

BOOK REVIEW

Education, conflict and development, edited by Julia Paulson, Symposium, 2011, 240pp., \$48 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-873927-46-5

The volume 'Education, Conflict and Development' has been published at the same time as the publication of the Global Monitoring Report 2011 – *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education*. The volume is divided into three parts. Part 1 deals with key concepts of education, conflict and development and establishes theoretical and conceptual frameworks to engage with a range of country case studies in the following section. The contributors in Part 2 analyze interactions between education, conflict and development in diverse cases including Southern Sudan, Sierra Leone and the joint history textbook initiative between China, Japan and South Korea. Finally, the Part C includes papers dealing with education, conflict and peacebuilding in Northern Uganda.

Brock's chapter in the volume goes beyond the usual debates around conflict and implications for the provision of education to analyse fundamental character of the interaction between education and conflict. He notes that 'education is culturally embedded' and the provision of formal and non-formal education generally exhibit political character of the state in which conflict is located within the process of unjust educational policy choice made by the state (p.19). In this process, education is often manipulated to implicitly inculcate particular types of cultural values that represent the interests of the social groups holding state power. Therefore, educational experience in a formal setting, which is often politically imposed, may not always be congenial to its beneficiaries. This is where education is involved in discrimination by default and the educational benefits are unfairly distributed even in the situation of universal access to education. Hence, education perpetuates and even 'exaggerates' social divisions by legitimizing economic disparity as a result of disproportionate educational achievement across diverse groups. This process becomes even worse in the situation of schooling which is divided along the religious lines (as in Northern Ireland where schooling remains massively divided across protestant and catholic communities) or public Vs state provision (as in the case of England where top university places and leadership

positions of most realms including politics, business and bureaucracy are monopolized by those with private schooling background). From a conflict perspective, this type of educational disparity plays a complicit role in nurturing social divisions thereby creating grounds for civil conflicts.

Literacy and education are two different things. Unfortunately the agenda of international educational development seems to focus more on the technical targets of education such as universal access, improving literacy rates, and retention rather than on the debates around social outcome of education and its role in improving the life conditions of the vast majority of downtrodden populations in the world. While it is often argued that the latter are the natural outcomes of the provision of quality education, it could only be true if the provision of education were apolitical. Educational initiatives led by international development agencies impose universal models of schooling and generalized forms of measurements of educational success. Without critically assessing the 'type' of education on offer (Smith and Vaux, 2003), access to schooling alone, does not necessarily contribute towards achieving social cohesion and harmony. This seems to be one of fundamental problems of international development agenda and the advocacy of programmes such as 'Education for All'.

It is not just pedagogies and curricular contents but the entire philosophical understanding of education may vary across different cultural settings. So, the imported models of education, irrespective of their efforts to incorporate local contents cannot appropriate the socioeconomic needs of the particular society. The Western education systems were developed over centuries as their society transformed and needs changed. Attempts to replicate these well-rehearsed systems, as panacea for development without appreciating the complexity of interaction between socioculturally distinctive societies and the Western model of education, will 'succeed in transforming neither education nor broader society and its development' (p.13).

Bengtsson's contribution deals with the 'fuzzy' concepts of 'fragility' and 'fragile states' that have recently become 'buzz-phrases' in the development sector including education in emergencies. These concepts bearing negative connotations such as 'poor governance as identified by a lack of political commitment and/or weak capacity to develop and implement pro-poor policies (Rose and Greeley, 2006, p.1) and those with

'persistently dysfunctional economic policies and institutions' (Chauvet and Collier, 2007, p.1), often stereotype these nation states in the long term. These labels are imposed on rather than negotiated with 'so-called' 'fragile' nation states based on the criteria developed by external agencies. In addition, the term 'fragility' is used inconsistently or ostensibly with prejudice to refer to 'underdeveloped' countries while developed countries also do exhibit 'uncontrollable' civil disorder. For example, violent riots erupted in major English cities in August 2011 can be argued as the indicator of 'fragility' in the seemingly peaceful English society. Even though the well-functioning state policing and legal system may have succeeded in bringing rioters into justice and preventing violence (by repressing the frustrated youth), the root causes of social injustice leading to conflict still remain unaddressed making England to an extent, a fragile state.

Bengtsson indicates that there is a lack of shared understanding of these phrases among individuals and agencies working in the international development sector that the term 'fragility' seems to be used to describe different problems by different agencies. The meaning of 'fragility' is generally subjectively determined which Bengtsson argues can be 'detrimental' in aid interventions to these countries. The inconsistent labeling of 'fragile states' followed by corresponding policy prescriptions often lead to development monopoly in the form of external patronage, which is likely to be resented by these nation states (whatever forms they might be functioning in) often putting the aid effectiveness in jeopardy.

Rappleye's chapter offers a useful theoretical and conceptual discussion laying out five different categories of 'conflict and development' theories, their presumptions about progress and relevant implications for education: Neo-classic development, moderated classic development, failed development, conflict as development success, and conflict as development success (p.88). He presents a case of international development in Nepal to problematise the generally indisputable image of development as a cure for poverty and armed conflict. Drawing on the case of USAID supported 'Rapti Development Project', Rappleye excavates the contentious face of 'development', the unintended outcome of which contributed to spark 'collective action by oppressed groups' in the form of 'People's War' (p.88). The imported form of development and market economy caused serious economic imbalances, increased dependency on foreign aid and destruction of local economies in the name of becoming 'developed' or

like the West. Educational goals and priorities are also influenced by the discourse of 'development', producing a 'so-called' educated workforce that is unemployable locally. In addition, development aid destroys confidence of its beneficiaries and gradually wipes out their ability to explore indigenous solutions to their local problems. As a result, detachment from foreign aid becomes almost unthinkable for the aid-dependent governments whose survival is largely dependent on foreign aid. This 'trap' of development which Shrestha (1997, p.50) calls a 'modern –day intoxicant' makes a violent rebellion inevitable through which the victims of this false 'development' rhetoric initiate a collective action against the structures nurtured by 'international development'.

