

Education in the twenty-first century: Conflict, reconstruction and reconciliation¹

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This paper is an attempt to map out an emerging, and increasingly important field of study concerning the relationship between education and conflict. The field has two main parameters. The first involves the variety of contexts within which education systems are required to operate. Distinctions are drawn between education that is provided within relatively peaceful and stable environments; during times of violent conflict; as part of reconstruction following conflict or political transition; and as part of longer term peace and reconciliation processes. Educational priorities and concerns may be quite different depending on each of these circumstances. The second parameter concerns different levels of action within an education system. These include the political and policy environment, administrative and structural features and various aspects of educational practice. The paper argues that actions through various ‘entry points’ at each of these levels carry the potential to exacerbate or ameliorate conflict and suggests that a systemic analysis of investments in education systems from a conflict perspective should be a routine part of educational planning.

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The changing context for education in the twenty-first century

The transition to the twenty-first century marks a number of significant changes in human development. For example, research by Parker, Ninomiya & Cogan (1999) suggests that the major global trends likely to have an impact on the lives of people over the next 25 years include:

- the economic gap within countries will widen significantly, poverty will increase;
- information technologies will dramatically reduce the privacy of individuals;
- inequalities between those who have access to information technologies and those who do not will increase dramatically;

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- the cost of obtaining adequate water will increase due to population growth, deforestation and environmental deterioration;
- conflict of interest between developed and developing countries will increase;
- migration flows from poor to rich areas within and between countries will have an impact on security and social order;
- increased use of genetic engineering will create more complex ethical questions; and
- economic growth will be fuelled by knowledge, ideas and innovations more than natural resources.

Such trends imply that conflict will continue to be a significant feature of human development during the twenty-first century with added security implications (Rogers, 2000). The negative effect of conflict on development is recognised in the UK government White Paper on Globalisation (2000) which states that, '*Violent conflict is one of the biggest barriers to development in many of the world's poorest countries. Of the 40 poorest countries in the world, 24 are either in the midst of armed conflict or have only recently emerged from it*'. This statement implies that conflict is more likely where there is poverty. However, conflict in the world is not restricted exclusively to low-income countries. There are many examples of violent conflict involving high-income countries with well-developed education systems, so wealth and education do not necessarily provide immunity from conflict and the 'wealthy' and the 'highly-educated' may be just as capable of turning to violence as anyone else. The complexity of these relationships suggest that it will become increasingly important to understand the underlying causes and dynamics of conflict as part of human development processes and that we should be cautious about simplistic assumptions about the relationship between conflict and poverty, or conflict and education. More sophisticated arguments about the causes of conflict tend to emphasise three main perspectives.

Political explanations emphasise the role of political elites and their motivations as they are played out within local, national and international contexts. In terms of international relations the latter half of the twentieth century has seen changes to the political context that few could have anticipated. These include significant world events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, dissolution of the Soviet Union and democratisation of former communist states in Eastern Europe. Duffield (2001) is among those who argue that the prevalence of conflict today is related more to issues of political transformation and globalisation than to persistent poverty. The political thesis argues that international power relations have changed as we enter the twenty-first century and a new world order provides the context for human development. From this perspective conflict needs to be understood in terms of ideological struggles between different political systems after the Cold War (Stern & Druckman, 2000). Rogers states that:

The prevailing post orthodoxy is that new forms of military power—driven by the revolution in military affairs—will allow the West to maintain its edge of superiority and therefore to confront these problems comfortably. The Gulf War, Bosnia and even Kosovo are being cited as proof of this enduring potential. Occasional military

interventions will be necessary to “keep the violent peace” in the post-Cold War world. Consequently, military forces in most Western countries have modified their capabilities accordingly. (Rogers, 2000)

However, he then argues that this ‘security paradigm’ at the end of the twentieth century is extremely limited and suggests that the global wealth-poverty divide, exacerbated by environmental limitations will increasingly fuel conflicts characterised by anti-elite insurgencies, the effects of migration and environmental conflict over resources. The implication is that military and diplomatic approaches are insufficient responses to conflict.

