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University of San Francisco

No one to save, and everything to learn: Decolonial possibilities for global NGOs facilitating education in emergencies

A Thesis Proposal Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Human Rights Education

By

Megan Patterson
May 2023

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ABSTRACT

The field of Education in Emergencies is an emerging field which aims to offer solutions for the continuation of learning in humanitarian settings, but also navigates dynamics of global development in the pursuit of delivering quality learning and universal learning access. In this study, qualitative content analysis is used to examine the beliefs, values, and motivations of three Education in Emergencies (EiE) programs implemented by NGOs. These were selected to offer insight into programming designed for global, regional, and local implementation, as well as nuanced dynamics of power, agency, and saviorism through seven criteria: (1) *Purpose of learning*, (2) *Instructional methods*, (3) *Literacy and numeracy standards*, (4) *Legitimacy*, (5) *Teaching staff agency*, (6) *Parent/community engagement*, and (7) *Risk mediation*. Findings indicated a dichotomy in the field between whole-student learning and learning towards workforce development, a strong value of student healing through play and creativity-based learning, and teacher agency as a key indicator of power between the NGO and the learning community. Further research investigating EiE programming in practice is recommended to explore the efficacy of student inquiry-based learning, and to identify nuances of power and community agency in EiE implementation.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I was raised with the sentiment of ‘take care of your corner,’ take care of the people closest to you at a small scale in your communities, and maybe we would all be cared for. I was born in the late 90s in a small coastal town near Los Angeles, playing make-believe with my sister all day and sipping Nesquik chocolate milk every night. Like many White, nuclear families in the US in the early 2000s, I grew up watching family TV shows like American Idol, Family Feud, Wheel of Fortune. In the early 2000s, each of these shows would have a ‘save the children’ week—a week where the show would be interrupted with videos of children in Africa and South America, the persistent narrative that they were starving and alone, and the call to action was for the people of the US to help them. This was my first introduction to the phrase “*children are starving in Africa*,” which I would hear again in many different iterations but the same sentiment. I am a feeler, and I wanted justice and equity in this world, so I followed what my school, what American Idol, what living and witnessing as a White person in middle-class America taught me was the ‘right path.’ I participated, and in many facets continue to participate, in the violence of saviorism¹ and the recreation of coloniality.

When I started this thesis, I thought I would approach my analysis of the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) humanitarian sector in an objective fashion, removing my lived experiences in order to take on a positivist persona of unbiased research. I realized as I took a few jabs at writing in this way that to remove myself from critique was a reassertion of the many privileges I have to be a whole person in the academy, with the simultaneous privilege to

¹ ‘Saviorism,’ also referred to as ‘White saviorism,’ is an emerging term referring to a social dynamic in which individuals from dominant identities or groups of society act with the intention of liberating, fixing, or ‘saving’ groups deemed marginalized or oppressed. This phenomenon is prevalent in international humanitarian work, and often recreates power dynamics which reinforce marginalization.

choose what to share of my journey and when. Over the course of my life, I have attempted to find a path to participate in a more just and equitable world which would position my work to be in the dismantling of oppression and centering of different ways of knowing. This pursuit has seen many iterations and has been largely misguided, including a few childhood service projects like sending a cow to a village in Uganda and thousands of mosquito nets I was told would be sent to ‘Africa’ as if it were a place rather than an entire continent. High school brought much needed critical perspective to these pursuits when my mom handed me Paulo Freire’s “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” with the firm statement, “*take care of your corner,*” but my ignorance masked my culpability and responsibility as a member of an oppressive body.

I entered my undergraduate program with the idea that I would study Psychology and Politics to bring mental health services to global emergencies, calling forward a need for psychological services in primary crisis support. Attending UC Santa Cruz, quite the liberal institution for the US, in many ways I thought my efforts would inherently be immune to saviorism and violence. To gain experience in the international sector to transition into international development after college, I joined a group on campus that organized trips abroad to participate in seasonal medical outreach. Flying to Viet Nam to learn about culturally relevant mental health support, I found myself sitting in an orphanage in Ho Chi Minh City completely ill-equipped, unable to communicate in Vietnamese, and the token image of White saviorism and voluntourism². I was participating in violence far beyond my culpability in voluntourism, though; sitting in an orphanage as an American in Viet Nam was also a participation in reinforced colonial dynamics that needed to be deeply considered before my participation.

Since this pivotal point of growth in college, I have focused on grassroots social impact

² An emerging term for ‘service’ trips conducted by organizations in the West to capitalize on saviorism at the perpetual cost of local and cultural exploitation.

and community building, honoring my upbringing with my commitment to taking care of my corner. With the knowledge, perspective, and critical reflection I have gained over the last two years of investigating Human Rights Education, it is time that I revisit my participation in the international non-governmental organization sector and propose critical dialogue with the systems which taught me that the only way to seek a just world was by ‘saving’ it. This thesis does not stand to say that I have learned my lessons by any means, but as a humble beginning of a lifetime commitment to the dismantling of exploitation masked as humanitarianism. This is a conversation with my younger self who felt wronged by the education I received, and a reminder that taking care of my corner is critically and practically humanitarian.

Statement of the Problem

Education is a largely underfunded and under-examined facet of emergency response in contexts of armed conflict and displacement. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) lists education as a fundamental right, global efforts towards this objective have been highly politicized and defined by states with global influence and power— who often possess such influence from their role as former colonial entities. Efforts towards illuminating the value of education within emergency contexts have been amplified by coalitions like the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), a network of international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO) focused on bringing quality education into sites of displacement from natural disasters and armed conflict. INEE aims to increase emphasis on learning as a first-response resource (INEE, 2020). Though standards outlined by INEE center community resources and knowledge as well as skills which could contribute to better life outcomes, such as language and comprehensive skills towards employment, programming often falls short on delivering education which is relevant to students in multicultural contexts (INEE,

2020), and can reassert dynamics and agendas of colonial power. While calls for increased funding and attention to education in emergencies have led to an increase in academic participation with the field of education in emergencies (Bromley & Andina, 2010; INEE, 2020), the sustainable and long-term implementation of these programs has been largely underproduced and understudied, leaving ambiguity as to the motivations of programming and efficacy in generating learning which promotes both growing and healing.

Background and Need

One of the most significant achievements of the United Nations upon their formation following the Second World War was the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a series of articles which legitimized to the Western world the existence of inherent rights that all people are born with. One of these rights was the Right to Education, sparking global initiatives to address disparities in education access across regions and within state contexts. One global initiative, called the ‘Education for All’ movement (EFA), was brought forward by the World Bank to illuminate a need for global access to education to focus on “quality” of education, rather than just learning in general (Bromley & Andina, 2010). In the global context, the World Bank advertises its role as a supportive loan provider to “developing” nations in order to promote economic and social developments. These loans are often motivated by efforts towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a list of objectives towards global social and economic development established by the UN to incentivize solutions for significant barriers to human rights and capital growth, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), updates to the SDGs which established clearer objectives and key indicators of advancement in development. Though the World Bank stands as a major funder of global economic development initiatives, the caveats of funding emphasize neoliberal systems

characterized by free-market labor that is unregulated and unprotected, and resource extraction which tends to emphasize exporting to more developed countries which dominate industrial production (Cardozo & Novelli, 2018). Within the realm of education development, neoliberal policy manifests through the privatization of learning, meaning businesses and partnerships generate profit from students meeting certain achievements and growth quotas, and a hyper-emphasis on learning standards which generate a skilled labor market, motivating literacy, numeracy, and language standards which prepare students to become laborers at the expense of meaningful community knowledge and holistic growth (Bromley & Andina, 2010). The influence through funding and agenda-setting within institutions like the UN have shifted a field that once was facilitated through grassroots, community-level education strategy to a highly politicized and internationally-organized field we see today (Cardozo & Novelli, 2018).

Education is one of the most underfunded resources in emergency responses (INEE, 2020), making sites of emergency a major inhibiting factor to actualizing human rights. The field of Education in Emergencies (EiE), a field of study and practice which examines effective means of delivering learning in emergency settings-- contexts that may be absent of a state school system to draw curriculum and programming from. In efforts to highlight the importance of learning for the healing and life advancement of students experiencing conflict and displacement, the INEE created a series of Minimum Standards for education initiated in emergency situations (Bromley & Andina, 2010). Incorporating objectives for global development asserted by the EFA movement in conjunction with a need to uniquely address healing and a sense of identity for students in emergencies, these standards aimed to find a meeting ground between education for labor and education for community identity. Ideal in theory, these standards have been challenged in practice.

In the delivery of education and learning accessibility globally, the INGO sector has been a longstanding partner in the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals and EFA movement. These partnerships have been flexed through international contracts as well as in-state coalition-building between government schools and local organizations. Because of the ambitious and costly nature of achieving true universal education access as proposed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these partnerships are vital in the extension of educational infrastructure, like schools, qualified teaching staff, and learning materials, as well as access to community-relevant learning which bridges the gap between standing knowledge systems and global objectives for learning. While NGOs provide vital resources towards learning, community buy-in and long-term sustainability of programming are barriers to success in delivering education which promotes growth in students while also providing a space for healing and relationship building, which advocates in the field call for in the advancement of EiE (Devonald et al., 2021; Seeberg et al., 2017; Bromley & Andina, 2010). Cardozo and Novelli (2018) also note how the field of education in emergencies shifted significantly with the influences of international development ushered in during the Cold War era, using humanitarianism as a tactic of acquiring global influence and perpetuating western agendas. Gaps in delivery of effective and sustainable education in emergencies, complex global agendas and funding within the field, alongside challenges of community involvement in education programming facilitated by NGOs call for an evaluation of the field in current contexts, examining how standards established by entities like the INEE are promoting the integration of community knowledge and in what capacities programming anticipates and accommodates protracted emergency education needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the current efforts and models in international emergency education, analyzing how INGOs navigate historic dynamics of power and provide humanizing learning in temporary contexts. Through a content analysis of curriculum from three NGOs implementing diverse practices of educational programming in emergency contexts, I aim to examine EiE current practices with an eye towards how EiE programs can formulate sustainable and long-term learning pathways for the holistic development of students. In this thesis, I analyze curricular materials considering the stated and unstated motivations of the NGO sector in providing meaningful community-driven learning in emergency settings. This study aims to provide a clear snapshot of current EiE curriculum globally, as curricular transparency has been lacking in the already minimal empirical works focusing on the motivations and implementation of EiE. Through a qualitative content analysis of curricular materials, I aim to call forward a decolonial approach to the expanding empirical research on the impact and motivation of learning in emergency contexts, and to support the NGO field in honoring community learning in a time dominated by neoliberal market objectives.

Research Questions

This thesis is an exploration of the Education in Emergencies NGO sector— one which is relatively new and increasingly influenced by both funding allocation and development in the global education system. To gather a deeper understanding of the current state of emergency education within the dynamics of the INGO and NGO sector in addressing learning in contexts of conflict and displacement, I aim to investigate the following questions:

1. *What values are explicit and implicit in the standards and learning objectives of EiE curriculum?*
2. *What values are explicit and implicit in activities and materials of EiE curriculum?*

3. *What dynamics of power emerge between the NGO and the learning community through teacher and administrative responsibilities?*
4. *How does EiE curriculum connect to community beliefs, values, and knowledge?*

Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, I use decolonial theory to explore the content of Education in Emergencies when delivered by one INGO from the US in regions of the world with historic colonial relations, meaning the US once colonized or oversaw colonial efforts in the region through resource extraction and/or labor exploitation, one region-specific INGO supporting a population actively displaced by coloniality, and a localized education initiative in a context affected by conflict and the impact of displacement, as well as the legacy of colonialism which persists in the education system.

Decolonial theory looks to the residual dynamics of power within institutional, physical, and societal structures which generate and recreate colonialism—exploring factors like racialization, economic exploitation, and societal globalization on the fortification of western dominance (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a theoretical framework, decolonial theory extends beyond anti-colonialism, the direct opposition to institutions which reinforce colonial powers of domination, extraction, and dehumanization, and the notions of social theories, which center the impact of social systems on recreating dynamics of power (De Lissovoy, 2010). Decoloniality is an active practice—one which Tuck and Yang (2012) characterize as an internal and external process of dismantling colonial influences, and the permeation of colonial ideologies into institutional, societal, and physical structures.

Decoloniality within educational contexts is in direct conversation with the reproduction of

colonial power structures reinforced through learning, in current contexts driven by neoliberalism and the globalization of education standards.

