

**WORKSHOP**

**EDUCATIONAL  
DESTRUCTION and RECONSTRUCTION  
in  
DISRUPTED SOCIETIES**

**International Bureau of Education  
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## INTRODUCTION

The role of education, and more particularly schooling, in conflict situations is ambivalent. It may sow the seeds that contribute to the outbreak of violence and conflict, assist in coping with and recovering from crisis, as well as contribute to the resolution and prevention of such conflicts. With the escalation of political, social, religious, and ethnic antagonisms observed since the end of the Cold War, education in conflict and crisis situations has emerged as a major concern. Most recently, the mid-decade meeting of the Education for All Forum (Amman 1996) stressed the importance of ensuring that education be incorporated within the first emergency interventions; that is, that education should be included early on within the linear relief-rehabilitation-development continuum. Indeed, re-establishing basic social services, including education, are crucial to society's return to normal life.

However, despite growing concerns for education in emergencies and the process of recovery, the more fundamental consequences or implications of violence and conflict on education and training systems do not appear to be receiving any serious attention. This more fundamental questioning and re-examination of education/training do not appear to be a major concern of both policy-makers and researchers within the framework of reconstruction. What attention has been paid to education in conflict/crisis situations has traditionally tended to focus on the reestablishment of the normative process in view of fostering stability and the return to normality. "Healing the wounds" of conflict, however, involves more than the rehabilitation of education services and requires a critical re-examination of the role and purpose of education during different phases in the development of political, social and ethnic conflicts. The absence of such critical re-examination would tend to seriously undermine the vision of a linear emergency-relief - rehabilitation - development continuum and may favour a more cyclical vision.

Such critical re-examination is also crucial if the reconstruction process is to be viewed as a "window of opportunity" to redesign educational systems so as to foster stability and promote peace through the inculcation of new values based on principles of justice, solidarity and participation. There now appears to be a general trend to place more emphasis on education for peace as a tool for conflict prevention. However, the end of conflict and the return to social order imply more than a return to what was being done in the past. We would have to attempt to understand, to the extent possible, what went wrong. What can be learnt about the role of education in the emergence of conflict and crisis situations of various natures?

Educational intervention in conflict situations must be grounded in sound analysis. Acknowledging the fact that the adequacy of intervention strategies in pre-conflict and post-conflict situations must be context-specific, it was thought necessary to examine four significantly different cases in order to reach a more global understanding of the role played by education in the development of conflict situations. It was therefore thought, appropriate to organise the discussions around the various issues relative to the question of (i) education as a potential catalyst in the outbreak of conflict/violence before turning to the question of (ii) education in emergencies, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Examination of these two sets of themes would help shed some light on the meaning to be given to the concept of (iii) peace education in various contexts.

The workshop brought together researchers, as well as practitioners, and policy-makers (cf. Annex 1) involved with the formulation, implementation, and funding of intervention on the ground. This report is an attempt to capture the dynamics of the debates and discussions among participants in terms of the relevant themes and issues identified and the types of questions raised.

### **Note of Caution**

The four studies presented illustrate violence of different natures and varying intensities ranging from the normalisation of structural violence in everyday life in Colombia, to the extreme devastating impact of prolonged warfare on Cambodian society: from the disintegration of a social order and the outbreak of civil war in Sierra Leone, to the struggle for self-determination of Palestinian society under occupation. Each of the case studies illustrates different stages in the development of violence and conflict and the ways in which education systems are involved. Despite the complexity of distinguishing between the different phases in the development of violence and conflict, the temporal dimension implies very different issues relative to education. Nonetheless, beyond these differences, violence appears to be increasingly affecting society and education systems.

The statistically observable physical manifestations of violence with regard to education systems (killing and/or abduction of students and teachers, destruction of infrastructure, enrolment of students as combatants) indicate the extent or scale of the problem. Such manifestations do not inform us on the more subtle longer-term impact on social development in terms of future survival and security. Examining violence in society is a deep soul-searching exercise that raises fundamental ethical and philosophical questions relative to human civilisation that are beyond the scope of this report.