Economic explanations tend to take one of two main directions. The first direction emphasises the need for economic development as a means of eliminating poverty with an associated expectation that this might remove some of the causes or motivations for conflict. This type of explanation is evident in a recent strategy paper that identifies development as the ‘third pillar’ of US foreign policy on a par with ‘defence’ and ‘diplomacy’:

The strategy recognises that a root of the national security threat to the United States and the broader international community is the lack of development, which can’t be addressed by military or diplomatic means alone. In countries that lack the ability, or will, to provide basic services or protection, we can no longer choose to look the other way. We need to engage in a coordinated and strategic manner to address the core issues of poverty and underdevelopment. (USAID, 2005)

This type of analysis also underpins the international movement to implement the Millennium Development Goals, although more critical perspectives draw attention to the existence of a ‘political economy’ at work:

A Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan is of course ostensibly aimed towards poverty reduction, but in order to be approved such a plan has to conform to a market-friendly view of development. Leaving aside the question as to whether such a plan can ever do more than contain the most extreme manifestations of poverty, the argument is that development management in this context is effectively a tool deployed by institutions of global governance which are controlled by northern interests. (Thomas, 2001)

The second direction that economic analyses take is to explain conflict in terms of underlying economic causes (Bardhan, 1997; Allen & Thomas, 2000), such as ‘resource wars’ involving struggles over commodities and natural resources. From this perspective inequalities created by the regulations for international trade may also generate resentments that fuel conflict arising from a sense of social injustice. Such motivations have become characterised as ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ explanations for conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2001), although the model has been criticised as being too simplistic (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003). Depending on the emphasis taken (whether conflict causes poverty, or poverty causes conflict), it has been suggested that international development agencies have a choice whether to work ‘around conflict’ by regarding conflict as an impediment to be avoided rather than addressed; to work ‘in conflict’ by accepting that development assistance cannot be suspended until conflict has been resolved; or to work ‘on conflict’ by including

specific programmes on conflict prevent and to address underlying causes (Goodhand, 2001).

Socio-cultural explanations emphasise the importance of relations between different social or ethnic groups as a means of understanding conflict. Opinion is divided on whether the existence of different identity-based groups (linguistic, cultural, religious) carries an inherent potential for conflict. The view that conflict between identity-based groups is inevitable underpins concepts such as a ‘clash of civilisations’ (Huntington, 2000). This is in contrast to the view that identity and ethnicity are important for understanding conflict, more because they may be mobilised to generate or escalate conflict, rather than them being fundamental causes. Stewart (2001) refers to differences between identity-based groups as ‘horizontal inequalities’ to distinguish them from ‘vertical inequalities’ based on economic status and access to power, although where identity and economic status map closely on each other the potential for conflict may be greatest. Another significant factor in the early twenty-first century is that the impacts of globalisation are perceived to be more extensive on all these fronts and this has highlighted the need for better integration between political, economic, environmental, social and cultural analyses of development (Woolcock, 2004).

Education and conflict—an emerging field of study

Education is implicated in all of these perspectives. Firstly, it may be perceived politically as a powerful tool for ideological development. This can take many forms, ranging from the use of education in the development of liberal ideas, to nation building and in extreme cases, indoctrination. Secondly, education may be perceived as an instrument for providing the knowledge and skills necessary for economic development and this may or may not include explicit reference to the implications or ethics of different forms of technological and economic development. Thirdly, education is a means by which social and cultural values are transmitted from generation to generation and depending on the values concerned, these may convey negative stereotypes or encourage attitudes that explicitly or implicitly condone violence or generate conflict.

Whilst there is a recognition of the positive and essential contribution of education to development (Lewin, 2001), research has also documented how education may be misused so that it becomes ‘part of the problem as well as part of the solution’. For example, a study by Bush & Salterelli (2000) identifies examples of:

- education used as a weapon in cultural repression of minorities, unequal access to education or use of education to suppress language, traditions, art forms, religious practices and cultural values;
- segregated education used to maintain inequality between groups within society;
- denial of education as a weapon of war;
- manipulation of history and textbooks for political purposes; and
- inculcation of attitudes of superiority, for example, in the way that other peoples or nations are described, and the characteristics that are ascribed to them.