Apple (1990) observes how neoliberal policies and structures of power have made the conditions through which education has contracted to prescriptive methods, where private industries have fortified their influence over learning by controlling the curriculum. He argues that this has generated a broadscale deskilling of teachers and has perpetuated a distrust in education which extends beyond standardized testing and content which favors private agendas. Neoliberal influences on education contract learning and the agency of teachers by scripting education and establishing the expectation and enforcement of conformity over context-relevant learning (Apple, 1990). Neoliberal global education standards have culminated from the dominance of economic industry leaders in international organizations like the United Nations, who have proposed global standards for development. While education is brought into the visions for large-scale industrialization and global economic growth, the style of education which is promoted centers skills for labor— framing the purpose of learning to supply the labor market with good workers rather than to enrich the holistic growth of students in relationship with community. The indigenization of learning that decoloniality proposes, instead, frames the purpose of education as the development of whole students, and the fortification of diverse ways of knowing (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

As observed by Fanon (1967), the process of colonial liberation across the globe after the second World War led to a belief within dominant discourse that the age of colonization was over, and the project would now be for the West to take on the role of “developing” the former colonies. In unraveling the lasting effects of coloniality, Fanon calls forward dynamics of power which can be observed throughout the globalization era—dynamics of paternalism, where

Western powers adopt narratives of caring for countries formerly colonized in the name of ‘aid, charity, and development.’ Fanon also illuminates the core dimension of the colonial project which enables its continuation by other names: *the colonization of the mind*. Neoliberal market structures which accommodate modern western liberalism emphasized a capital-centered framework for individual contributions to society and relevant skill sets. This framework established by western powers facilitated a belief in this order as economically and socially “correct” – thus, colonizing the mind (Fanon, 1967; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Anti-colonial theory was formulated to combat colonization by calling for the end of colonization in the form of one state or imperial power extracting resources and labor from the land and people of another state or region (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). While this framework has served to generate collectives of resistance to colonial imperialism and played a key role in the dismantling of colonies in Africa and South America, it functions to critique explicit structures of colonialism, but falls short on addressing institutionalized means through which extraction primarily by the West continues in covert ways. Critiqued by Tuhiwai Smith (1999), anti-colonial theorists cease to meaningfully combat the institutionalization of the colonial project within learning by simply disdaining its existence without using a framework of active resistance. In an active practice of decoloniality, Tuhiwai Smith proposes restorying– telling a holistic narrative of truth and right learning– as rooted in indigenous knowledge production. Through this critique, Tuhiwai Smith and the later works of Tuck and Yang (2012) articulate the direct dialogue between colonial knowledge production and indigenous learning through the act and theory of decoloniality. Thus, combatting neoliberalism within global education must be in direct conversation with indigenizing learning systems. When looking at contexts through which neoliberal learning perpetuates dominance– rural education settings, the global education development project, and education in emergencies

as arenas— decoloniality proposes that restorying for the dismantling of colonialism must center indigeneity and indigenous knowledge. In this reframing and restructuring of praxis, the notion of whole-student learning emerges.

Whole-student learning depends on critical reflection of the dynamics of power within the classroom, from students' relationship with curriculum, students' relationship with teachers, and students' relationships with one another. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) proposes the significance of community agency within school dynamics in the dismantling of oppressive power systems, and extension beyond the works of Freire (1970) which offer a problem-posing, critical inquiry approach to learning as an alternative to what he refers to as 'banking' models, where students are devoid of agency and rather receivers of knowledge. The entanglement of student agency and critical inquiry expose the dynamics of power which recreate coloniality in learning spaces as multi-tiered and offer for analysis to examine nuanced power dynamics within the stated motivations of learning. Apple (1990) offers that an examination of teacher agency is vital in understanding the power dynamics and motivations within curriculum, offering for decolonial theory that a multi-tiered analysis which examines student, teacher, and community agency could expose colonial dynamics, and a re-centering of teachers as skilled and equipped to educate students would call forward a return to a valuing of localized learning.

In the analysis and evaluation of global emergency education programs facilitated by the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) sector, decolonial theory gives a framework for the theoretical dismantling of neoliberal power structures and the continuation of the colonial project through learning. In facilitating western domination, neoliberal education standardization globally discredits and delegitimizes indigenous knowledge systems by defining them as threatening or lacking in rigor (Abiew, 2012), reinforcing colonial power systems. The

neglect of whole-student approaches in favor of global education standards which contribute to the generation of a labor force (Bromley & Andina, 2010) exposes the hidden agendas of global learning initiatives to center capitalist contributions over holistic development. Throughout this thesis, decoloniality will guide critical analysis and counter-hegemonic narratives to global education, combatting neoliberal structures which define learning. In evaluating the degree to which the NGO sector can combat neoliberal standardization in vulnerable contexts like education in emergencies, decolonial theory invites an indigenous restorying and holistic educational philosophy to assert decoloniality as a theoretical praxis and an act of structural reimagining.

Methodology

In this qualitative content analysis of EiE curricular materials, three EiE programs created and implemented by NGOs were selected to serve as examples of materials created for global implementation, region-specific implementation, and local/state-level implementation. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) *Safe Healing and Learning Spaces* was selected as a sample of a global implementation EiE program and was chosen for analysis as a program created in the United States intended for global implementation outside of the US with a particular emphasis on social-emotional learning and psychological intervention. UNRWA's UNRWA's *Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance* (HRCRT) Toolkit and *Self-Learning Programme* were selected in conjunction with one another as representative of a region-specific EiE program largely developed within UN field offices to support Palestinian students in the diaspora. The EducQuest *Journey of a Question* Initiative was selected as representative of a local-level EiE program for its implementation in Egypt to support students amidst educational crisis and COVID-19. Materials for each of these programs were collected

through open-source websites, program-specific websites, and personal contacts, and included foundational handbooks, teacher training materials, lesson banks, curriculum frameworks, and subject-specific teaching guides. All materials were then analyzed through a content analysis matrix using decolonial theory on the basis of seven criteria: (1) *Purpose of learning*, (2) *Instructional methods*, (3) *Literacy and numeracy standards*, (4) *Legitimacy*, (5) *Teaching staff agency*, (6) *Parent/community engagement*, and (7) *Risk mediation*. These programs offer a snapshot into the motivations of EiE curricula, and an opportunity to observe comparative nuances to programming at the global, regional, and local levels.

Significance of the study

Given the lack of curricular transparency of previous literature on EiE initiatives of INGOs conducting work abroad, this study aims to inspire greater research on the growth and evolution of the EiE field as primarily facilitated by the NGO sector. As the global education sector urges for greater investment in learning in emergency contexts, it is vital that dynamics of power, community relevance, and holistic learning are modeled and exemplified. This research is intended to illuminate the implicit and explicit motivations of learning in emergencies and provide a tool through which emerging research can use decolonial approaches to global learning.

Limitations of the study

Time posed a great limitation to this study, but opportunities for great expansion in further investigation by the field. With offering analysis of three programs, this thesis offers a preliminary lens into the motivations of the field as stated in the ideal sense of implementation using the curricular materials, but should be considered in future research in relation to these tools in actual practice and implementation.

This study was also limited by my limited language comprehension of Arabic, in which many materials for both the UNRWA and EducQuest programs were implemented. This limitation was navigated using document translation software as well as assistance from personal contacts to cross-check the accuracy of translations. However, nuance is often lost in translation. I considered on multiple occasions the legitimacy and justification of continuing a content analysis of materials that I would need to translate due to my personal limitations. Returning to decolonial theory, found that the omission of such insights and learnings for the field of EiE in this analysis would perpetuate dynamics of academia which reinforce English and Latin languages as dominant and favored, an extension of which can be observed within the colonial dynamics of the contexts both programs are implemented within. This limitation stands as a persistent reminder of the unlearning and relearning I must commit to and reinforces this thesis as a starting point for a lifetime commitment to decolonization. As a result of these limitations, it is my intention for the content analysis tools utilized within this study to enable further decolonial research on the EiE sector, and greater transparency surrounding motivations and growth.

Definition of Terms

International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs): An organizational classification that differentiates the efforts of the organization from a state or state-funded organization, meaning they operate as a separate entity from the country they may be based within. However, INGOs often receive funding from state entities and, while they are not obligated to state agendas, the conditions of such funding may influence the actions and objectives of the organization. NGOs are often associated with non-profit entities, meaning they do not seek capital gain from their efforts, though NGOs can be either non-profit or for-profit depending on their organizational model.

Education in Emergencies (EiE): An emerging field which prioritizes the implementation of learning and education programming in settings of crisis and/or displacement sparked by natural disasters or armed conflict.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): An extension of the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] asserted by the UN as a global action plan towards the actualization of Universal Human Rights, the Millennium Development Goals were created in the 1990s to re-energize global coalitions towards global economic growth and improvements in human conditions of poverty and resource scarcity. Education was expanded upon in these goals to center ‘quality’ learning, sparking the creation of field-specific global learning standards, which inherently increased the influence of powerful states in ‘developing’ regions of the world.

Education for All (EFA): Sparked by the 1990 Education for All Conference, the EFA movement centers the right to education outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and emphasizes efforts for quality education in diverse global contexts (Bromley & Andina, 2010).

INEE: The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies is an international coalition of actors including states, international organizations, and NGOs formulated in 2004 to address education access as a Human Right in emergency situations (Bromley & Andina, 2010).

Functioning as a partner to international relief efforts, the INEE created the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies to emphasize community needs and standards for quality learning.

Humanitarian and Emergency Contexts: Defined as settings in which natural disasters or armed conflict have led to displacement, migration, and/or the destruction of necessary infrastructure for quality life. These can be refugee camps, resettlement centers, or temporary shelters, and can exist within state jurisdictions or be considered spaces of statelessness.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Non-governmental organizations have a longstanding relationship with humanitarian efforts within emergency contexts and have played a vital role in advancing education in emergencies. However, direct analysis of the motivations and efficacy of the NGO sector in providing education in these contexts has been largely under-investigated and calls for heightened attention to learning as a basic necessity in emergencies have been made from the global educators, researchers, and international organizations (Bromley & Andina, 2010). A detailed analysis of the relationship between the NGO sector and primary learning, as well as the role of NGOs in emergency learning is vital.

This review examines the literature pertaining to the role of NGOs in providing continued education for primary school learners in emergency settings, the long-standing relationship between international and local organizations, and the delivery of learning to marginalized students. It also examines how that role is complicated by dynamics of global education initiatives and the common barriers posed by learning in emergency contexts. First, I will identify key relationships between local and international NGOs and the delivery of primary school learning, examining in-state partnerships as well as international coalitions for the promotion of Education for All (EFA). Second, I will explore the legacy of education discrimination in humanitarian settings, examining how the flexibility and adaptability of the NGO sector permits creative educational strategies for the inclusion of marginalized students and knowledge, but may also justify the hyper-presence of western knowledge and values in vulnerable contexts. Finally, I will examine the complex relationship between the NGO sector and the delivery of Education in Emergencies (EiE), and the capabilities of the sector to activate

diverse learning strategies to meet students where they are. The relationship which stands between the NGO sector and learning accessibility is one that has long been observed through the single dimension of benevolent humanitarianism, which must be challenged in order to decenter western learning in EiE settings, and to elevate community-centered, culturally relevant knowledge in inherently multicultural learning environments.

NGOs and the Delivery of Primary Education for All

As with most Human Rights as defined by the UDHR, the right to education at a global scale is limited by factors of funding, accessibility, and meaningful delivery. Contexts in which students face increasing barriers to educational access often pose the greatest challenges to states and international organizations in the pursuit of increasing schooling enrollment towards global Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals. In recognition of these barriers, the NGO sector is often a primary partner in bridging learning gaps, and streamlining approaches to curriculum development, standards, and expectations (Tota, 2014). To meet global standards, many states forge collaborative partnerships with NGOs to establish necessary components of effective learning environments, such as physical school buildings, teaching staff, and school materials (DeStefano & Schuh Moore, 2010; Tota, 2014; Gali & Schechter, 2020; Saud & Ashfaq, 2021). In practice, the flexing of these strategic relationships has cultivated a significant change in the global function of education, introducing dynamics of business into school systems and an assertion of educational values that conflict with community knowledge in many contexts where educational access initiatives are being emphasized (Seeberg et al., 2017; Gali & Schechter, 2020).

Global education standardization has expanded the primary actors of learning beyond government education ministries to influence expectations of what meaningful learning

objectively should produce. Championed in large part by the participation of INGOs like Oxfam, ActionAid International, and Education International, global Education for All (EFA) movement of the early 2000s refocused learning access and developed a series of standards of learning for literacy and numeracy to center skills which would prepare students for success in the labor market, drawing a connection between learning and economic mobility (Tota, 2014). As initiatives to enforce education standards globally permeate into state governments deemed “developing” through funding by the World Bank and USAID, the influence of western economic institutions on learning through the NGO sector leans a heavy hand on what student learning outcomes constitute valuable knowledge (Tota, 2014). Gali and Schechter (2020) explore this phenomenon in Israel where many state schools in low-funding urban environments have leaned into private partnerships and the integration of NGOs into school infrastructure to meet global learning standards (Gali & Schechter, 2020). In interviews with principals from ten primary schools, Gali and Schechter (2020) found that principals’ responsibilities shifted significantly in this new dynamic to focus on the pleasing of funders in order to maintain a certain level of sustainability for programming, and simultaneously found that this shift towards an increasingly privatized schooling process did enrich student experience. However, the variability of funding and bureaucratic reporting processes did lead to courses and programs offered within schools that were exclusively funded by outside interest and susceptible to discontinuation of funding, making the quality of student learning experience highly dependent on the maintenance of private funding interests. These efforts did increase educational access to some degree, but also created convoluted reporting systems which distracted principals from their responsibilities to students, demonstrating how education standards can both facilitate

educational access and neglect the necessary infrastructure and sustainability aspects of meaningful learning.

In rural settings where educational access is a main focus as states aim to meet global learning standards, tensions arise between community beliefs surrounding quality education and the capacity for programing to contradict community knowledge. In a case study of rural schools in Pakistan, Saud and Ashfaq (2021) interviewed 398 parents of students attending schools facilitated through strategic partnerships between NGOs and Pakistan's Ministry of Education to provide learning through NGO-operated primary schools. As a complementary learning environment to government schools, these rural NGO schools were viewed positively by the Ministry of Education as a necessary partnership to meet learning standards and increases in literacy and numeracy nationally. Interviews with parents were conducted to evaluate family buy-in to learning provided by NGOs, and found that the increase in learning infrastructure, such as school buildings, computers, textbooks and teaching staff were major contributing factors to family investment. This parental buy-in, motivated by increases in infrastructure and clear access to coursework in mathematics and language skills, led to an increased direct involvement of parents in the learning through means like parent-teacher associations. However, parents also vocalized a belief that NGO schools could not provide the same quality of learning as government schools, calling forward a community belief that NGOs were addressing needs of educational infrastructure, but were overall providing inferior quality education.