## **BEFORE the CONFLICT Education as a Catalyst**

Given the observation that children are increasingly involved in conflict, both as victims and as protagonists, and that many combatants involved in armed conflict today have had a significant exposure to formal education, it was thought appropriate to question the very role of education systems in conflict situations. Determining the extent to which educational policy choices and the nature of educational management systems explain or reflect the climate of political tension leading up to conflict is not an easy endeavour. There is a need to distinguish between education as an "accomplice to rebellion" and to the outbreak of conflict, and education as a victim of violence and destruction when the origin of conflict lies elsewhere. A number of factors have been identified in considering the way in which education may contribute to the process of social and political disintegration that can result in violence and the outbreak of armed conflict.

### **1. Modernization & violence**

Violence may be considered to be inherent to the process of modernisation whereby social bonds are destroyed before other forms of social cohesion and socialisation are

built. This may be seen with the "breakdown of a caring society" in Sierra Leone, and the role of "underground education" in Palestine during the uprising and in the current phase of nation-state building. The speed of change that characterises recent social evolution in Colombia was also clearly associated with rising violence. Becoming aware of the violent and often brutal nature of change and modernisation would help us understand and anticipate what is happening.

## **2. State schooling and community culture**

Historically, modernisation also involves the imposition of a foreign schooling system and alien culture in many parts of the developing world. Based on the schooling model born in Europe in the 19th century, the content and organisational mode of schooling is still often unrepresentative of local or national cultures. In many parts of Africa today, the school, as a result of foreign curricula and the use of foreign languages, is an alienating factor creating a communication gap between the schooled and their parents and communities. Within current concerns to contextualise schooling, there is a need to bring the school back to the community. Schooling may either work toward a set of common values among different national communities, or toward reaching an understanding and acceptance of a plurality of interpretations.

Schooling is clearly an instrument of integration in the process of nation-state building, and may be conflictual in a situation of multicultural societies. It was recalled, however, that the experiences of nation-state building in the West are extremely variable. Regardless of how the notion of community is defined, a number of questions remain to be addressed. Are different types of "community - schools" better adapted at the local level? Is there a balance that can be found between community-based modes of social organisation and identification, and a minimal level of collective understanding and consensus at the national level? Is community-based social organisation a necessary historical stage?

## **3. Frustration gap and economic inequities**

The spread of mass schooling inherent to the process of modernisation has considerably expanded access to formal education as well as to means of communication, creating new expectations and consumption needs. There appears to be a gap, however, between the scale of expansion of access to formal education and the pattern of growth of real incomes and employment possibilities. It is a paradox, for instance, that Latin America, which has relatively high levels of educational development at the macro-social level, is the region of the world with the most inequitable distribution of wealth. It is such differences between the distribution of formal education and the expectations that it gives rise to, and the distribution of wealth and real earning and consumption possibilities, which result in a "frustration gap" that may, in the absence of appropriate mechanisms for the management of conflict, contribute to violence. This is sadly illustrated in the participation of "forgotten aspirants" as combatants on both sides of the rebel war in Sierra Leone. If the assumption of a frustration gap is true, it raises fundamental questions relative to the implications of promoting the principle of democratisation of education (or Education for All), particularly in the absence of accompanying measures at the economic and political levels.

#### **4. Weakened power of schooling as an agent of socialisation**

Education cannot be equated solely to schooling. Rather, the general concept encompasses a wide range of educational and socialising processes. These processes of socialisation of children and youth are characterised by competition between the various agents of socialisation such as the family, the school, the media, and\* so on. The media, and television in particular, are generally considered to be very powerful modes of socialisation that may be in contradiction with the socialising efforts of family and formal schooling. Furthermore, the normative and violent values and behavioural patterns that youth acquire in street gangs in Colombia, for instance, clash with those transmitted at school. Street violence experienced by Palestinian youth during the uprising is also seen to erode the traditional normative authority of the elderly in general, and teachers in particular. The question is therefore to identify the sources of normative authority of the various agents of socialisation (family, neighbourhood, media, street...) and the ways in which they are in competition.