The expansion of modern education may be seen as a 'development success' in Nepal that, by providing critical awareness of the unjust political and socioeconomic realities, formal education played a critical role in creating a mass of frustrated youths who joined the violent conflict with the hope of a better political system and socioeconomic structures (Pherali, 2011). Such a phenomenon can be understood as 'conflict as a development success' and 'development' as one of the major causes of violent conflict. These theoretical trends are not only useful in better conceptualizing the education-conflict-development nexus but also understanding assumptions and hypotheses about causality of modern-day conflicts globally. Developing an awareness of this process can help identify better-informed and realistic 'prescriptions' for the role of education in contributing to a sustainable peace. For example, Matsumoto's chapter in the volume indicates that education, as an independent institution, cannot be assigned with the responsibility of building peace while existing socioeconomic conditions dominate the task of peacebuilding in a post-conflict society. Matsumoto suggests that the educational reforms in Sierra Leone are yet to address the pre-conflict problematic role of education that contributed indirectly towards the war - by maintaining itself as an elitist system, fostering exclusion and failing to make it relevant to young people. These hidden problems of education are linked with broader sociopolitical structures of the country and therefore, the process of educational reconstruction becomes a part of political restructuring in a post-conflict society. However, the post-conflict educational reforms have a tendency to continue more of the same practice as that of pre-conflict, potentially undermining the role of education in correcting the historical antecedents of violent conflicts.

The teaching of history in the post-war period often becomes controversial. The nature of conflict and its resolution dictate the curricular choice and the core values of citizenship education in the post-war education systems. This may be consistent both in the case of inter-state as well as intra-state ethnic and sectarian conflicts. The post-war history textbooks are generally redesigned to promote particular version of history determined by the political leadership of the time, which may or may not incorporate true stories about the historical incidents. As discussed in the Otsuki's chapter in the volume, the joint history textbooks initiative between China, Japan and South Korea encountered powerful resistance of 'nationalism' in the trilateral debates around producing common history textbooks – *History that Opens to the Future*. However, revising national and regional history collaboratively to allow for a historical dialogue across generations is a 'democratic' and 'ethical' way of sharing responsibility of the traumatic past. Post-conflict educational projects such as this does play a significant role in building peace across the region.

Pagen's chapter identifies different learning sources from which Southern Sudanese gain their knowledge about 'democracy' and 'human rights'. Her conclusions indicate how these Western notions of 'democracy' and 'human rights' travel to conflict-affected countries and become dominant operational values of international agencies. Conflict-affected societies often have their social fabric damaged and political institutions become dysfunctional, which results in a dominant role of external agencies including development partners in restoring peace and rebuilding social and political institutions. The influence of international norms in the process of post-conflict state rebuilding means that the national governments and local communities turn to external agencies to learn and implement these ideas in their daily lives. As a consequence, the imported notions of democratic concepts can become unviable solutions to post-conflict scenarios and are therefore difficult to be institutionalized – a problem of international development indicated by a sheer numbers of post-conflict nations returning to violence.

In Part 3 of the volume, Murphy et al report on 'sexual violence' as a barrier to educational access of girls in Northern Uganda. The chapter presents dominant themes of social and cultural practices that undermine the value of education for girls and argue that the victims of sexual violence are 'doubly disadvantaged' from the educational opportunity. In the times of conflict, women are often victimized and their existing

barriers to social privileges become even wider. Young girls who become the victim of sexual violence experience social exclusion and are blamed for bringing defame to their own families. Clearly, the issue of gender disparity in education is deeply rooted in the cultural domination of women in these societies, which is a broader problem concerned with international development and requires sustained national level programmes aimed at social transformation.

There is an increasing amount of evidence that educational institutions including teachers and children come under attack during conflicts (UNESCO, 2010). School children and teachers are abducted and forcefully recruited in the armed groups. The involvement of youth in violence is likely to make a long-term impact on their lives making the post-war rehabilitation seriously challenging. Ezati et al report that learners displayed increased 'aggressiveness' and 'indiscipline' as the effects of war while their academic ambition was found to be low. The post-war professional motivation and self-esteem of teachers was also reported to have been depleted. The effects of violent conflict on teachers and learners are profound and protracted, which generally have serious implications for peacebuilding. The final chapter by Cunningham deals with the peacebuilding role of schools in Northern Uganda through teaching and learning of human rights, values of forgiveness and fairness and equal dignity. The chapter also proposes some recommendations for building peace in the region. However, the conflicts that emerge on the ground of unjust socioeconomic and cultural disparities are difficult to be transformed unless these broader structural problems are addressed. For example, socioeconomic and political inequalities such as cultural domination and discrimination against women, monopoly of state power by a privileged group, regional and ethnic exclusion and unequal distribution of land and resources, which are some of the major causes of violent conflicts, require revolutionary changes in order to achieve peace with social justice. Peacebuilding education while undermining these social injustices is likely to produce nothing but another development problem.

As a whole, the volume makes a significant contribution to the existing literature in education, conflict and development by drawing on a range of case studies globally. However, the volume falls short in debating the 'development' aspect of education and conflict (except Rappleye's chapter), which is increasingly becoming a major issue of global concern. There is a scope for further research and analysis to more critically

engage with the concerns and pitfalls of international development in the field of education and conflict.

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