While some educational partnerships between NGOs and government schools have produced positive outcomes and community buy-in, others have fallen under criticism as an avenue for outside influences to change cultural practices and norms. In a study conducted on NGO educational initiatives in China, India, and Pakistan focused on the enfranchisement of

girls historically marginalized from learning, Seeberg and colleagues (2017) expose cultural tensions around learning standards and community distrust in learning facilitated by NGO actors. Through community interviews and observations of five educational access initiatives conducted by one INGO, one government organization, and three domestic NGOs, researchers found tensions between community norms, which tended to exclude women and girls from education and emphasized skills in agriculture for rural life, and curricular offerings of the outside organizations which asserted education equity and mobility, or increased employment possibilities, through literacy and numeracy courses. Seeberg and colleagues (2017) found four core strengths of NGO-education partnerships in delivering on quality education: securing resources necessary for learning, including infrastructure and instructional staff, gaining legitimacy by providing outlets for certification and skill development in contexts historically marginalized from learning initiatives, sparking social progress and change in approaching learning inequities and discrimination, and achieving educational enfranchisement and learning standards at scale (p. 238). To deliver on these strengths, organizations generated what Seeberg and colleagues referred to as “positive friction,” tensions between the directives of global quality education and community-held beliefs and learning systems. These educational initiatives did increase educational access and mobility for women and girls, but also created tension between global education standards and community beliefs and norms, and raised the question of the boundaries between positive friction towards global education access and potential educational oppression of marginalized communities.

Similar community skepticism arose within a study of ten complementary educational programs facilitated by NGOs as investigated by DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mali, and Zambia. They

sought to analyze a former international education initiative promoting education standards called Education Quality Improvement Standards 2, or EQUIP2, based on education SDGs and the growing emphasis on education standards by international actors and organizations. Specifically, DeStefano and Schuh Moore (2010) analyzed the implementation of complementary education programs, or programs which operate alongside government schools in the form of enrichment courses or out-of-school learning, including subsidized schools and NGO-facilitated educational programs for accessibility in rural and remote contexts. Each NGO had a unique partnership with the state government in the implementation of quality improvement standards, some funded in part by the government, some included in the government education system, and some operating entirely parallel to the government schools. These programs were implemented where primary education was not accessible or did not meet the quality standards of basic education. Through infrastructural analysis, the authors revealed that NGOs had greater flexibility and innovation in educational design and implementation than government schools as they faced fewer regulations and standards, though many complementary education programs were culturally viewed as subpar to government schools by parents and community members in the deliverance of quality education. Researchers also noted the financial frugality of the programs implemented by NGOs, where many cut corners by making teaching roles voluntary or minimally paid while simultaneously increasing instructional time, in comparison to the budgets of government schools (DeStefano & Schuh Moore, 2010). In delivering education to rural and remote regions, it is evident that NGOs play a vital role in increased educational access, but struggle to deliver educational programming which is viewed as comparable in quality to government schools by the communities, and through implementation which does not exploit instructors.

While the relationship between NGOs and government schools is largely influenced and structured by global development standards, NGOs are often mediating bodies between community knowledge and global standards of quality education in content and in implementation. In recognition of the need for economic growth in rural contexts, as well as rich histories of community learning, Levitan and Johnson (2020) conducted a study through an educational NGO they were both a part of in providing meaningful learning and infrastructure for a Quechua, or indigenous, town of 5,000 people with centuries-old practices of agriculture, in a rural community in the Andes of Peru. Levitan and Johnson were tasked by their NGO with creating an educational program which would enfranchise girls with meaningful learning that could bridge global education standards with community knowledge. To craft a new curriculum, researchers conducted youth participatory action research (YPAR) and community ethnography through student-parent interviews to highlight key values within the community, goals and wishes for improvement through education, and a vision for community-informed education outcomes (Levitan & Johnson, 2020). Interviews revealed core values of respect, diligence, and punctuality as skills parents wished to see in students, as well as pathways for students to become “professionals,” which the community perceived as higher-paying urban jobs. Researchers found that students and parents both did not view agriculture as a profession, which the researchers argued revealed the influence of neoliberalism on perceptions of success and employment which inherently decentered cultural expertise in the community. To bridge expectations of student outcomes from within the community which followed a vision aligned with the neoliberal definition of professional success and a wealth of community knowledge, Levitan and Johnson crafted a curriculum which would highlight community history and cultural practices while simultaneously developing language skills in Spanish and English and numeracy.

In using community-driven methodologies to conduct research on community beliefs and educational desires while simultaneously developing a curriculum which bridged community knowledge with global standards for learning, researchers noted how the flexibility of the NGO sector gave the necessary conditions for a collaborative curriculum development. They noted that this type of curriculum development may not be accessible to government schools which face higher standards and regulations. This demonstrates the vital role of the NGO sector in bridging expectations of learning, and calls into question if global education standards are designed in a way which can support the maintenance of community knowledge systems if the regulations upon government schools are preventing this collaborative education model.

Levitan and Johnson's community education research follows what Bajaj (2011) calls "transformative education" which centers community knowledge and norms to bridge the gap between what is and what is envisioned. In her study of a Human Rights Education program conducted in India through an NGO-government school partnership, Bajaj (2011) examines how the learning of Human Rights Education not only influenced development in students, but instigated change and learning within teachers, inspiring them to become critical actors in community growth. Through interviews with teachers and students, as well as observations at a teacher training retreat and within a Human Rights Education classroom, Bajaj (2011) found that teachers had changed their behaviors in the classroom to reflect the agency of students, discontinuing corporal punishment and inviting students to lead conversations on injustices they experience in their daily lives. This inspired some students to enlist the help of their teachers in confronting parents and community members who violated human rights, simultaneously enabling agency in students while increasing their presence and influence over the community to inspire change from within (Bajaj, 2011). The key to the success of both efforts was the bridging

of knowledge from within the community and drawing from community events and histories to make growth possible. The ability of both of these efforts to craft unique curricula and expand learning beyond a top-down process was in part facilitated by the agility and flexibility of the NGO sector. For example, Levitan and Johnson (2020) noted that they were able to curate a community-rooted curriculum largely because their efforts were unregulated and not monitored by government ministries. While this flexibility can enable bottom-up education development, the lack of distinctive regulations and standards of implementation in the NGO sector inspires understandable skepticism regarding quality, consistency, and accountability.

NGOs have been engaged globally by government schooling in order to meet global standards of education. Gali and Schechter (2020) found in their investigation of NGO programming within government schools in urban Israel that, while NGOs were able to enrich educational quality for students, they also created bureaucratic structures of reporting which distracted principals from student needs, and programming was heavily dependent on funding, creating educational variability and inconsistency. Saud and Ashfaq (2021) found in their interviews of parents in a rural NGO-operated school in Pakistan that NGO contributions to infrastructure in the form of supplies and teaching staff increased parent buy-in to learning and educational access, but the community still viewed the offerings of the school to be of lesser quality to government schools. Seeberg and colleagues (2017) emphasized that community buy-in to learning is not limited to a belief in the quality of education delivered by the NGO, but in a community's acceptance of education which may challenge community beliefs. In Seeberg and colleagues' study, the curriculum challenged beliefs about educational access for women and girls and educational emphasis on skills of economic mobility. Rather than adopting the "positive friction" model proposed by Seeberg and colleagues, Levitan and Johnson (2020) modeled how

YPAR and community ethnography could be used to bridge the space between community knowledge and global education standards. Bajaj (2011) referred to as “transformative education,” both demonstrating how community buy-in can be generated at the level of community co-creation in educational programming. NGOs have flexibility and tendencies towards frugality which position them to provide educational access which might otherwise be neglected or overlooked by government schooling. NGOs also face challenges, however, in community buy-in and beliefs from communities that NGO schooling is inferior in quality to government education.

The Politics of Education in Emergency Settings

Humanitarian contexts tend to be characterized with impermanence, sparked by environmental disasters, war and conflict, and displacement. In temporary settings, basic necessities like food, water, shelter, and medical attention tend to be prioritized, and funding for emergency efforts is granted in urgent but short bursts (INEE, 2020). As many scholars, activists, and humanitarian workers have noted, education has yet to be included on the list of basic necessities in emergency settings (Bromley & Andina, 2010). In the global pursuit of universal access to quality education, learning in emergency contexts is often overlooked as settings of displacement are viewed as temporary, and it is often unclear if states or humanitarian relief organizations are responsible for education. These sites can also be points of tension between states or actors amidst conflict, recreating dynamics of oppression and discrimination present within the emergency itself. In this section, I will explore the political tensions which EiE must navigate, and explore the challenges which pose barriers that impair sustainable education programming for students in emergencies.

Education in emergencies is highly politicized as it is interlaced with conditions of conflict and often displacement, challenging the traditional notion of state governments being responsible for learning in contexts that may be deemed stateless, with no singular governing body responsible for basic needs and human rights. The case of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh reveals the politicization of learning in humanitarian contexts. In research conducted by Rahman, Mustafa Shindaini, and Husain (2022) in the Nayapara and Kutupalong refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, individual interviews and focus group discussions with students, parents, and NGO staff of Learning Centers were conducted to examine the structures of educational discrimination experienced by Rohingya youth. Rohingya families have been violently persecuted in Myanmar as a religious and ethnic minority group, migrating to Bangladesh as refugees, but subject to similar discrimination within the host country (Rahman et al., 2022). The Bangladesh government banned the teaching of their national curriculum in refugee camps as they feared this would inspire a desire in displaced communities to stay and integrate into Bangladesh society. They also banned the teaching of Bangla, the national language, that was vital for students to find success in relocation (Rahman et al., 2022). Because of ethnic persecution, the Rohingya refugees were simultaneously banned from the Myanmar curriculum and educational certification process, leaving them both stateless and devoid of education access. UNICEF created a curriculum to be implemented through Learning Centers for Rohingya students, but educational staff had limited education of their own, and camp curfews made it difficult for outside staff to support learning (Rahman et al., 2022). The case of Rohingya refugee education in Bangladesh demonstrates how political tensions in conjunction with ethnic discrimination created conditions in which Rohingya students were barred from relevant learning towards their transition into Bangladesh and from continuing education through

the curriculum of Myanmar. Without a clear path towards integration into the host country, the politicization of education in the Cox Bazar camp calls into question the motivations of providing education in emergency settings.

Devonald and colleagues (2021) compared the case of the Cox Bazar Learning Centers to an integrated learning program for Syrian refugees implemented in partnership with government schools in Jordan, demonstrating how the motivation of states to support student integration is vital in educational success within temporary contexts. The approach of Jordan schools was to give a clear pathway for Syrian students to develop relevant skills for the labor market, particularly computer skills and Human Rights Education. The intention was to cultivate active citizenship, and a sense of inclusion, meaning, and belonging. Syrian students in the integrated learning program found more success towards standard learning objectives and their cultivation of Human Rights knowledge and civic participation (Devonald et al., 2021). This sense of inclusion may have been rooted in shared beliefs, as many Syrian students were Muslim and shared similar cultural practices to Jordan, a cultural similarity Rohingya students did not share in the context of Bangladesh. In the politics of emergency settings, education access can be easily denied through the neglect of host countries, forcing responsibility onto outside actors who may lack culturally-rooted knowledge to meet student needs and growth.

As humanitarian contexts are also often interwoven with armed conflict and violence, education can be susceptible to malicious agendas and the politics of warfare. In the case of the US military occupation of Afghanistan, education became a tool through which the US could continue its attack on what they called “Islamic extremism” by implementing a US-favoring curriculum, promoting a western image of progress, liberation, and economic growth (Abiew, 2012). As Abiew (2012) illuminates, western NGOs and humanitarian groups who were brought

in amidst the war between the US and the Mujahideen in Afghanistan to provide emergency services like food, shelter, and medical attention also facilitated the overhaul of the educational system, politicizing and militarizing humanitarian action under the guise of benevolence.

Because of widespread instability and the increasing power of US interests in the region, the US-implemented curriculum faced minimal critique by the international community as it was posed as a means of further destabilizing “extremism,” though similar efforts by the US in the region collectively led to the rise of groups like Al Qaeda (Abiew, 2012).

The militarization of education, particularly in humanitarian contexts characterized by instability and vulnerability, can also facilitate colonial dynamics. Abu Moghli (2020) observed the educational motivations towards Human Rights Education implemented within Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the West Bank, a Palestinian territory which has experienced decades of occupation by the Israeli military. The PA was established as the acting governmental body of Palestine, but is critiqued internationally for operating in the interests of Israel, which Abu Moghli illuminates in the PA’s education motivations towards human rights. In schools operated by the PA, Abu Moghli found through informal interviews and classroom observations that students were taught Human Rights Education as a means of informational learning, meaning students were educated on what human rights are, but not as an active practice. Students were still held to expectations of obedience and subservience in a way which Abu Moghli describes as a recreation of the conditions Palestine has been held to through during the military occupation by Israel. In student reflections and observations of classroom practices, Abu Moghli calls into question the motivation of HRE in an occupied territory, positing that such a curricular emphasis could facilitate a political image of benevolence and human dignity in order to denigrate the conditions of colonial occupation to the global stage. What Abu Moghli observed within PA

schools reinforces how learning can recreate the conditions of militarization and oppression. These cases complicate the notion of the benevolence of humanitarian educational interventions, once viewed as inherently human-centered and positive but which have gained significant critique for their perpetuation of violence and occupation.