#### **5. Local versus global educational cultures**

It appears important not to restrict analysis to public schooling and to consider private schooling initiatives. This is particularly true within the context of economic globalisation that is promoting a greater role for the private sector in education and training. More specifically, it may be appropriate to examine more closely the range of religious movements involved in educational initiatives in the context of the development of a global society. Although the separation of religion and state affairs may be seen as contributing to greater tolerance in certain contexts, the separation is not universal. What then is the role of religion in national education systems to be in a globalising world and what room is there for the study of comparative religion?

Furthermore, globalisation is questioning the very notion of territorial integrity on which nation-states are based. It is appropriate then to examine the impact of globalisation particularly on societies that have not even begun building the nation state concept. Moreover, globalisation may also be seen as exacerbating political imbalances that would only invite violence. In considering educational recovery within the general context of globalisation, is the focus to be on schooling in the (re) construction of the nation-state, and/or on community-based educational alternatives, and/or on modes of religious social organisation? The nature of government and the extent of political participation of different components of civil society are fundamental issues that require close examination.

### **FROM EMERGENCIES to RECONSTRUCTION**

Apart from the important work done in the area of refugee education as a traditional component of emergency relief work, there appears to be a limited role for educational intervention in conflict situations. Education generally does not appear to be a high priority among the donor community in the emergency or immediate post-conflict stage, when food aid and health are generally considered to be higher priorities. It is important to recall that the lack of effective central authority structures in conflict zones render educational intervention strategies during emergencies very difficult, if

not impossible. When donors do become involved with education in post-conflict situations, they tend to focus on the more visible rebuilding of physical infrastructure.

### **Refugee education**

As a refugee-producing situation, emergencies may be viewed in three phases, from the initial emergency with the need to focus on the settlement of displaced persons, to that of "care and maintenance" while awaiting a political solution, to that of the return home to the country of origin. As in other areas of intervention, it is now suggested that there should be a rapid educational response in newly established refugee camps. The main principle is that children should quickly be brought together in group educational activities led by refugee teachers using the same language of instruction and core curriculum of the country or region of origin. The philosophy behind this is that as children have a right to education, refugee children have the right to their own education, at least in the early phases of an emergency. It is important to note, however, that not all governments are co-operative as was illustrated in the case of Rwandan refugees in Eastern Zaire in the 1994 emergency. In prolonged emergencies, however, the Ministry of Education of the asylum country has the right to discuss appropriate curricula for refugee children.

### **Reconsidering the emergency-rehabilitation-development continuum**

It is acknowledged that there is a general "theoretical deficit" regarding the integration of components of sustainable development within relief and rehabilitation efforts in war-torn societies. This is further complicated by the fact that post-conflict phases cannot always be clearly identified, and situations may all too often be considered to be "permanent emergencies". In such cases, emergency intervention (preparedness) may have to be viewed as an integral part of development operations. The recent unfortunate re-emergence of violence in Sierra Leone is but one example of how the vision of a linear emergency-recovery-development continuum may seriously be questioned. More generally, given that chronic economic stress is continuing in nations currently in crisis, the notion of a linear development is further invalidated. Researchers and policy-makers consequently need to think of non-linear patterns of conflict development and bear in mind the potential re-emergence of conflict when planning intervention strategies.

### **Examining the wider political context**

The process of recovery and reconstruction in disrupted societies requires a context of safety and security. Once in place, the definition of policy choices is intimately dependent on the nature of the cessation of armed conflict or the peace achieved. Traditionally, education has all too often been treated as a self-contained area detached from the wider political context. The importance of the broader political context in which educational development takes place is even more pronounced in the post-conflict stage. Educational policy-making in the context of uncertain peace and relative instability, as is currently the case in Palestine, can be a major challenge. Indeed, the contours of the categories of peace and conflict in periods of transition may be rather diffuse, as is the case in Sierra Leone.