A growing number of studies highlight aspects of education that have implications for conflict (Sommers, 2002; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Tawil & Harley, 2004; Buckland, 2004), including links between gender and violence (Leach, 2003; Kirk, 2004), education in emergencies (Sinclair, 2002; Nicolai, 2004); refugee education (Crisp *et al*, 2001; Bird, 2003), the reconstruction of education systems (Obura, 2003; Sommers & Buckland, 2004) and aspects of schooling linked to violence (Davies, 2004; Harber, 2004). This has opened up debate about coordination and the role of international development agencies (Sommers, 2004; Seitz, 2004) and led to the identification of a more explicit research agenda (Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005).

This emerging field of study therefore runs across a wide range of contexts. Conflict theory tends to emphasise 'conflict transformation' rather than 'conflict resolution' from the viewpoint that conflict is not a simple or linear process involving predictable stages or cycles (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 1997). Nevertheless, from a development perspective, there are distinctive challenges in developing a conflict-sensitive approach to education depending on whether education is provided within relatively peaceful and stable environments; during times of violent conflict; as part of reconstruction following conflict or political transition; or as part of longer term peace and reconciliation processes. Inevitably these distinctions are difficult to sustain, particularly in cases where there are transitions taking place, but within these different contexts an analysis of the role of education from a conflict perspective may be helpful in determining whether certain policies or practices are likely to ameliorate or inflame conflict. Some of the key issues are identified in the following sections.

The need for 'conflict-sensitive' education systems

The importance of education to human development is emphasised by its central place in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)² and this has been translated into a global initiative known as Education for All (EFA)³ aimed at securing primary education for all children by the year 2015. There are many impediments to the achievement of universal primary education. These include lack of political will or lack of priority to education on the part of national governments (such as, insufficient spending as a percentage of GNP or inequitable distribution of funding and resources) or lack of effective action in terms of development assistance from the international community. Within countries, poverty, child labour, distance from school, unequal access due to gender or cultural factors and the existence of conflict are barriers to the enrolment of all children in primary education.

The first EFA Global Monitoring Report (2002) presents a model of education based largely on quantifiable inputs, processes and outcomes. The problem with a purely quantitative approach is that the 'quality' of education is particularly important in relation to conflict. The International Commission on Education for the twenty-first century (Delors *et al*, 1996) highlighted the need for education to take account of significant world trends and identified 'learning to live together' as

one of four main pillars that needs to be strengthened in light of increasing globalisation. This is an argument for a definition of quality education that takes more account of the type of values, educational content and processes that education systems provide. These values include the statement in Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that the aims of education involve:

...the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

This has also been acknowledged in the third EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005):

Although most human rights legislation focuses upon access to education and is comparatively silent about its quality, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is an important exception. It expresses strong, detailed commitments about the aims of education. These commitments, in turn, have implications for the content and quality of education.

Therefore, arguments have emerged that the right to education is not only about access to education, but also about access to a quality of education that is based on human rights principles and processes. Whilst the right to education is properly concerned with universal access to free and compulsory education on a basis of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, it is also concerned with the right to an education where the content and processes are consistent with human rights and fundamental freedoms (Tomasevski, 2004).

There are a number of problems in turning these aspirations into practice. Whilst there may be international norms and standards concerning the aims and purpose of education, these are mediated significantly by local conditions, customs and practice and governments tend to regard comments on their education system as external interference and encroaching on national sovereignty. Added to this is the likelihood that many of the situations where there might be most concern about the type of education being provided are also those caught up in conflict. Nevertheless, from a rights-based development perspective, children do not lose the right to education simply because they live in the midst of a conflict or in a difficult environment. This perspective is consistent with emerging policies about effective ways of providing development assistance within 'fragile states' and difficult environments, defined as '*those areas where the state is unable or unwilling to harness domestic and international resources effectively for poverty reduction*'. These include situations of state collapse, loss of territorial control, low administrative capacity, political instability, neo-patrimonial politics, conflict and repressive polities (DFID, 2005). Education is identified as a crucial entry point and for such a strategy to work it is clear that any educational assistance must not only 'do no harm', but should hopefully contribute towards 'making things better' and certainly 'not making things worse'. This is why it is important to analyse the political and policy environment, the administrative and structural features of education systems and various aspects of educational practice from a conflict perspective.