Though great capacities for exploitation arise in the implementation of education in emergency settings, sites for learning also pose critical opportunities for healing, belonging, and relational learning. In a meta-analysis of 184 studies on positive learning factors in emergency learning contexts, Burde and colleagues (2015) found a series of core factors were present in emergency learning contexts that effectively met the holistic needs of students: physical learning infrastructure, like schools, textbooks and teachers, students' close proximity to school, the buy-in of families and communities in learning, and the safety of students within schools (Burde et al., 2015). Beyond these factors, Cha (2020) examined how student motivation for learning evolved in humanitarian settings, conducting a questionnaire of students in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northwest Kenya. The study found that students were generally highly intrinsically motivated to achieve educational success, but that the key extrinsic motivation was a sense of belonging in their learning environment (Cha, 2020). To center meaningful holistic learning and the cultivation of belonging, scholars have argued that humanitarian settings need to challenge the expectations of learning outcomes beyond literacy and numeracy to include life skill development and healing. Through observations of four humanitarian education programs in Sierra Leone, Colombia, Northern Caucasus, and Gujarat, Aguilar and Retamal (2009) examined multiple styles of education in emergency initiatives, and analyzed their efficacy in addressing healing and promoting play in conjunction with global standards in literacy, numeracy, and language acquisition. In post-war Colombia, researchers observed rural education initiatives

which invited play as a tool of healing and relationship building between students. Other initiatives like UNICEF's "school-in-a-box," educational supplies and materials designed to be implemented in conflict zones, were noted as inflexible by researchers, overemphasizing global standards of learning over the nurturing of student's holistic wellness (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009). While education can provide a site for healing and holistic growth, education in emergencies is challenged both by logistical barriers of implementation and, as Aguilar and Retamal argue, a necessary shift in the field towards the legitimizing of whole-student learning.

In the context of emergencies, education faces increased barriers to meaningful implementation due to factors of inconsistency, and the political nature of the conditions. As Rahman, Mustafa Shindaini, and Husain (2022) noted of the Rohingya education experience in Bangladesh, learning can be prevented in emergency contexts through a lack of infrastructure, curfews, and bans on curricula which would help students transition into their host country. By contrast, Devonald and colleagues (2021) found belonging to be a vital component of growth and efficacy of EiE programming for Syrian refugees in Jordan. Cha (2020) also credited belonging with contributing to student motivation for continuing education. As Abiew (2012) and Abu Moghli (2020) expose, emergency education has a legacy of interweaving colonial agendas, and can be militarized in order to facilitate violence and oppression beyond the bounds of war or armed conflict. Burde and colleagues (2015) and Aguilar and Retamal (2009) both set forth a mission for the EiE sector to ensure that, while education standards in literacy and numeracy are emphasized, so are structures and pedagogical methods which emphasize healing and whole-student learning, calling forward a need for community buy-in as a contributing factor to student growth and success. Due to the political nature of conflict and emergencies, non-state actors like

the NGO sector play a critical role in implementing and advancing education in settings where students are overlooked or intentionally barred from learning.

Critical Influence of NGOs on Emergency Education

Emergency contexts pose unique obstacles in accessibility and effective delivery of learning. In many respects, the NGO sector is most prepared to address education in emergencies through the relative flexibility and lack of regulation in the sector which can delay implementation. The volatile nature of emergency contexts, however, poses challenges even an agile sector struggles to navigate. Ideally, students who experience emergencies should be able to pick up where they left off from learning, though a linear timeline on learning is impossible to maintain with factors of educational discrimination, displacement and relocation, and the impacts of crisis and trauma. While meaningful learning may seem an impossible task, the previous section illuminated that students remain highly motivated, and that positive factors like belonging and transformative education practices provide contexts for thriving educational developments. In this section, I review research that examines NGOs in emergency contexts to explore how they navigate the multiple tensions reviewed in the previous two sections.

Within emergency contexts, NGO partnerships have brought forward many advancements in alternative education delivery, considering effective ways to lean into community leaders, parents, and small group gatherings to bridge learning in humanitarian contexts. In a comparative study of diverse educational implementation in Sri Lanka, Creed and Morpeth (2014) examine how alternative forms of learning address the needs of students amidst high-mobility periods and inconsistent educational pathways in the wake of emergency. In the study, researchers analyze how Open, Distance, and Flexible Learning (ODFL) systems, which do not require teachers and students to be in the same place at the same time, have facilitated

education in emergency contexts for a significant time, though these programs are typically implemented by NGOs on a temporary basis to address immediate emergency needs. Through their investigation, Creed and Morpeth (2014) note the efficacy of tools established within the emergency education field including School-in-a-Box, the curriculum kit developed by UNICEF for educators within contexts of displacement, Home-School programs, which provide tools for parents and community leaders to guide learning that is reported to an off-site educator, Catch-Up programs, which give students a pathway to fortify their learning when able to access government schooling, and Open School, asynchronous grade-specific modules that allow for students to continue a pathway towards certification. In analyzing the capacities of these programs to address the needs of students, Creed and Morpeth (2014) conclude that effective tools for addressing the needs of students in protracted emergencies already exist within the field, but are currently being implemented as temporary fixes with short-term commitments to implementation rather than effective protracted learning strategies which bridge the gap between formal and non-formal education for students in emergencies. Researchers note how educational outcomes from these programs point to efficacy in basic education development for students, namely literacy and numeracy improvements, but these programs do not inherently include what Aguilar and Retamal (2009) advocate for when addressing the full spectrum of student needs in emergencies, namely “child friendly spaces” for healing and psychological wholeness. Creed and Morpeth note the need for education in emergencies to address the psychosocial needs of students, but do not find any distinctive evidence that ODFL programs effectively do this, noting how the temporary nature of the current implementation of education in emergencies does not lend itself to sustainable growth and wellness in students. This calls into question the efficacy of the field in addressing the call of education researchers like Aguilar and Retamal to address

whole-student learning in emergencies and continues the debate of the most effective education strategy for contexts that are volatile and inconsistent.

Emergency education is conditioned by unique factors which could inhibit learning development and progress, yet could also promote healing, belonging, and exponential potential for peacebuilding. Aguilar and Retamal (2009) assert that learning in its most raw form must consider a responsibility to healing for youth to the same degree as literacy and numeracy is emphasized. As discussed earlier, Devonald and colleagues (2021) demonstrate how the integration of Syrian students into the government education system of Jordan was vital to cultivating belonging. Belonging is a powerful outcome dependent on a host country's inclusion of students who experienced displacement. In a series of comparative case studies of educational programs implemented amidst conflict in Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, and Sierra Leone, Reimers and Chung (2010) analyze the use of Human Rights Education, which emphasizes the learning of Human Rights through means which honor and elevate the rights of students. HRE creates a framework within emergency education contexts which promotes healing and peacebuilding. Articulating the dangers of direct youth involvement in conflict through recruitment and ideological isolation, the authors propose that models for HRE in conjunction with Peace Education that address community beliefs, are context-relevant, and offer multiple perspectives are most effective in raising student consciousness. They conclude that HRE as a peacebuilding practice must recognize the long-term educational needs of students in conflict rather than short-term interventions, which correlate with short-term peace (Reimers & Chung, 2010). However, long-term interventions within emergency education are challenged by resource scarcity, political and social variability, and lack of funding attention.

While the NGO sector is the most prepared to address learning in emergencies, there are inherent challenges which complicate consistency in learning. Creed and Morpeth (2014) found that ODFL programs were able to contribute to students' educational progress by providing alternative learning avenues, but noted that these were only temporary solutions delivered in short term increments, making any claims towards long-term impact unsupported. These education initiatives, while intended to support psychosocial development in students as emphasized by the work of Aguilar and Retamal (2009), did not indicate any long-term commitment to the holistic development of students, but showed promise in being effective tools if they were to be adapted from short-term interventions to long-term education pathways (Creed & Morpeth, 2014). Devonald and colleagues' (2021) findings of the importance of belonging for students in emergencies echo the analysis of Reimers and Chung (2010) in examining the use of HRE in emergency contexts to cultivate peacebuilding and a value of the rights and wellbeing of others. Both demonstrate how emergency education which addresses the whole student not only facilitates the call for healing to be a critical component of learning, but also asserts that these learning systems can play a vital role in relationship building and peacebuilding at large. While innovative program models exist in the field to address education in emergencies, and an increasing body of research is developing to illuminate the critical role of learning towards conflict management and peacebuilding within emergency contexts, the field is lacking in long-term solutions, following norms of short-term programming facilitated by the NGO sector which struggles to navigate the challenges of access, interest, and funding of for these educational initiatives.

Summary

The NGO sector continues to play a vital role in educational access globally, from rural and remote learning centers to innovative non-formal education in emergency contexts. In the first section, the relationship between government schools and the NGO sector in delivering quality education to regions and communities often overlooked by government schooling exposed neoliberal business dynamics shifting the focus of schools from student needs to accommodating bureaucratic reporting, increasing educational access but facing variability in the consistent delivery of programming (Gali & Schechter, 2020). Some studies called forward community skepticism of the quality of learning provided by NGO schools (Saud & Ashfaq, 2021), and the intentions of NGOs in implementing learning which caused friction with community norms and beliefs (Seeberg et al., 2017). In the second section, the educational conditions of emergency contexts were exposed to be highly politicized, with curriculum being withheld from Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to explicitly prevent the generation of belonging (Rahman et al., 2020; Devonald et al., 2021), a key factor of learning success and motivation for students in emergency learning programs (Cha, 2020). In the final section, studies demonstrated how the NGO sector plays a critical role in providing EiE programming, and has the tools and critical programming to be able to adapt and provide context-relevant learning, but is currently structured to address education in emergency contexts as short-term projects, with funding cycles that simultaneously inhibit sustainability and adaptability to meet community norms and knowledge (Creed & Morpeth, 2014). It is evident that the NGO sector is positioned as a primary actor in facilitating meaningful learning in emergency contexts, but faces challenges of bureaucratic reporting and standardization, community buy-in, the politicization of learning in emergencies, and the improper models of implementation to provide meaningful, sustainable, and community-driven learning. In this study, I will examine the curricular materials of three

INGO and NGO emergency education programs, exploring how the content and practices of these programs demonstrate the motivations for learning by the field, and how education in emergencies interacts with community knowledge and holistic learning.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

Brief Description of the Study

For this qualitative content analysis, three Education in Emergencies (EiE) programs were selected: *Safe Healing and Learning Spaces* (SHLS) from the IRC, *Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance* (HRCRT) Toolkit and the *Self-Learning Programme* from UNRWA, and the *Journey of a Question Initiative* from EducQuest. These three programs in particular were chosen to offer unique lenses into the motivation of learning in emergency contexts, and to examine how programming was designed with global, regional, or local/state-level implementation in mind. For each of these programs, teacher training guides, lesson plans, and curricular materials and theory documents were collected through open source online platforms and, in the case of EducQuest, through education contacts who developed the program. To analyze these documents using decolonial theory, a content analysis matrix was developed to categorize quotes, pedagogical tools, and learning objectives according to seven core criteria: (1) *Purpose of learning*, (2) *Instructional methods*, (3) *Literacy and numeracy standards*, (4) *Legitimacy*, (5) *Teaching staff agency*, (6) *Parent/community engagement*, and (7) *Risk mediation*.

These criteria guide analysis in the examination of the four research questions: What values are explicit and implicit in the standards and learning objectives of EiE curriculum? What values are explicit and implicit in activities and materials of EiE curriculum? What dynamics of power emerge between the NGO and the learning community through teacher and administrative responsibilities? And, how does EiE curriculum connect to community beliefs, values, and knowledge? In this study, these questions and criteria guide a starting point for the examination

of EiE curriculum using decolonial theory, offer a lens through which to note strengths in the field, and illuminate areas in need of further critical examination.

Development of the Study

Freire (1970) and Apple (1990) remind the field of education that learning is always political, predominantly carrying the messaging and motivations of cultures and groups in power. In considering the field of global education, and the increasing influence of neoliberalism on the field as explored in Chapter 2, I became curious as to how the inherently political nature of learning appears in education in emergency contexts, and how learning standards would be defined either by global education standards, or perhaps by outside standards like funders, alternative education pedagogies, and recreation of historic and colonial relationships. Although I had prior work in the field of non-profit education, the field of EiE was relatively new to me— a field I found out about by name through my studies towards this Master’s degree. Upon preliminary investigation, I was aware of my limited knowledge of the field, having only known of the EiE programs developed by two major NGOs in the United States from collaborations during my undergraduate studies. I knew I needed to understand what trends and practices were on the rise in the field from those deeply rooted in practice, which led me to impactful contacts: one who offered insight into the INGO space of EiE, giving direction to which programs to explore that were designed for global implementation, and one contact who offered a lens into regional and local EiE curricula that could serve in conversation with the motivations of the field at large.

Background on the EiE Programs

The experts in the field that I consulted inspired the investigation of three EiE programs, representing one intended for global implementation, one intended for region-specific

implementation, and one designed to address an educational emergency within one state, with insights on local initiatives for educational access. Each is described in the following sections.

IRC's Safe Healing and Learning Spaces (SHLS)

The IRC's *Safe Healing and Learning Spaces* (SHLS) curriculum was developed in the United States with the intention of being implemented in global educational emergency contexts.

Developed in 2016, SHLS was one of the first EiE curricula to focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) in conjunction with foundational reading and math skills through non-formal educational practices (IRC, 2016a). This SEL focus was significant to the field as its learning objectives and activities centered student-wellness, and called for a consideration of psychological needs and care as a responsibility of learning in emergencies. This particular program was created in conjunction with Save the Children's *Psychological First Aid* toolkit standards, which appears as side notes to instructors throughout the training materials and lesson plans, and also appears in learning objectives. For the SHLS curriculum, teacher training materials in program foundations, math, reading, and SEL, as well as lesson plans in math, reading and SEL, were acquired from the IRC website, and are available as open-source learning materials. As the program was created at the IRC headquarters in the US, the online materials are available predominantly in English, with some materials available in both French and Arabic. The SHLS was designed specifically for students ages 6-11 years as a non-formal learning program, meaning it was designed to be implemented outside of a formal classroom setting to accommodate the resources and space available within emergency contexts. Materials were also delineated as targeting basic learning skills for students with little to no prior knowledge, and the program was designed for implementation in blended learning groups of diverse educational ability and grade in order to adapt to the needs of the context (IRC, 2016a).