## **Setting priorities for economic reconstruction**

The mere scale of physical destruction and decimation of human life during the long years of warfare in Cambodia poses the dilemma of setting priorities in the post-conflict period. This is compounded by the sheer scale of urgent and specific social and economic needs of vulnerable and war-affected groups (physically handicapped persons, widows, orphans) and the need to reintegrate demobilised soldiers. Moreover, the breakdown of public education systems during periods of prolonged conflict has an adverse impact on the general level of basic education of the population. In cases of extensive destruction such as Cambodia, massive external assistance is needed to rebuild a society that has been taken back decades in its social and economic development efforts. The complexity of the task of large-scale national reconstruction requires addressing short and long-term needs both in education as opposed to other sectors of social development, as well as among various educational sub-sectors.

## **Combining short versus long-term strategies**

Donor institutions and policy-makers have very short-term policy horizons to cope with the complexity and depth of the problems that exist. Moreover, the uncertainty of the political future in the case of Palestine, for example, is perceived as a major hindrance in the articulation of short and long-term objectives in the process of educational development being undertaken by the PNA.

Experiences in the reintegration of demobilised combatants and war-affected groups in Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola, for instance, point to the need to promote training for both short and long-term employment creation. Short-term employment creation has proved effective in the field of labour-intensive work programmes to rehabilitate basic infrastructure. Long-term training for employment, on the other hand, may be targeted to local needs as defined by labour market assessments and, when possible, by the building of labour market information systems. Given the need to quickly serve large numbers of former soldiers, as was the case in Bosnia, accelerated training for demobilised combatants has proven to be more appropriate than long-term training.

## **Bridging the gap between education, training and employment**

High unemployment poses a threat to sustainable peace, particularly in post-conflict situations. In view of this, certain agencies are attempting to identify the types of skills needed for survival in post-conflict and to create a bridge between technical training and practical real employment possibilities. It is also increasingly felt that training must be linked to adult basic education and must not only focus on technical skills, but also on literacy, numeracy and other life skills. This is also clearly illustrated by the Cambodian government's decision to focus simultaneously on basic education and on vocational training.

The importance of non-formal adult education and literacy programmes and the need to integrate life skills and basic adult education with technical training is also echoed by NGOs involved in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in Africa. It must be recalled that the

definition of basic education adopted at Jomtien included a whole range of skills and potential delivery systems that are not restricted to primary schooling. Furthermore, it can be argued that education and employment, as basic rights, are Prerequisites for peace and democracy.

### **Need for accelerated creative initiatives**

Given the diversity and scale of educational and training needs, as well as financial and time constraints, it appears necessary to be design creative interventions for recovery and reconstruction. It was pointed out, however, that the "dependency syndrome" caused by (prolonged) emergency intervention leads to the disempowerment of communities thus making creative educational interventions very difficult in post-conflict phase. The creative use of local resources has also proven to be more cost effective than the traditional heavy investments of donor agencies in the reconstruction of training centres. Cambodia has adopted a policy whereby basic education is combined with vocational training based on local technologies.

Creative initiatives may also build upon community-based educational alternatives and grassroots experiences that develop during prolonged periods of crisis. Unfortunately, official recognition of non-formal educational structures that may have played a crucial role in maintaining the delivery of education during conflict is not always forthcoming. This has largely been the case relative to the non-recognition, by educational authorities in a number of African countries, of semi-qualified and non-qualified teachers that continued providing basic education during periods of conflict. It may also be extended to the non-incorporation by Palestinian authorities of underground off-campus education that developed in the West Bank and Gaza in response to Israeli-imposed school closures. Finally, the case of educational reconstruction in Bosnia raises important questions as to why and how externally designed, donor-driven strategies were imposed against the logic of effective local experiences. Indeed, Marshall Plan-type school construction programmes in post-conflict Bosnia were imposed in a context in which MoE supported co-operative war-school efforts blending formal and non-formal initiatives had proven successful.

## **PEACE EDUCATION**

Peace education is both a tool of prevention and of social reconciliation. It appears crucial from the outset to clearly define what is meant by peace and what model of social coexistence is being envisaged in each specific context. Given that peace education, be it for preventive or reconciliatory purposes, is a long-term process which aims to modify behavioural patterns through changes in values and perceptions, it is crucial to determine how the time factor intervenes in differing conflict situations.