Political context, policy and administration

The existence of conflict inevitably raises questions concerning government views on the purpose of education and the extent to which education is seen as a tool for political or ideological purposes. Political involvement in operational matters, such as education appointments, deployment of teachers, determination of the curriculum etc., may provide some indication of the extent to which government perceives education as mainly about 'social control' or about 'empowerment' through social, economic and cultural development. In many circumstances political elites are likely to want to use education for their own purposes. Although decentralisation of education systems may carry the potential to increase participation and ownership, it may leave education open to manipulation as part of local politics. This highlights the need for systems and structures that 'insulate' the education sector from political bias, potential corruption and interference in operational decisions to implement policy. Capacity building and training for those working within the public service may therefore be a necessary prerequisite for the success of any overall education sector plan that takes account of conflict. At all levels of the education system *governance* is a crucial issue. The arrangements that are in place for representation and participation in consultation, decision-making and governance may be potential sources of conflict, or they may be opportunities for inclusion and the resolution of grievances. Arrangements for transparency and accountability also reflect the system's capacity to accept and address inequalities that might otherwise become sources of conflict.

Equality concerns may arise in terms of 'inputs' such as equal access of all groups to education, transparency in the allocation of resources and the recruitment, training and deployment of teachers. Bush & Saltarelli (2000) claim that restricted access to education '*should be viewed as an indicator of deteriorating relations between groups*' and '*a warning signal that should prod the international community to initiate what the World Bank would call a "watching brief" so that it might anticipate and respond to further deteriorations*'. Equality issues also arise in terms of educational 'outputs' such as differentials in education attainment and qualifications between groups. These have important consequences for equal opportunity of employment, for example, Bush & Saltarelli suggest that educational attainment is one of the ways in which dominant groups seek to maintain their privileged position within diverse societies. They cite examples from Rwanda, where historically Catholic missionary schools favoured the Tutsi minority through preferential treatment that led to employment by the colonial government; and Burundi where restrictions on the admission of Hutu children to secondary schools prevented the acquisition of necessary employment skills (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

In broad terms, government policies may play a part in developing trust or mistrust between groups. This will depend on how the education system is structured and the way that it operates in practice. Education may become a source of conflict depending on whether it promotes conformity to a single set of dominant values (assimilation), permits the development of identity-based institutions (separate development) or encourages shared institutions (integration). The extent

to which any of these approaches make conflict more or less likely will be highly context-dependent.

Curriculum skills and content

At the practical level, there are many aspects of curriculum that have a bearing on conflict. When curriculum is conceived narrowly as the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next, it may be perceived as an extremely powerful tool to promote particular political ideologies, religious practices or cultural values and traditions. The contemporary trend in many countries is to 'modernise' the curriculum so that it is defined in terms of 'learning outcomes' where learning outcomes refer to skills, attitudes and values as well as factual knowledge. They may include the development of 'generic skills' that include communication skills, the ability to draw on multiple sources of information and evaluate conflicting evidence, the development of media literacy, critical thinking and moral development (EFA, 2003). Within international development settings there is a particular emphasis on 'life skills' as a means of providing child protection, social and health education (id21, 2004; INEE, 2004) and the argument is that these are the type of skills that are also helpful for peacebuilding (UNICEF, 2005).

Additionally, in terms of 'content', every area of the curriculum carries values with the potential to communicate implicit and explicit political messages. Many of these involve specialised areas of study. For example, the UNESCO position paper on language of instruction highlights the importance of sensitivity to majority and minority languages and distinguishes between 'official' and 'national' languages:

Although there are more than 20 States with more than one official language (India alone, for example, has 19 official languages while South Africa has 11), the majority of countries in the world are monolingual nation states in the sense of recognizing, *de jure* or *de facto*, only one official language for government and legal purposes. That is not to say that they are not bilingual or multilingual societies, but rather that while there may be many languages widely used in a country these do not necessarily have the legal authority of an official language. In many countries that were previously under colonial regimes, the official language tends to be the language of the former colonizers. In addition to official languages, several countries recognize national languages, which may be compulsory in education. The choice of language in the educational system confers a power and prestige through its use in formal instruction. Not only is there a symbolic aspect, referring to status and visibility, but also a conceptual aspect referring to shared values and worldview expressed through and in that language. (UNESCO, 2003, p.13–14)

The UNESCO position paper advocates mother tongue instruction as a means of improving education quality and bilingual and/or multilingual education as a means of promoting social equality and understanding between different groups. However, at a more political level, arguments for mother tongue education may also mask movements for separate education (de Klerk, 2002). Another area of curriculum is the teaching of history and the extent to which history education may become a vehicle for promoting particular versions of history, revising historical events or confronting the past in a critical way (UNESCO, 1999a; Barton & McCully, 2005).