UNRWA's *Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme*

UNRWA's *Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme* were selected in conjunction with one another as representative of a regional EiE program designed to support Palestinian students in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (UNRWA, 2013b). The UNRWA is a subset of the UN which was created to support the Palestinian diaspora, and has long played a role in providing continuing education to Palestinian students. In addition to operating formal schools, the UNRWA has also developed curricula and tools designed to meet global standards of learning and quality education access goals established by the UN. The HRCRT curriculum was developed in 2012 with the intention of centering human rights and peace-building into Palestinian curricula, and has been added to all subsequent education programs created by UNRWA, making its materials both relevant and critical to an examination of the motivations of UNRWA's EiE curricula. Most recently, to address the unique learning challenges posed by increased regional conflict, UNRWA developed a distance-learning adaptation of their curriculum called the *Self-Learning Programme*, supporting students through location and grade-specific online classes focused on Arabic and English literacy, math, and science skills. For the examination of UNRWA EiE programming, teacher guides, parent guides, curriculum frameworks, and the *Self-Learning Programme* online platform were acquired through the UNRWA website. These materials were designed specifically for Palestinian youth in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan in grades 1-9, or 6-year-olds to 14-year-olds, in distance-learning and formal learning modalities.

EducQuest's *Journey of a Question Initiative*

EducQuest's *Journey of a Question* initiative offers a lens into local implementations of EiE that are designed for students by educators in context. I was informed about EducQuest and their work in Egypt from a contact through the INEE membership network. Created by a team of five Egyptian educators, EducQuest as an organization aims to address learning gaps for Egyptian students, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as the Egyptian Ministry of Education adopted new learning standards, and student's access to quality education became increasingly stratified by economic divides (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). The increasing need to provide quality learning access to Egyptian students, and students who Egypt serves as a host country amidst migration and displacement in the region, led the EducQuest team to develop the *Journey of a Question* initiative. Through the initiative, students guide their learning through any question they choose to explore, be it an inquiry about how a Barbie doll is made, why one is shy, or the history of Palestine (EducQuest, 2021a). Implemented in sessions July through August, the initiative is a six-week educational enrichment program aimed at supporting students ages 7-17 years in developing what they refer to as "21st Century skills" emphasizing the use of technology and critical analysis skills (EducQuest, 2021a). Students connect with educators via the online chat platform WhatsApp and group Zoom calls to dive deeper into critical research on the question, and some are selected from each cohort to be published in a book, documenting the research and findings of students. While originally conceptualized for distance learning, *Journey of a Question* continues to adapt to the educational needs of Egyptian students, and is now used in in-person non-formal sessions. Materials for this study included a parent guide, and example student research projects from the EducQuest website. Additional materials including curricular framework and teacher training materials were provided by personal contacts, and were permitted for use in this study.

By investigating three programs designed for implementation at global, regional, and local scales, this study aims to explore nuances of teaching strategies, motivations, and values in the field of EiE. This study is not designed to generalize to the field at large, but to give practical examples of practices in the field, and to examine how historic global dynamics may be reflected in the field. To do this, the materials from each program were analyzed using a content analysis matrix which examined power, agency, saviorism, and colonial legacy through seven criteria. These particular criteria were selected as informed by decolonial scholarship and practice, which offer a lens through which to examine power between and within educational systems. These criteria were also considered in relation to the field of EiE, which focuses on basic education skills and standards as well as risk mediation for students in emergency contexts (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009). Each of the seven criteria will be operationalized in the study to follow.

Examining curricular materials like teacher training handbooks, lesson plans, curriculum frameworks, and online materials poses an opportunity to see what different organizations emphasize in their ideal program. While experience as an educator consistently shows that programming in practice can differ significantly from programming in concept, this content analysis serves as a starting point for critical qualitative analysis of EiE programming at the conceptual ideal early implementation phases.

The Study

In this study, three Education in Emergencies (EiE) programs, designed to provide basic access to learning for students in contexts impacted by conflict, environmental disaster, and displacement, are analyzed on the basis of seven criteria. Each criterion reflects a different theme or section of curricular materials, of which included teacher training materials, curriculum frameworks, lesson plans, and sample outcomes for each learning program. As each of the three

programs were designed for similar age ranges, the lower of the range being six years and the upper being 17 years, these programs have similar target student populations, but vary in delivery strategy and intended implementation context. Critical qualitative content analysis of each program is detailed in accordance with each criterion of evaluation, including an operational definition of each criterion. The findings are as follows:

Purpose of learning

Each of the three programs have unique mission statements in relation to the impact desired by the EiE curriculum. By examining the stated purpose of learning for each program, a deeper insight into the values and beliefs of each program can be examined. In many ways, the stated purpose of learning serves as a lens into the ideal for each program, but must be considered in relation to pedagogical practice and program outcomes so as to ground analysis in the practical rather than the idealistic. By starting with an examination of the ideal, as well as the core beliefs, each program is analyzed for how dynamics of power, community and student agency, and historical legacy appear.

IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces:

The SHLS *Foundational Training* states the overarching mission of the program to be that “children are safe, well and learning in emergencies,” (IRC, 2016a, p. 7). This is delivered in conjunction with four core beliefs for the program, being that students need to develop trusting relationships with adults to mediate impacts of emergencies, children need to be protected in emergencies, students benefit from routine, and “(i)nstructional content for children must be designed to build foundational and developmentally appropriate skills in social-emotional learning, reading and math, and to achieve measurable outcomes,” (IRC, 2016a, p. 8). The desire to produce measurable outcomes and significant development of students’ basic math, reading,

and SEL skills falls in line with what Bromley and Adina (2010) note as a necessary development in the field, as programs are often implemented with inconsistent reporting and evaluation tools, demonstrating a motivation for programming to be of meaningful impact on students. However, this motivation is driven towards traditional outcomes in literacy and numeracy, and must be considered in conjunction with the content and delivery of learning. The motivation to provide safety for students, and naming the need to protect students in the core beliefs of the training should be complicated by inherent dynamics of power between the IRC, a US-based INGO, and the context of implementation, often outside of the US. As Fanon (1967) offers, residual dynamics of colonization carry on through what he refers to as colonial paternalism, where colonizer countries seek to maintain power over former colonies through narratives of aid and care, reinforcing colonizer control and admonishing of agency in the former colony. In the beliefs of the IRC stated as students need to be protected, the SHLS curriculum offers that the IRC is more equipped to address the needs of students than community systems, reinforcing a dynamic saviorism through the belief that students in emergencies need the IRC to save them. The reference to students needing positive and trusting relationships with teachers could indicate relational power between students and teachers as Freire (1970) would assert as a decolonial practice, but could also reinforce paternalistic dynamics within the classroom, and usurp power and agency from parents to meet the needs of their students.

UNRWA HRCRT Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme:

The UNRWA education programming states their core missions as multifold, the first being to “develop the full potential of all Palestinian refugees,” (UNRWA, 2013b, p.5). In the UNRWA curriculum framework, this mission is accomplished through a “holistic approach to learning... provid(ing) equal access for all students to quality learning... engages students in

active learning that excites their imaginations... and promotes a culture of human rights, conflict resolution, and tolerance,” (UNRWA, 2013b, p.5). UNRWA’s emphasis on human rights is at the center of educational programming, where further explanation of the UNRWA curricular methodology states that in learning, “is consistent with the values and principles of the United Nations (UN) and promotes human rights, tolerance, equality and non-discrimination of race, gender, language and religion in line with the broader UN development goals.” (UNRWA, 2020, p.1). Curricular framework materials also note the goal of enabling students to, “integrate into host secondary and tertiary educational systems and more broadly participate in the social and economic life of the host country.” (UNRWA, 2020, p.1). While value is placed on the development of students’ Palestinian identity, noting holistic learning approaches, engaging student creativity, and supporting them in contributing to Palestinian society, there is also a strong emphasis on the UN definitions of human rights, a commitment to students’ embrace of UN visions of tolerance and acceptance, and a desire for students to have access to quality learning in order to contribute to the economies and development of host countries. The promotion of Palestinian identity leans into a whole-student approach to learning, centering community knowledge and a sense of place and culture for students and an opportunity to maintain identity as Tuck and Yang (2012) offer as a decolonial approach to learning for students who have been marginalized by power dynamics of colonization. However, this stands in tension with the assertion of UN beliefs and understandings of human rights, and a motivation for students to contribute to development and economic growth, which reinforces neoliberal educational dynamics and recreates exploitive dynamics between NGOs and the Palestinian diaspora.

EducQuest Journey of a Question Initiative:

EducQuest states the core purpose of the *Journey of a Question Initiative* to be for Egyptian students “to develop 21st century skills, e.g., communication, collaboration, creative and critical thinking and problem-solving skills through their participation in a writing contest.” (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). This is based on a stated belief that, when students ask questions, they develop higher level thinking skills, critical and curious engagement with their environment, and increased abilities to self-regulate and self-evaluate, which will lead to better academic performance (EducQuest, 2021b). The initiative website also notes the program’s intention to support students, “(t)o be proficient and have the skill to deal with technology and keep pace with its development while using it safely and effectively,” and to “acquire different life skills such as thinking based on questioning and its role in solving problems, managing time and accepting the other” (EducQuest, 2021a). The focus on students acquiring skills in technology and critical inquiry which are the centerpieces of the initiative are proposed as relating to students’ ability to effectively use tools to better understand their learning environment and surroundings, and center student inquiry. These purposes center student agency, which Freire (1970) and Tuck and Yang (2012) posit as a method of shifting power within the classroom to position students as the teachers and center of the learning experience, and the promotion of community-relevant learning by returning the agency to students to decide the content. The vision set by the purpose statement is for students to be able to better navigate their learning environment and tools that are accessible in their context, establishing the expectation of students having the ability to best use their learning in a way that is meaningful to their community and personal interests.

Across the three programs, it is apparent that the motivations of learning in emergency contexts vary significantly, and include varying levels of direct intervention by the NGO. The

SHLS curriculum focuses distinctly on protecting children using psychological and SEL tools, as well as setting standards for literacy and numeracy so students may be evaluated on the basis of learning outcomes. This reinforces power dynamics which position the NGO to ‘save’ students, and follows a neoliberal structure of the evaluation of educational success that often views the purpose of learning as the students’ productivity over students’ holistic development. The UNRWA programs and the *Journey of a Question* initiative focus on whole-student development, but do so with significantly different approaches. UNRWA looks to support the holistic development of Palestinian identity in students, but limits this development to its conformity with the UN’s standards of human rights and peaceful conduct. *Journey of a Question*, on the other hand, removes conditions and classifiers regarding what students’ learning must look like, and allows individual inquiry to guide educational and personal development, contrasting the role of NGOs as knowledge-keepers instilling learning upon students in emergency contexts to NGOs as resource-sharers consulting the true needs of students. These purposes of learning reveal dynamics of the NGO sector as practice intersects with saviorism and neoliberal globalization, signifying how colonial power dynamics influence the idealistic visions of the sector long before impacting action in practice.

Instructional methods

The three EiE programs were then analyzed for core instructional methods and practices by reviewing teacher training materials, pedagogical explanations in curriculum frameworks, and lesson plans. Particularly, references to best implementation strategy and class/learning environment structure were documented for comparison in conjunction to pedagogical practice. For each program, multiple methods were identified as foundational to program instruction and implementation. By examining instructional methods, dynamics of power within the classroom

structure and the conceptualization of the delivery of content can be observed.

IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces:

SHLS curriculum follows what Freire (1970) refers to as ‘banking’ methods of instruction, which can be characterized by scripts, recitation, and top-down learning structures, in conjunction with play-based learning methods. In the foundational materials, a note directed to the instructors of the teacher training states, “It is essential for you to study the training sessions and resources in advance and follow the script provided to ensure that the content is delivered accurately and in the allocated time,” (IRC, 2016a, p. 10). Teachers are also given a ‘steps to follow’ guide in all three subjects of instruction, which include the everyday classroom implementation steps of *warm-up*, engagement activities related to the objectives of the day, *present*, when teachers share with students the lesson for the day, *practice*, where students work either individually or in groups on the lessons and skills for the day, and apply, where students demonstrate their learning for the day (IRC, 2016c, p. 16; IRC, 2016e, p. 15). The stated motivation of scripted and hyper-standardized lessons is to “create predictability in the SHLS. It is to communicate clear learning objectives to children at the start of the lesson.” (IRC, 2016a, p. 63). Freire (1970) critiques traditional banking methods of learning as a dynamic which recreates oppressive power dynamics within the classroom, making the teacher the bearer of knowledge which is gifted to students. Freire also examines how this dynamic of power is often above teachers as well, where educational agendas are set by dominant groups and culture, which are then delivered to teachers through banking methods. In the dynamic between the IRC through the SHLS program to teachers, and through teachers to students, it is evident that the required conformity to scripts maintains the power and control within the NGO, and inherently distrusts teachers and students to bring forward their cultural knowledge as legitimate. These banking

methods of learning which cross historically colonial power dynamics recreate what Fanon (1967) identifies as intellectual colonization, or ‘colonization of the mind,’ permitting the continuation of colonial power and the justification of resource extraction which is then ‘gifted’ back to former colonies so as to act as the savior rather than the oppressor.