### **Culture of peace**

Peace education must be conceived beyond the narrow confines of schooling. It may be argued that schooling cannot have a major impact in promoting peace if it is not supported through other agents of socialisation and communication such as the family and the media. Furthermore, in situations of insecurity and warfare, national schooling systems may be partly or completely dysfunctional. In light of this, it may be more

appropriate to refer to the more encompassing notion of "culture of peace" wherein a multiplicity of educational responses is to be employed. The media, and the radio in particular, are important channels of information dissemination and peace-building in post-conflict phases. Also, experiences in Burundi and Somalia offer concrete examples of recourse to local culture in promoting minimal norms of conduct in situations of violence through the innovative use of films, theatre and other art forms.

### **Conflict management and prevention**

Considering that conflict is inherent to social dynamics, peace is not the absence of conflict. Rather, it is an operating mode wherein conflict is managed through non-violent means. This, however, requires justice and a legal participative framework to ensure the equal rights and opportunities of all citizens. If there are thresholds of violence that may be considered acceptable in a given society at a given time in its history, levels of violence that exceed this threshold are clear indicators that something is wrong. Peace education must therefore seek to address the key issues that may be at the root of conflict.

### **Peace education as an instrument of political change**

Although at a collective level, protagonists need to have equal status, individuals from antagonistic groups may be able to work together to initiate political change in view of establishing justice for all despite political inequalities that may exist between communities. Dynamics of peace must therefore be brought about or encouraged by harnessing motivated forces to provoke change. Peace education, however, remains superficial when there is no practical support or evidence of change on the ground. There has to be a minimal level of hope in the future on the part of those involved.

Evidence of such peace education operating in conflict situations may be illustrated by Palestinian- Israeli Cooperation relative to the setting up of community-based educational alternatives during the period of school closures characteristic of the Intifada period. The lessons learnt from such experiences are that for peace education to be effective, it is essential that i) it is promoted by motivated individuals and groups, and ii) that protagonists be involved in the design and implementation of programmes. It has been shown that peace education does not require substantial financial resources. Beyond bold expressions of intent on the international level, however, the only meaningful experiences in this respect are small grassroots experiences.

### **Social Reconciliation**

Education (together with other systems) may help define the nature of the new society to be rebuilt. Education may also serve to depoliticise and "heal the wounds" of conflict. It is true that the qualitative impact of destruction on culture and mentalities or the extent of the "cultural fracture" in cases similar to that of Cambodia are difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the introduction of history of the war in primary school curricula in Cambodia is a good example of an attempt to confront the experience of war and heal emotional wounds. In a similar vein, there is a collaborative examination of the way in which the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is presented in the

school curricula of both nations. Redesigning curricula for such endeavour implies addressing emotional and non-cognitive components such as social representations of the other. Within the context of social reconciliation on which national reconstruction efforts depend, there is a need to constitute a mechanism of dialogue between different parties to seek the main partners for a community-based agreement on a national education plan.

### **"Window of Opportunity"**

Broad definitions of the content and organisation of education systems were largely imposed during the historical construction process of the nation-state. Post-crisis reconstruction may indeed be perceived as a "window of opportunity on condition that there is genuine negotiation and consultation between protagonists regarding education as a process of socialisation. At a more local level, peace education may be seen as having the potential to contribute to survival and sustainable participative development. Indeed, evidence from Sierra Leone suggests that many organisations working in the area of peace education do not define the outcome of their efforts as "peace", but rather, as "empowerment at the local and community level or as "awareness" of rights, opportunities and obligations.