Political dimensions in the way that geography is taught and the lexicon it uses for disputed territories can be problematic (Bar-Gal, 1993) and the content of teaching material for areas such as culture, art, music and religious education often get drawn into controversy. Such areas are sometimes referred to as 'national subjects', in many instances tightly controlled by governments and regarded as essential tools for nation building. Indeed, the concept of a 'national curriculum' may be extremely problematic where it does not address the inevitable tension between the need for unity whilst respecting diversity (Gutmann, 1994).

Learning resources and textbooks

The values represented in textbooks, and other learning resources, is a further area of specialist concern. For example, the operation of a single textbook policy may offer a Ministry of Education a way of guaranteeing a 'minimum entitlement' for all pupils to basic learning resources, particularly important in low-income countries and where equal access needs to be demonstrated. However, questions may arise about who controls or benefits from the production of textbooks and about their content. In contested societies, arguments over textbook content can also become cultural and ideological battlegrounds. For example, part of the education reforms in Bosnia has involved the removal of 'offensive material' from history textbooks (UNESCO, 1999b). Such a process necessarily raises sensitive issues about the judgment of what might be considered offensive and by whom, about who should be involved in such a process, and how it is implemented. The production of single textbooks for different linguistic communities can also present difficulties. For example, textbooks produced by Sinhalese authors in Sri Lanka have been translated to produce copies for Tamil pupils. However, the Tamil Teachers' Union identified inaccuracies in the translated versions and claimed cultural bias in some of the illustrations and content matter (Wickrema & Colenso, 2003). Textbook review processes have a long history. For example, there were joint initiatives on French-German textbooks during the 1920s; German-Polish cooperation following the Second World War; and a US-Soviet textbook project in the 1970s (Höpken, 2003). A project reviewing Palestinian and Israeli projects has been underway for some years (Adwan & Firer, 1999). Further examples include concerns raised by China and Korea about the treatment of World War II in Japanese textbooks (Woods Masalski, 2001) and a critique of international assistance for the replacement of textbooks in Afghanistan (Spink, 2005).

Teachers and teacher education

Curriculum, pedagogy and learning resources are inter-related and teachers are an important factor in mediating the curriculum and the values it conveys. Factors related to teachers that have a bearing on the extent to which education can be a positive force include the relative status of teachers and the extent to which diversity-sensitive recruitment and deployment policies ensure adequate recruitment of male

and female teachers from different ethnic groups and an adequate supply of teachers to provide education to different groups in their first languages. A UNESCO report on teacher training in 44 countries across sub-Saharan Africa highlights some of the challenges in terms of quality and type of teacher education available, including significant numbers of untrained teachers as well as difficulties in recruitment and retention (UNESCO, 2004). This is significant from a conflict perspective especially where:

The main focus of teacher education in post-conflict countries is to design and implement comprehensive teacher training policy and teacher training programmes, especially focusing on primary education in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Guatemala. These teacher training programmes aim at enhancing countries' capacities of curriculum renewal and development, particularly to focus on peace, human rights and democracy, literacy, girls education, education for youth returning from combat. (UNESCO, 2004)

It is unrealistic to expect that relatively inexperienced teachers, untrained in the basics of human rights education and other relevant areas, will be able to take forward such areas with students without having developed the necessary skills themselves. For example, the UNESCO International Bureau for Education (IBE) has completed comparative research on curriculum reform processes in seven conflict-affected countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Lebanon, Mozambique, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Sri Lanka) and the findings illustrate the complexity of educational issues that can become implicated in social and political conflict. A particular issue in situations of conflict is that teachers themselves may be part of the communities in conflict and therefore find it difficult to challenge the values of their own community without becoming emotionally involved in the issues (Tawil & Harley, 2004).