In contrast to the call for strict conformity to scripts and learning outcomes, the SHLS curriculum also exercises play-based instructional methodologies across the three subject matters. Within the math intervention, teachers are directed in “(d)aily lessons use games, songs, art activities, role-playing, working in small groups or in pairs, and teaching aids to create an inclusive, safe, predictable and enjoyable learning experience.” (IRC, 2016c, p. 34). Play and game-based learning is used primarily to sustain attention and deepen comprehension for students, explained in the math trainee toolkit as, “(c)lassroom activities such as games and art projects allow students to manipulate, compare, sort, classify, compose and decompose geometric forms. Learning feels more like play and less like something that is boring and tiresome.” (IRC, 2016c, p. 116). Play-based learning is proposed in the SHLS curriculum to also improve “students’ self-confidence and sense of control over their own learning, (increase) student participation, (make) the lessons more concrete, (and help) teachers to assess learning,” (IRC, 2016b, p. 20). Aguilar and Retamal (2009) note the significant impact play-based learning has on students in emergency contexts, providing opportunities for students to build relationships and participate in individual and collective healing. Play-based learning methods is conducive to the SHLS’s motivation to provide space for psychological safety and SEL in each section of the learning intervention, and may also disrupt traditional power dynamics between students and teachers by allowing more authentic engagement.

UNRWA HRCRT Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme:

The UNRWA EiE programs focus on the full development of Palestinian students through student-centered learning methods, where lessons and enrichment materials are designed to promote students' engagement and to allow for teachers to adapt learning to better meet the needs and experiences of students. In the UNRWA curriculum framework, it is stated that a "high quality curriculum should be... learner-centered, active, practical and encouraging independent thinking and creativity, relevant to students' lives, responsive to their needs and set within the context of the Palestinian refugee community..." (UNRWA, 2013b, p.7). Within the HRCRT teacher toolkit, student engagement in class discussion as well as decisions which affect them and their communities are highlighted, noting "...students learn about human rights in class, students participate in decisions that affect them in the school, and teachers use participatory approaches to engage students," (UNRWA, 2013a, p.4). As a methodology, teachers are offered to follow the lesson guide "Experience, Reflect, Apply," where students first share their life experiences and knowledge, they reflect critically on their beliefs and knowledge, and then students apply their knowledge through action, which UNRWA conditions as "actions to facilitate the enjoyment of human rights by promoting practices, attitudes and behaviours that are positive..." (UNRWA, 2013a, p.35). This style of critical engagement with students aligns with what Freire (1970) asserts as 'problem-posing' methodology, where the classroom is used as a space to engage with students' knowledge and experience in the world, and collectively decide on action. This also asserts student agency in the classroom, disrupting dynamics of banking methods. While this methodology may promote what Tuck and Yang (2012) call forward in critical dialogue which centers community and indigenous knowledge as resistance to 'colonization of the mind,' there is a distinctive assertion that actions which come from critical

thinking within UNRWA programs must seek outcomes which reaffirm the UN's notion of human rights, which are persistently denied to Palestinian students.

In conjunction with student-centered learning, UNRWA also centers creative and expression-based learning and evaluation practices. For in-person implementations of programming, the curriculum framework notes classroom activities should include “Groupwork, brainstorming, discussion activities, drama, art, research project” (UNRWA, 2018a, p.53). Creative activities are aimed to offer alternative forms of expression and group processing for students, noting, “drama activities are those where students can express themselves through role-play and acting... game activities are aimed at presenting students with a particular challenge... visual arts activities are those including drawing and painting for self and group expression,” (UNRWA, 2016, p.2). Creative self-expression within classroom activities aligns with Aguilar and Retamal's (2009) findings of the impact of play on healing, and within the curriculum is explicitly noted as a way of connecting students with their feelings and group expression, which services what Cha (2020) notes as dynamics of belonging, which encourages student participation and motivation. Creative expression in the classroom also serves as a break from a hyper-fixation on hard skills which dominate neoliberal classroom practices, and gives space for individual and cultural expression, aligned with Tuhiwai-Smith's (1999) call for whole-student learning.

EducQuest Journey of a Question Initiative:

The primary instructional method used in the *Journey of a Question* initiative is problem-posing, inquiry-based learning, where all learning and guidance originates from students' research question. In presenting the initiative at eLearning Africa in 2022, the program developers noted that:

Activities that motivate critical thinking were implemented, e.g. mind mapping to draw all interrelated connections and see the diverse perspectives of one single topic or issue. This is a crucial skill that children in Egypt lack due to the traditional lecture style teaching in schools where opportunities for questioning and researching is minimal. (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022).

Students were given complete agency over the questions they chose to research, and facilitators were trained to scaffold learning across math, science, and humanities subjects to support students in their research development. The research process for students was outlined as “free expression of their questions, and topics of interest– Question Narrowing– Data collection and analysis– Reflection on one’s own learning and construction of meaning” (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). Activities used to engage students with their research were noted as play-based, and “children were motivated to actively participate realising that they were given a rare opportunity to express themselves freely and openly and to have their learning style and preferences appreciated.” (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022) This methodology models Freire’s (1970) problem-posing methods by centering student-inquiry and positioning student agency over their learning at the center. Creed and Morpeth (2014) note how creative curricular design which use accessible resources and are contextually positioned in emergencies enrich more holistic educational needs in students, and Tuck and Yang (2012) note how critical engagement in the classroom, particularly with dynamics of coloniality as the *Journey of a Question* initiative explicitly states in critique of the Egyptian formal education system, supports students in an active decolonization of learning.

The three EiE programs demonstrate cross-over in instructional methods which exercise play-based learning, an implementation strategy which prior research in the field reaffirms as

effective in supporting student healing and coping (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009). However, the programs differ significantly in their primary instructional approach, with SHLS practicing predominantly banking methods through scripts, strict learning standards, and expectations of student and teacher compliance. UNRWA and the *Journey of a Question* initiative express instructional methods more aligned with problem-posing, but differ in expected outcome with UNRWA conditioning student actions with alignment with the UN's vision of human rights, and *Journey of a Question* leaving outcomes to be determined by the student with guidance and critical engagement by teachers. These unique approaches expose nuances of power within instructional methods, where problem-posing may still be conditioned by NGO agendas, and play-based learning not always being in relation to student agency.

Literacy & numeracy standards

In global education, literacy and numeracy standards form the basis of what constitutes basic, quality education (Saud & Ashfaq, 2021). These standards were developed at the turn of the century with the development of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), detailing objectives and outcomes in literacy and numeracy that would constitute 'quality' learning. While the field of EiE adopted some standards from the global development space, EiE programs vary in standards of literacy and numeracy, and what constitutes quality education. In the current neoliberal climate of education, literacy and numeracy objectives are often the singular evaluation tools to define student success and the quality of learning (Bromley & Andina, 2010), which limits the purpose of education and the demonstration of learning to a western-scope of relevant skills. In this study, each program is analyzed for literacy and numeracy standards first by explicit reference to objectives in numeracy and literacy, or math and reading respectively, and evaluated for content relating as such. These sections of each

program which outlined literacy and numeracy standards are analyzed for definitions of student mastery of each standard, and how each standard is assessed and evaluated.

IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces:

SHLS seeks five core literacy outcomes as documented in the *Reading intervention: Trainee's manual*. These are (1) developing language skills for self-expression, (2) enhancing social skills with reading as a social activity, (3) benefiting students' families through students sharing skills with parents and siblings, (4) increasing future opportunities for students through access to higher levels of learning and quality jobs, (5) exposing students to other cultures and experiences (IRC, 2016d, p. 6). Using decolonial theory, outcome 1, 2, 3, and 5 consider mastery of literacy as self-enrichment and community-enrichment, thinking of how the student's learning translates into family learning and social development. Outcome 4 draws a connection between learning and access to higher education and quality jobs, which could be critiqued as learning towards labor. This tension between the student enrichment and student output complicates how outcomes are evaluated, as students' preparedness towards labor and higher education reinforce neoliberalism while student enrichment focuses on healing and whole-student development. The deviation from whole-student development to concentrate on student output mirrors what Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) notes as extractive learning practices disguised as the centering of student and community knowledge, reinforcing colonial power under the guise of curiosity or celebration.

With numeracy skills, SHLS asserts its "primary goal of the math component is for students to develop problem-solving skills through analysis and reasoning," (IRC, 2016c, p. 7). The *Math intervention: Trainer's manual* breaks down target math competencies into number sense, meaning counting skills, operations, meaning adding and subtracting with objects,

measurement and data, and geometry (IRC, 2016c, p. 8). Standards are documented as basic-level competencies for students with little to no prior education (IRC, 2016a). The motivations for numeracy skills, documented as ‘math competencies’ in the SHLS training, were that “it predicts students’ academic success, increases intelligence, develops mathematical thinking and problem solving skills, and builds students’ self-confidence.” (IRC, 2016c, p. 7) This mirrors literacy standards in motivation to increase students’ likelihood to continue on to higher education and cultivating self-confidence, and particularly emphasized problem-solving as a relevant skill to the context of EiE.

UNRWA HRCRT Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme:

The UNRWA Self-Learning Programme has individual program materials based on host country and grade level, and “cover(s) the core concepts and key skills of the four Host country curricula (Gaza and West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) to ensure that UNRWA students in all Fields of operation can benefit from the programme,” (UNRWA, 2018b, p. 5). The program’s parent/caregiver guide outlines the core competencies for literacy and numeracy as they relate to skills in English and Arabic reading and writing, and basic math skills, and are partitioned into grade-level sections of grades 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9.

For numeracy, grades 1-3 identify counting to the thousands, numerical sequencing, multiplication, basic geometry, length, mass, time, and surface area comprehension (UNRWA, 2018a, p. 16). For grades 4-6, objectives include comprehension of numbers up to one billion, the four operations of natural numbers, sequence of math operations, factors, divisibility, multiples, powers and square roots, integers, fractions, decimals, proportions, units of measurement, geometric concepts, data representation, and experimentation and probability. For grades 7-9, operations of integers, relative numbers, real numbers and proportionality, as well as

percentages, triangles, angles, data analysis, polynomials and algebraic expression, trigonometric ratios, and data range analysis mastery are expected (UNRWA, 2018a, p. 17). These standards emphasize fundamental comprehension of arithmetic, object reasoning, and data analysis as basic learning skills to prepare students for practical application, and follow arithmetic protocols outlined by global standards of learning. This is aligned with UNRWA's assertion of providing quality learning to Palestinian students, and asserts that global education standards do, in fact, indicate quality learning for students.

For literacy, students grades 1-3 practice towards the objectives of identifying the alphabet, understanding nouns, verbs, and letters in Arabic, defining sentences, early reading skills, punctuation, and early self-expression through writing (UNRWA, 2018a, p.12). Grades 4-6 emphasize identifying parts of speech, arabic sentence structuring, creative storytelling, and punctuation (UNRWA, 2018a, pp.10-11). For grades 7-9, objectives focus on transitive verbs, modification of verbs in Arabic language, spelling, punctuation, and expression of self through writing (UNRWA, 2018a, pp.11-12). These standards also apply to students' foundational learning of English through course materials. These core objectives reflect expected outcomes to include higher levels of literacy and comprehension in Arabic as well as English, as related to the purpose of UNRWA programming to support students in adjusting and participating in host countries (UNRWA, 2020; UNRWA, 2013a). These also emphasize writing as a tool of expression, and specifically note creative writing skills as an intended outcome for students. Paralleling literacy standards in Arabic as well as English to support students' assimilation into host countries stands as an indication of the influence of coloniality, and positions the motivation of literacy learning as a skill to influence student conformity, acting as a liberatory factor of learning which is simultaneously enacted to control students' expression.

EducQuest Journey of a Question Initiative:

The Journey of a Question Initiative does not explicitly outline literacy and numeracy standards as the program centers inquiry-based learning. Critical literacy skills are achieved as a result of student research project, and core literacy skills are valued as a tool towards the final research project created by students (EducQuest, 2021a). Numeracy skills are acquired by students through scientific research methodologies (EducQuest, 2021a), and through using data analysis skills to answer the question. This stands in direct contrast to the increasing call for standardization across the EiE field in literacy and numeracy, and decouples learning outcomes from neoliberal standards which assert that learning must be conducted with certain outcomes in mind. Instead, allowing for students to guide their acquisition of literacy and numeracy standards through their inquiry positions the students as the teacher (Freire, 1970) and allows for community and cultural knowledge to scaffold student development (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

SHLS and UNRWA's EiE programming follow similar outlines of literacy and numeracy, documenting hard skills in each concentration with the intention of supporting students in assimilation and participation in labor and for-profit education spaces. Simultaneously, both programs note how these standards are also personally enriching for students, giving space for creative expression and processing and enabling them with skills to make sense of the world around them. *Journey of a Question* takes a very different approach, coming to skills in literacy and numeracy not by naming robust objectives, but by scaffolding student inquiry with the hard skills and tools they need to be successful in their research. This positions literacy and numeracy learning as tools for students to navigate the world rather than objectives towards labor outcomes. Tuck and Yang (2012) critique educational standards for their reproduction of colonial power dynamics, and supposing the outcome of learning to be to

participate in neoliberal power structures. Levitan and Johnson (2020) navigate the hyper-standardization of global learning by recognizing that there are necessary hard skills in literacy and numeracy to participate in the modern world, but that these should be tools towards a self-directed end rather than an end in and of themselves. Each program navigates this juxtaposition uniquely, offering a lens into the complexity of the embrace of standardization into EiE programming.