### **Co-ordinating international aid**

Various initiatives on inter-agency collaboration in a number of educational sub-sectors point to the fact that the lack of co-ordination is being taken more seriously. Although it is agreed that aid co-ordination in general within the donor community has come a long way over the past ten to fifteen years, important gaps persist in the field of aid to education in emergencies and conflict situations. In the case of Sierra Leone, for example, although much is being done in the area of peace education, there is very little evidence of co-ordination and intervention strategies appear to be implemented in a chaotic fashion. It is to be recalled that peace is a political issue. Consequently, there may be tension between information acquisition and dissemination, as well as competition among NGOs for funding. Although there is some evidence elsewhere of effective strategic linkages being made among agencies and between certain agencies and NGOs, it is acknowledged that efforts to share experiences and information must be urgently and significantly developed.

As aid is usually dictated by donor countries based on specific political motivations, it is crucial that recipient countries be empowered to co-ordinate aid. Regular sectorial meetings that bring together national authorities and donors for the sharing and dissemination of information about on going programmes being implemented in Palestine, is an example of such an initiative from the part of the recipient country. Also, the attempt to initiate education sector studies conducted by national teams involving agencies, national researchers and government, as is currently the case in Zimbabwe, is an illustration of this process of empowerment.

## POTENTIAL ROLE OF RESEARCH

### Preliminary Comments

Researching issues relative to education and conflict situations requires a sound knowledge of the general context within which societal violence develops. Documenting the extent and causes of violence in society at large therefore constitute the necessary first steps in exploring the role of formal education in the development of conflicts.

#### **Documenting the magnitude of violence in society**

It is now generally assumed that violence and armed conflict are becoming more widespread. A necessary starting point would be to document the more visible manifestations of violence in a given region within a given time frame in order to trace the pattern of development of Violence in society so as to confirm the basic assumption.

#### **Analysing the root causes of violence**

If it is true that levels of violence are rising and that armed conflict is becoming more widespread, it would be urgent to seek a better understanding of the underlying causes, not only of the open manifestations of violence, but also of "hidden" or "silent" violence.

Moreover, a number of the factors which have been identified as catalysts, such as knowledge gaps and the absence of basic rights, exist in countries where wide scale violence has not developed. In attempting to identify the root causes of the outbreak of violence and conflict, it may then be appropriate to look into situations where violence has not erupted. In the same vein, rather than seek to understand why certain individuals or groups are violent, the more appropriate question may be to determine why others are not.

#### **Designing a conceptual framework**

The complexity of issues relative to education in disrupted societies reiterates the need for research. Such research, however, needs prioritising and should be of practical use for policy-makers and practitioners. An adequate conceptual framework is needed to establish a typology of situations and it may be useful to distinguish between the various issues in question at the macro, meso and micro levels. Identifying the relative weight of such issues at the different levels and during the various phases in the development of conflicts, may prove useful in informing intervention strategies on the choice of local partners and the appropriateness of delivery systems to be employed.

## **During Conflict**

### **Exploring psychological dimensions**

The psychological impact of exposure to and participation in violence during the formative years of childhood and adolescence need to be reconsidered and researched further. What effects do these changes have on the impact of normative authority that various educational processes are invested with?

### **Developing early warning systems**

It is important to monitor what is being conveyed by the school system and its potential implications. To what extent can measurable indicators be developed as early warning signals?

### **Education systems as arenas for conflict**

What lessons can be drawn from the extent and nature of educational destruction during periods of conflict? What does the intentional targeting of education systems (i.e. the adoption of strategies to disrupt educational processes and/or to destroy the state educational model and its products) by armed forces signify?

## **Emergencies and Reconstruction**

### **Documenting international commitment**

Since the importance of addressing "education in emergencies" figured in the Jomtien Declaration (1990) and was reiterated in the Amman Affirmation (1996), what evidence is available that there has indeed been a shift in budget allocations both for intervention and research? To what extent are international agencies taking the issue seriously?

### **Assessing the impact of intervention strategies**

There appears to be a need for impact analyses relative to emergency and post-conflict intervention. This would lead to a critical reassessment of the basic theoretical assumptions on which various intervention strategies are founded. Given the sensitivity of the topic, collaborative assessment between researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners from universities, international agencies and NGOs, was seen as the appropriate type of constituency to provide the necessary degree of detachment needed for such assessment.

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