With so many levels and potential entry points to an education system, it is a significant challenge to develop a comprehensive analysis of how a system might be more 'conflict-sensitive'. Each area may represent a field of specialist expertise (for example, the implications of language of instruction policies or approaches to teaching history in divided societies), nor is it likely that initiatives through a single entry point will be sufficient (for example, new approaches to teaching history require different forms of teacher education supported by textbooks consistent with new teaching methods). It is unlikely that education policymakers will have expertise across all such areas. In practical terms a systemic, conflict analysis of an education system may result in a set of inter-related initiatives through various entry-points, such as the sector-wide approach to education reform in Sri Lanka reported on later in this issue (Colenso, 2005).

Education during violent conflict

Whilst all education systems might benefit from an analysis of their 'conflict-sensitivity', they face exceptional challenges during times of violent conflict. In the midst of conflict, international humanitarian law has a particular importance. The

Geneva Conventions make specific reference to protections related to education at times of war. These include provisions that:

- Parties to a conflict ensure that children under fifteen, orphaned or separated from their families, are provided with appropriate education;
- Occupying powers should facilitate the maintenance of education;
- Education should be provided for interned children and young people; and
- Education should be provided for children throughout non-international conflicts.

A main weakness of such provisions is that, because the Geneva Conventions were developed just after the Second World War, they related to situations where a formal state of war had been declared between countries. Later protocols, UN declarations and resolutions have tried to update accepted 'rules of engagement' to accommodate the more complex nature of modern conflicts, but in these situations, where conflicts are often waged by groups within countries and with no sense of accountability to international authority, the main problem is a disregard of the values and norms represented by the Geneva Conventions (Tawil, 2000).

Concerns about the impact of violent conflict and war on children received considerable attention during the 1990s and were comprehensively documented through a study commissioned by the UN Secretary-General (Machel, 1996). The report identified a number of important implications for the education sector including arrangements for the education of refugees and displaced persons, strategies to prevent the use of child soldiers, protection for girls against sex crimes, landmine education and trauma counselling. It provided the basis for a number of significant initiatives, such as landmine awareness programmes and many of the issues identified by the report have become specialised areas in the field of international development. Arguments have also been made that education should be an integral part of humanitarian responses (Retamal & Aedo-Richmond, 1998) and a review of progress since the Machel report provided the basis for an international conference in Winnipeg in 2001 when it was claimed that during the 1990s 'more than two million children have died as a result of war and some 15 million children have been displaced within their countries or made refugees' (Machel, 2000; UNICEF, 2000).

During conflict, especially in refugee situations, the emphasis has to be on preparing families and children to cope with the traumatic disruption in their lives and simple daily survival. In complex emergencies, many international humanitarian agencies have developed education programs for children and youth especially. However, practitioners and researchers familiar with refugee and humanitarian programs recognize the limits to delivering sustainable long-term educational programs if they are not linked to more grounded development planning and programming. (Isaac, 2001)

This area has developed significantly since then and has become known as 'Education in Emergencies'.⁴ Whilst not defined exclusively in terms of conflict, the disruption of education due to conflict is certainly one set of circumstances that come within the definition of an emergency (Sinclair, 2002). A joint initiative by UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE International

and the Save the Children Alliance has led to the creation of an Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE). INEE does not have the mandate to implement or co-ordinate during crises, but enables network members to share information and encourage collaboration. An important goal for INEE has been to define minimum standards for education in emergencies (INEE, 2005). Additionally, the UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) provides research, training and publications with a focus on education in emergencies and reconstruction.⁵

The reconstruction of education systems in the aftermath of conflict

The reconstruction of education systems represents a further important context in which education is increasingly taking place in the immediate aftermath of armed conflict, humanitarian catastrophe or political transition. A report on 'Education for Reconstruction' (Philips *et al*, 1998) draws heavily on Europe's experience of reconstruction after World War II, but also presents case studies on education reconstruction from Bosnia and Rwanda. The report importantly distinguishes between 'physical' reconstruction of school buildings (including emergency repair strategies, the needs of refugee education and landmine safety issues); 'ideological' reconstruction that refers, for example, to democratisation of the education system and retraining of teachers; and 'psychological' reconstruction that responds to issues of demoralisation, loss of confidence and health-related issues of stress and depression.