Teaching staff agency

Teacher agency is the ability of teachers to make decisions on content, execution, and adaptability of education programming to meet the needs of their students. In EiE programming, teacher training toolkits are used to examine the power and permissibility of teachers' adaptations of curricula to meet students' abilities and cultural understandings. In each program, teacher training materials as well as curriculum framework materials offer insight into how teachers are positioned in learning, what role they are intended to play for students, and pathways for teachers to inform learning to make education more accessible and relatable to students.

IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces:

In the SHLS materials, teachers are instructed to follow scripts for lessons and activities to follow verbatim. The foundational training for teachers notes, "it is essential for you to study the training sessions and resources in advance and follow the script provided to ensure that the content is delivered accurately and in the allocated time." (IRC, 2016a, p. 10). Each core competency of math, reading, and SEL also includes instructions and justifications for teachers to follow lesson plans and scripts precisely. The math intervention notes, "the Scope and Sequence is a detailed plan of what to teach, how to teach it and in what order, during the 9-

month Math Intervention. It is important to teach math in the explicit and sequenced manner outlined here.” (IRC, 2016c, p. 13). In the reading intervention, teachers are urged not to change the “keywords” used to develop an understanding of reading and word association “unless the given keyword is very inappropriate for your context,” as “the keywords for each letter sound were carefully chosen for the SHLS Reading Intervention and should be used in the same way every time,” (IRC, 2016d, p. 24). The standardization of the SEL curriculum is detailed through a Scope and Sequence plan, “a detailed plan of what to teach, how to teach it and in what order... (These) are the guiding documents for what you will be teaching, and how, and when you will be teaching it,” (IRC, 2016g, p. 58). The justification stated in the materials for scripted teaching praxis is to ensure that the SEL components of each lesson are taught correctly, citing that specific methodologies and implementation strategies are needed for the program to be effective (IRC, 2016a). It is also noted that following the scripts provides a sense of routine and consistency for students, which is needed to feel a sense of control and stability in emergency contexts (IRC, 2016a). Scripting explicitly limits teachers’ abilities to adapt to student needs and culturally-relevant context, and reinforces the IRC’s control over education implemented outside of the US. This expunges teacher agency, and, as Apple (1990) critiques, strategically deskills educators in order to assert conformity and dominant agendas.

Teachers are also given behavior guidelines throughout the program, with cues on not only what to say, but how to act within the learning environment. Specific instructions for how to deliver reading lessons are noted to teachers as, “Read with appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression to help students understand (that means, not so fast, not boring, nor with so many mistakes that students cannot understand).” (IRC, 2016e, p. 48). Further behavioral instructions for the reading intervention are documented in the teacher trainer manual: “Ensure that all

students are ready to listen (sitting properly but comfortably, attentive, and so on)... Pronounce letter sounds correctly consistently... Use the correct keyword picture associated with the letter of the day..." (IRC, 2016d, p. 29). In the math intervention, an aside to teacher trainees is noted, "How should I behave as the Facilitator of small group work? It is important not to criticize or negatively interact with students. Show respect and empathy for each student and encourage all students to show the same attitude." (IRC, 2016b, p. 64). Within these behavioral guidelines, some cues aim to support cultivating a teacher-student relationship, asking teachers not to place judgement on students as they acquire new skills and to embrace student inquiry. Others explicitly aim to control teachers' interactions with students to ensure the program is delivered precisely to the learning materials, and urge teachers to act perfectly, and simultaneously 'not boring.' This indicates a lack of trust between the NGO and the teaching staff, and reasserts a lack of teacher agency, both of which Apple (1990) notes as directly correlated with the rise of neoliberalism in education.

The SHLS curriculum also establishes a guideline for classroom management for teachers to follow in enacting positive discipline to students. The SHLS foundational training notes that "positive discipline focuses on prevention rather than punishment... violent punishment for misconduct can lead to mistrust of the Facilitator, and continued, repeated and even increased misconduct. It has also been found to decrease the ability to problem-solve and think rationally," (IRC, 2016a, p. 65). Teachers are urged to set clear expectations with students, establish daily predictable routines, use positive reinforcement, and keep students engaged (IRC, 2016a, p. 119). These guidelines outline how student agency and wellness can be addressed and respected within the educational space, and offer strategies for teachers to build clear and realistic expectations with students, while also recognizing that discipline may be necessary,

though should never be violent. This maintains teachers as the authority in the classroom, contrary to Freire's (1970) assertion of lateral power between teachers and students, but also reinforces that a relationship of care should be present between teachers and students which aligns with whole-student learning in emergency contexts.

UNRWA HRCRT Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme:

In the UNRWA EiE programming, teachers are positioned as experts in their contexts, with the ability to modify learning to meet the needs of students and evaluate relevant learning materials. In developing the HRCRT program, "all levels of UNRWA education staff and other external stakeholders were consulted on the best way to realise this vision, (and) they agreed that a useful resource for teachers would be a toolkit... with practical activities for all age groups..." (UNRWA, 2013a, p.4). Throughout the materials, it was noted that "the activities will likely be adapted and improved by the teachers who try them out. Future versions of the Toolkit will... include many more examples from the Fields of successful Planning Tools... teaching methods, and activities to promote human rights," (UNRWA, 2013a, p.6). In the curriculum framework which serves as the basis for all UNRWA programs, teachers were noted to play an active role in adapting host country curricula and materials to the needs of their students, "taking into account the evolving capacities of the child," (UNRWA, 2013b, p.11). As experts of their context, teachers were also charged with assessing students using observational methods, which "means teachers observing, listening, asking questions, and checking what they see and hear against the framework grade criteria," (UNRWA, 2013b, p.17). In adapting learning to meet the needs of students, the UNRWA curriculum approach notes that its "Teacher-Centered Approach... seeks to empower teachers to address the specific identified issues of concern in a way that is in line with UN values and promotes students' critical thinking," (UNRWA, 2020, p.2). By centering

teachers as experts, the NGO acts as a resource-sharer rather than a knowledge-bearer, and recognizes that, to be adaptable and effective, learning must be contextualized by educators within the community and context. However, teachers are encouraged to adapt learning and support student critical thinking towards the direction of UN values, reinforcing UN power and a belief in the ideological superiority of the UN's definitions of human rights.

Teachers were also encouraged to collaborate with one another in teaching teams, sharing resources, lessons, and specialized skill sets to better students' learning experience. Teachers were urged to "share your experiences with other teachers during staff meetings, or informally... Invite other teachers to visit your class as you are teaching a lesson related to human rights... Share your experiences with UNRWA teachers in all Fields as well as other teachers internationally through the use of ICTs (information and communication technologies)," (UNRWA, 2013a, p.59). While lateral collaboration is established between teachers, teachers also have resources and additional support roles accessible, and "the Education Specialists and Head Teachers are there to support teachers in successfully implementing the Programme," (UNRWA, 2013a, p.206). This cultivates a sense of community in educating students rather than partitioning teachers into meeting standards and performance indicators isolated to the performance of one class, dismantling competition models within teaching staff to focus on resource sharing for student success. However, dynamics of hierarchy still persist with roles like Education Specialists and Head Teachers maintaining some as higher knowledge-bearers than others. From the materials, it is unclear how this relationship is enacted in practice.

Teachers and students are encouraged to have a lateral and critically engaging relationship with one another through a participatory approach. The curriculum framework outlines that this approach "shifts the traditional role of the teacher as someone who "imparts"

information to someone who “facilitates” children’s learning,” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.56). In implementation, the *Self-Learning* remote program encourages “teachers (to) support students in setting goals and executive function skills,” (UNRWA, 2018b, p.7). Teachers also lean into lateral relationships with students to evaluate comprehension and learning, as “teachers are responsible for assessing how well their students achieve these competencies, but they also rely on feedback from students,” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.206). Critical engagement between students and teachers signifies lateral power, which Freire (1970) asserts as a dismantling of oppressive dynamics in the classroom, and positions students as active cultivators and evaluators of their learning while honoring the agency of teachers in meeting students where their learning needs are.

EducQuest Journey of a Question Initiative:

Teachers are viewed as facilitators or guides within the *Journey of a Question Initiative*, tasked with providing students with tools and resources they need to critically engage with their question. Facilitators train students on how to search for resources and provided guidance for structuring their writing and research (EducQuest, 2021a), and also trained by EducQuest on remote facilitation strategies. Facilitators are trained, “to apply constructivist learning approaches... (and) to apply humanized, engaging and fun e-learning activities,” (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). These techniques and the conceptualizing of teachers as facilitators recognize that students come into the learning space with their own knowledge, and the role of educators is to facilitate the honing in of skillsets directed by student inquiry. This positions teachers as resource-sharers rather than knowledge-bearers, resisting banking methods of learning. This does not inherently mean indigenous and community knowledge is centered, but does create a relationship between students and teachers which allows for whole-student learning.

The lateral power dynamic between teachers and students is also reinforced through communication and the non-formal educational structure which centers personalised feedback and connection. Program creators noted that the 2022 eLearning Africa conference that “developing all those 21st century skills on a tight timeframe was possible through focused and structured assignments and activities that were always followed by personalised, warm constructive feedback.... Facilitators were well trained to appreciate, accept and encourage children’s diverse learning styles, preferences, and creative expression.” (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). Teachers maintained informal guidance and communication with students through WhatsApp groups and Zoom calls (EducQuest, 2021d) and were trained specifically on how to engage students online while honoring their inquiry. Encouraging a personalized relationship between teachers and students dismantles traditional models where teachers are authority figures who are responsible for the discipline and obedience of students, but, rather, that the teacher-student relationship is inherently human, and one of mutual investment.

The agency of teachers exposes a significant contrast between the three programs, and serves as an indication of the conceptualization of power and the built-in capacities of programming to adapt to context. The SHLS curriculum heavily emphasized teacher-obedience, with scripted lesson plans and behavioral instructions. This curriculum was also the only to explicitly reference student discipline, and teacher responsibilities to establish and enforce behavioral expectations. While this was addressed with the stated intention of promoting positive discipline which honored child safety, it must be noted that the utmost expectation was the obedience of students through the obedience of teachers to the verbatim delivery of the program. UNRWA centered teachers as experts and as core contributors to educational materials and relational evaluation of program efficacy, with teachers encouraged to work collaboratively and

in conjunction with students. However, hierarchy was still established within teaching staff to position some roles, namely Education Specialists and Head Teachers, as more expert than others, and the encouragement of critical engagement to be towards the facilitation of UN values. This stands in contrast with teacher agency as it asserts that teachers are able to adapt learning so far as it encourages students to believe and follow UN values, rather than promote student agency to critically analyze and act within their context. *Journey of a Question* positioned teachers as facilitators in lateral, personalized relationship with students where access to non-formal communication channels encouraged real-time feedback and guidance. Building a caring relationship between students and teachers, teacher agency was established so far as to honor the agency of students over their learning. Teacher agency serves as a key criterion for how NGO agendas are put into practice, and reflects the agency and projected outcomes of students in learning.

Legitimacy

In this content analysis, the criterion of legitimacy is defined as how the program gains external credibility in providing programs for students in emergencies. Key terms included “credible,” “evidence-based,” and “efficacy,” and curricular framework documents were analyzed for reference to the educational status or prior professional experience of the creators of the programs. This particular criterion is vital to decolonial analysis as it examines what factors make a program credible to the field, and offers an observation of how dominant views of legitimacy in relation to education, professional background, and where the program was created influence the reach and common practices of the field of EiE.

IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces:

The SHLS curriculum defines its legitimacy in relation to its partnership and compliance

with other INGOs and international agencies focused on health and humanitarian aid. The *Foundational Training: Trainer's Manual* references how the 'psychological first aid' components of the curriculum "has been endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Sphere Project, and reflects an international consensus on how to support people in the immediate aftermath of extremely stressful events," (IRC, 2016a, p. 12). It notes that this style of training was created in compliance with the World Health Organization's 2011 guide for "psychological first aid," a UN agency focused on global health (IRC, 2016a, p. 11). The SHLS program materials note that it was created by a team at the IRC Headquarters based in the United States, with the reference to its creation within the IRC Headquarters rather than field offices functioning to reinforce legitimacy. The SHLS program is also funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and, though a disclosure statement in the *Foundational Training* states that the SHLS program does not reflect the beliefs of the US government or USAID, association with funding by USAID is used as an indication of legitimacy to funders and partners. By establishing legitimacy in relation to other international NGOs, SHLS reinforces a western-centered view of education, and reasserts that legitimacy of learning is located in the West. Rather than drawing on community and cultural knowledge to acquire legitimacy and trust within the communities of implementation, legitimacy is acquired through association and notoriety within the humanitarian and international development sector, reinforcing dynamics of power and influence which historically favor former colonial powers.

UNRWA HRCRT Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme:

UNRWA also defines its legitimacy in relation to other INGOs and international agencies, noting that the HRCRT Toolkit was developed in collaboration with eleven agencies, organizations, and educational ministries, and thanked these organizations as well as the INEE

for providing materials and the majority of the program's activities (UNRWA, 2016, p.iv). The program materials are created by the UNRWA headquarters and field offices, and are based on the standards and curriculum of the host countries (UNRWA, 2013a, p.22), with legitimacy towards students, parents, and host countries coming from the relevance of learning to the context and objectives of the host country. The UNRWA programs also draw upon the promotion of UN standards and ideas as a source of legitimacy, leaning on the notoriety of the UN as a global power and policy-making entity. In examining power within the UN, decolonial scholars would argue that such powers reinforce western and colonial domination, calling into question the power the UN draws upon to claim its legitimacy as, in fact, colonial power.