This contrasts significantly with a report to evaluate the World Bank's experience with post conflict reconstruction which suggests that the main priority has been on the reconstruction of physical infrastructure (World Bank, 1998). This report drew on nine case studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Uganda, Cambodia, Eritrea, Haiti, Lebanon, Rwanda and Sri Lanka. The main recommendation was that the Bank should 'develop an operational policy on the subject, to address readiness in the provision of economic development advice during peace negotiations; aid coordination following conflict; leadership on macroeconomic and external debt issues; priority definitions in macroeconomic stabilisation; infrastructure rebuilding; and the restoration of human and social capital'. These recommendations illustrate how the World Bank's position has traditionally been to maintain a watching brief, but stop short of providing development assistance whilst conflict is underway.

However, a more recent report from the World Bank Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit acknowledges the need for a shift in position from an emphasis on post-conflict reconstruction to 'a sensitivity to conflict' (World Bank, 2004). This is also reflected in a study undertaken by the World Bank education team on education and post-conflict reconstruction (Buckland, 2004). The study draws on a review of the literature, on a database of 52 countries affected by conflict since 1990 and on a set of 12 country studies. The 12 countries include three that are emerging from conflict (Angola, Burundi and Sri Lanka), four countries/territories that have

recently emerged from conflict (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste) and five countries that have a longer history of post-conflict reconstruction (Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Lebanon and Nicaragua). The main objective was to review experience of education system reconstruction in post-conflict countries and to identify lessons that can assist in the achievement of EFA goals. These more recent reports reflect a move away from the notion of thinking about conflict in discrete stages, to an appreciation that the analysis of conflict and ‘conflict sensitivity’ needs to be built into routine thinking as part of mainstream operations.

Education for reconciliation and peacebuilding

The concept of reconciliation is not new. It has been a central feature of rebuilding relations between peoples and states in post-war Europe. Some legacies of World War II are still visible today, for example, the Austrian Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation is still making ‘voluntary payments to former slave and forced labourers of the Nazi regime on the territory of present-day Austria’. Explicit reference to reconciliation as part of post-conflict ‘peace building’ has gained more prominence in recent years, particularly since the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (Daye, 2004). A focus on processes of reconciliation has also been a feature of developments following the genocides in Rwanda and as part of the peace process in Northern Ireland supported by substantial European Union funding. Whilst the concept of reconciliation has received attention across a range of international contexts, each conflict is quantitatively different in terms of the level of violence and number of casualties, and qualitatively different in terms of the social context and the nature of atrocities that may have taken place. These factors mean that those affected by conflict will have different perspectives on what is ‘reasonable’ or ‘realistic’ to expect in terms of a commitment to reconciliation. This makes it extremely difficult to consider reconciliation as a generic concept with the same implications for different conflicts.

The concept of ‘reconciliation’ is problematic, both conceptually and in terms of the difficult and controversial issues it evokes. Hamber & van der Merwe (1998) suggest that the term is considered to embody positive connotations about ‘coming together’ and healing past conflicts. However, a deeper understanding of the role of education in contributing to reconciliation processes has yet to be developed. Reconciliation may be necessary at many levels (between individuals, between groups in conflict, between peoples or nations at war). There are implications for education in terms of facilitating reconciliation by addressing the legacies of conflict. These include the impact on the bereaved and injured, remembrance and commemoration; debates about forgiveness, expressions of regret, apology and symbolic events; understanding the role of amnesties, prisoner releases, alongside concepts of restorative and transitional justice.⁶ These are challenging, long-term tasks that link reconstruction programmes into the mainstream education sector and the longer-term goal of conflict prevention.

The contribution of human rights education, citizenship programmes, intercultural and peace education are also relevant. The key point about all these education programmes is that individually, none of them offers a 'magic solution' for the prevention of conflict. Rather they represent a complex matrix of education initiatives that address key themes and values that could have a preventative effect in the long term. It is unrealistic to expect that such programmes will have immediate impacts within short periods of time. Nor is it reasonable to expect that non-specialist aid managers will be familiar with the intricacies and claimed 'efficacy' of individual programmes. It may be more realistic to adopt an audit approach that encourages education authorities to take stock of educational provision with a special focus on features that could have a preventative role in terms of conflict. The absence of 'key themes' might then become part of a broader debate about curriculum development strategy within the system. Alongside this the international community needs to give more serious attention to evaluating the 'efficacy' claimed for preventative education across a range of international contexts and monitored over a sustained period of time.

Conclusion

In many respects the sheer breadth and diversity of research areas that arise from a consideration of the links between education and conflict illustrate the significance of this emerging field of study. The dynamics of conflict rarely follow predictable phases, but it is possible to distinguish between the distinctive challenges in providing education in a number of different contexts. Of relevance to every education system is a growing recognition that education can never be value free. Whilst it is an extremely effective tool for human development, it also carries the potential to condone or promote ideas, attitudes and behaviours that form the basis for conflict. Systemic analysis of education systems from a conflict perspective is an under-developed area of mainstream education thinking. It is relevant for a range of professionals, including politicians, policy makers, education administrators, teachers, parents, community activists, youth and development workers. There are many entry points to the various levels of an education system and the development of conflict-sensitive education systems involves analysis at each of these. This includes a critical analysis of the political ideology driving a system, as well as its legislative, structural and administrative qualities. At the practical level there are a range of specialist areas related to the curriculum, teaching and resources that also have implications for access to and experience of education. The most contentious challenge in terms of international development is to find a way of raising critical questions about the form and content of education and its implications for relations between peoples, groups and nations. The difficulty will be in finding ways for this to be accepted internationally as a legitimate concern as part of improving the quality of education.

Alongside the need for all education systems to be more conflict-sensitive, there are additional challenges that arise for the provision of education in situations of violent conflict, as part of post-conflict reconstruction and as a means towards longer

term reconciliation and peacebuilding. Once again each of these areas involves specialised knowledge, expertise and experience. Indeed it is notable that the development of these areas has to a large extent been taken forward by development agencies and fieldworkers rather than the academics or education professionals. This underlines the extent to which these contexts are regarded as exceptional, rather than a 'mainstream' concern for education policy makers. Yet the development of minimum standards for education in emergencies demonstrates the crucial role that education has to play in child protection and providing points of stability during, and in the aftermath, of conflict. Given the numbers of adults and children affected, and the fact that conflicts can span generations, it is untenable to suggest that the education of an estimated 9.2 million refugees and 25 million internally displaced people⁷ should be set aside until hostilities cease. Similarly, there is a growing appreciation that reconstruction is not simply about replacing the physical infrastructure of schools, but needs to include opportunities for rebuilding human relations and inclusive education systems. This highlights the fact that emergency aid and short term reconstruction should provide the basis for the longer term development of conflict-sensitive education systems, which is why it is so important that conflict analysis is included during these crucial transitions. In this respect, the contribution of education to processes of reconciliation and peacebuilding is least well understood. It is significant that peace education programmes tend to be most visible and valued during times of conflict, yet their relevance is less appreciated as peace processes unfold. Nor is it universally accepted that education has a role to play in dealing with the legacies of conflict as part of longer term reconciliation processes. Part of this may be due to a natural desire to avoid revisiting the detail of past hurts and grievances, but part is also to do with our lack of conceptual understanding of what we mean by reconciliation and how education can contribute to the process in practice. Ultimately, whether education is provided within relatively peaceful environments, in the midst of conflict, as part of reconstruction or longer term reconciliation, questions arise about the extent to which education systems challenge inequalities and contribute positively to improved relations between peoples. The argument in this paper has been that, within each of these contexts, this can best be achieved by systemic analysis of education systems from a conflict perspective as a routine part of educational planning and practice.

Notes

1. This paper draws upon a report for the UK Department for International Development (DFID) on education, conflict and international development (Smith & Vaux, 2003) and was the basis for a keynote address to the 2004 biennial conference of the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE).
2. See Millennium Development Goals (MDG) <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>
3. See Education For All (EFA) <http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/index.shtml>
4. See Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) <http://www.ineesite.org>
5. See UNESCO IIEP http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/focus/emergency/emergency_1.htm

6. See <http://www.restorativejustice.org>
7. See UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

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