EducQuest Journey of a Question Initiative:

The *Journey of a Question Initiative's* claim to legitimacy originates from the program being created by a team of five Egyptian educators to meet the needs of Egyptian students (EducQuest, 2021a). The program's creators have experience teaching within the context of learning in Egypt, and use culturally-relevant tools to deliver learning (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). Evaluation of the impact and success of the program emphasizes student and parent satisfaction and student's acquisition of 21st century skills (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). EducQuest's other programming does receive funding in partnership with the Egyptian Ministry of Education, national NGOs, and profits generated from the selling of trainings and materials (EducQuest, 2021a), though no outside funding was acquired for the *Journey of a Question* initiative, leaving any source of external legitimacy to reside in the initiative's association with EducQuest as an EdTech NGO. In this case, legitimacy originates from the efficacy of the program to meet students' needs and demonstrate impact, and claims legitimacy in context by being bottom-to-top Egyptian.

The claims to legitimacy in the three programs demonstrate significant contrasts in the field of EiE, with SHLS and UNRWA’s EiE programming claiming legitimacy through their association with other INGOs and funding from major international development actors like USAID and the UN respectively, reinforcing existing dynamics of the field which elevate western and colonial power. *Journey of a Question* contrasts this by sourcing its legitimacy from its rooting and understanding of community dynamics and the shortcomings of learning in the context of implementation. Levitan and Johnson (2020) speak to this contrast in their development of rural education programming, how the field favors legitimacy that is top-down whereas program efficacy is benefitted from bottom-up and grassroots development.

Parental/Community engagement

In whole-student learning approaches, parent and community engagement is vital in supporting students to acquire culturally-relevant learning, as well as maintain engagement and buy-in to learning and learning access (Saud & Ashfaq, 2021; Seeberg et al., 2017). Each EiE program was examined for indicators of parent and community inclusion, meaning parents and community members explicitly entering the classroom as support or in sharing personal stories, and community engagement, and the appearance of community values, customs, and norms in the learning environment.

IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces:

The SHLS curriculum includes parents and the larger community by identifying relationships between the community and the classroom. This is primarily a factor of the SEL concentration, where it is noted for teachers to, “identify external and community strengths and supports” (IRC, 2016g, p. 10) and “identify family, peer, school and community strengths... Explain how family members, peers, school personnel and community members can support

school success and responsible behavior” (IRC, 2016g, p. 20). While this is included in the SEL training, minimal opportunities for community and parent involvement are mentioned within the reading and math curriculum, though the SHLS program does have a parenting guide that was not included in this analysis. Additionally, parents and community members are considered in the SEL programming materials as support actors for students’ care, noting for teachers to “understand how their actions affect their caregivers... Role-play of scenarios as caregivers... Draw a network of caregivers” (IRC, 2016g, p. 20) and to work with the larger community in establishing behavioral expectations with students by “identify(ing) family, peer, school and community strengths... Explain how family members, peers, school personnel and community members can support school success and responsible behavior,” (IRC, 2016g, p. 20). The application of community strengths into student experiences of the program are not included in the curricular materials, but referenced as an activity for teachers to participate in bridging the classroom with the experience of students outside of the learning environment. Identifying community strengths and educational buy-in is a positive factor for students’ development of self-identity (Burde et al., 2015), but is presented in the SHLS curriculum as a resource for teachers to use in student performance and behavior in the classroom rather than to integrate community knowledge as an asset of learning. This maintains that the NGO knows best for the students, and parents and community members are necessary for the compliance of students with programming, recreating dynamics of colonial paternalism (Fanon, 1967) by positioning the NGO as the parent of parents, and parents and communities as a tool for control.

UNRWA HRCRT Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme:

The UNRWA EiE programs engage parents and community members in implicit and explicit ways within learning, embracing community stories in the development of students’

Palestinian identity, but also establishing parameters around the role parents and community members can interact with learning. With the *Self-Learning Programme*, parents play a vital role in implementation as resources when available remotely, requiring that parents support students in managing their learning. Teachers were encouraged to “organize parents' meetings/awareness sessions during times of relative normalcy. Aim to ensure that parents are familiar with the programme, and understand how they can facilitate its use when the children are unable to access school” (UNRWA, 2018b, p.11). The teacher guide noted that “Self-learning should be supported by a parent or community member” (UNRWA, 2018b, p.7), and students, parents, and community members would be vital in mobilizing resources in times of emergency (UNRWA, 2018b, p.6). Within the HRCRT program, community members are encouraged to play a more active role in the content of learning, inviting teachers to “consider inviting grandparents and parents on a regular basis to tell their stories, either to a single class or to the entire school,” in support of students developing a strong sense of Palestinian identity and cultural knowledge (UNRWA, 2013a, p.136). An explicit objective of the HRCRT curriculum notes, “Community links: The focus of this theme is to make their learning in school as practical as possible while encouraging community members and families to learn more about the education their children receive,” (UNRWA, 2013b, p.34). However, the involvement of community members in learning is also limited within the curriculum given the state of the Palestinian diaspora, and the structural denial of many human rights. In sharing stories in the classroom, teachers are cautioned to “Make sure that the grandparents and parents are aware of their audience: children. They should use simple language to highlight positive stories,” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.136). It is evident within the UNRWA curricular materials that parents and community members play a core role in the implementation of EiE and are trusted, in some capacities, to contribute

positively to students' learning and development. Community engagement in learning supports a whole-student approach (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009), though the attempt to limit narratives shared within the learning space facilitates the continuation of oppressive systems, negating the opportunity for the learning space to be a site of restorying, in which Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) asserts, community knowledge and experience may facilitate a more truthful understanding of power and oppression. This will be explored more in the 'risk mediation' criterion.

EducQuest Journey of a Question Initiative:

The *Journey of a Question* initiative does not explicitly include parents and community members in the intervention, but does recognize the role they may play implicitly in students continuing their inquiry and critical practice throughout and after the program. After the first year implementing the initiative, the development team created a brief guide for parents intended to teach parents inquiry-based learning as a way to support their students' learning (EducQuest, 2021b). This guide gave ways for parents to promote inquiry in their interactions with their child to use everyday situations into fun learning opportunities (EducQuest, 2021b). The developing team noted at the eLearning Africa 2022 conference that community implications were "revealed after season 2, when parents started to express real interest in inquiry-based learning and personalised learning. This actually led to organising an online workshop for parents to train them on some of the evidence-based learning strategies," (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). The direct inclusion of parents was not a component of the original program, though efforts are currently in development to bridge learning from the initiative into daily practice through parents and community members, adopting an expanded view of the classroom to integrate learning with everyday life, as Freire (1970) notes as expanding learning to the world beyond the bounds of a classroom. This produces more lasting and impactful learning by integrating skills acquisition

into daily practice rather than an accomplishment of a standard or objective.

Each program adopted a different strategy for parent and community engagement. SHLS focusing on parent engagement as a strategy for behavior and program compliance, while UNRWA conceptualizing parent and community engagement as a tool for cultural identity formation, but also potentially disruptive to the UN's concept of human rights education. The *Journey of a Question* initiative only recently evaluated the role of parent involvement in the lasting impact of learning. Parent and community engagement serves as an indication for both the integration of community knowledge into the learning space, but also the bridging of learning outside of the program towards the development of the whole student. Each program expressed a need to set parameters around parental involvement, which demonstrates a dynamic of power between the NGO program and parents over the development of the child.

Risk mediation

In the field of EiE there is a strong emphasis on education and learning spaces as a means of addressing risk factors associated with emergency contexts for young students. Agencies like the INEE include risk mediation standards in their recommendations for the field, encouraging learning to emphasis skills to navigate emergencies including resilience, trauma-informed care, and skills to support student assimilation (INEE, 2020). Each program was analyzed for risk mediation objectives and strategies as related to student agency, dynamics of saviorism, and power.

IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces:

SHLS focuses on many dimensions of risk mediation as a program implementing 'psychological first aid' and social emotional learning. By name, the program notes that it defines *Safe Healing and Learning Spaces* as "...caring and predictable environments where

children and adolescents in conflict and crisis can go during the day to ensure that they are protected from violence, and that they are learning and doing well socially and emotionally,” (IRC, 2016a, p. 25). One primary emphasis is the program’s assertion of child protection, and the need to protect children from the impact of emergencies. The *Foundational Training* notes “a strong emphasis on child protection is needed to ensure that children’s experience in the SHLS is free from all forms of violence and harm” (IRC, 2016a, p. 8). The SHLS program’s commitment to child protection is justified in the SEL training materials: “Children, even those who have faced danger and difficulty, can still thrive when exposed to a combination of stable, supportive caregivers, good health and nutrition, and quality learning experiences,” (IRC, 2016g, p. 46). In these explanations of child protection, SHLS asserts that the program is most capable of producing a safe and stable environment for students that is inherently not accessible to students in emergencies, carrying the assumption that access to stability and quality learning would not be possible for students without the NGO intervention. This directly reasserts the notion of saviorism, where the NGO is providing safety and protection to students through the recreation of colonial paternalism (Fanon, 1967), where resources and programs from the US are being implemented with the assumption that the program models more meaningful support than could be available within the community or context.

The SHLS program also asserts student self-efficacy as a risk mediation factor. The *Foundational Training* notes, “Our goal in an SHLS is to strengthen a child’s ‘inner resources’ to help them to be resilient” (IRC, 2016a, p. 32). In the SEL trainer materials, expected outcomes for students from participating in the program are outlined as, “children should understand the benefits of mindfulness for reducing feelings of anxiety and stress, focusing their attention, and learning to persevere through hardship” (IRC, 2016g, p. 10). The trainer manual also notes that

students should “develop a sense of control... positive self-concept, identity and confidence... Demonstrate self-reflection and improvement... (and) develop a sense of hope for the future,” (IRC, 2016g, pp. 10-11). The emphasis of students developing hard skills for emotional regulation, self-concept, and resilience signifies a distinctive expansion beyond viewing the learning space as only a space for student output as the program does incorporate an emphasis on student development and healing. Aguilar and Retamal (2009) note this extension to center student-healing as vital in emergency contexts to address the full development of students.

The SHLS program also bridges self-development and self-healing with an emphasis on interpersonal relationships to cultivate a sense of belonging. The *Foundational Manual* notes:

a sense of belonging is the feeling that you are part of a community, which promotes good learning and positive behavior. Children should feel a sense of belonging in the SHLS, which means they feel included, accepted and welcome... Connecting to children’s lives promotes a sense of belonging in the SHLS by helping SHLS Facilitators understand the children and their personal circumstances, and showing that their lived experiences are valued. (IRC, 2016a, p. 69)

To indicate belonging, teachers are given the indicators that students, “(s)how care and compassion for their peers... (t)rust and feel attached to their teachers... (f)eel included, accepted and welcome at the SHLS... (f)eel like they are part of a group, and that they are not alone...” (IRC, 2016a, p. 70). Within the SEL training, teachers are given the objective to support students to “...understand the importance of friendships and how they create a sense of belonging and support,” (IRC, 2016g, p. 21). Devonald and colleagues (2021) note the critical importance of belonging in student success within emergency contexts, and specifically note the need to bridge communities through learning in contexts of relocation. SHLS defines belonging as relation

between students and teachers and between students with peers as a means of validating students' experiences and seeing students as whole. There is also a reference to students feeling a sense of attachment to their teachers, which aligns with the notion of having a trusting adult as a child protection strategy.

UNRWA HRCRT Toolkit and Self-Learning Programme:

The UNRWA EiE materials conceptualize risk mediation as student development, but also as a restriction of dialogue and content within the classroom to maintain the integrity of UN definitions of human rights. One significant restriction used as a form of risk mediation is the restriction of historical dialogue within the HRCRT curriculum. The HRCRT teacher toolkit notes, “the historical context of Palestine refugees necessitates teachers and school management to be very sensitive about the way certain historical events are taught to students... keep in mind that the Toolkit is primarily about human rights education, not history” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.27). The promotion of critical dialogue in the classroom was conditioned with the aside that teachers should take caution when opening conversation with students about human rights, as a “right denied to some people where you live could be the “right of return.” It is important to discuss this activity beforehand with your Head Teacher and other teachers for suggestions on how to approach this topic sensitively,” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.123). With recognition that not all human rights are extended to Palestinian students, the HRCRT justifies limited critical dialogue by noting:

Human rights issues, especially for children whose rights are not fully enjoyed, can create a wide range of opinions, experiences, and understandings. Because of this, the reflection process must enable learning that strengthens self-confidence, the ability to express

oneself, and the ability to listen and understand the opinions of others. (UNRWA, 2013a, p.35)

Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) argues that the strategic omission of stories and experiences in learning spaces facilitates the continuation of coloniality, which is particularly so for the experience of Palestinian students (Abu Moghli, 2020).

UNRWA also centers self-efficacy as a risk mediation tool, centering personal development skills within curriculum guides. In the UNRWA psycho-social support resources guide, it is noted that lessons are designed and “specially selected for its potential to stimulate development in... emotional self-regulation, management, and personal growth... capacities and skills for collaboration and managing social relationships... and understanding and capacity to solve problems in their communities.” (UNRWA, 2016, p.3). This emphasis on personal development through EiE learning systems aligns with Aguilar and Retamal (2009) in considering tools for coping and healing as comparably valuable to learnings of literacy and numeracy, and positions personal development as relational to others, considering the necessity of collaboration and community in healing.

The HRCRT places a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships in the support of Palestinian students as a means of risk mediation. Interpersonal relationships are depicted as cultivating student belonging, and are established as a standard of learning modeled when students “show a sense of belonging to their school community, are proud of their Palestinian identity, and respect and value cultural diversity... Respect the human dignity of students and colleagues under all circumstances, including zero tolerance to violence...” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.41). Mutual respect between students and teachers, and between peers, is highly valued, further indicated by “care for personal property (such as a child’s own possessions and possessions of

other children) and school property (such as desks, chairs, and school grounds)... (and t)o be considerate of the opinions, beliefs, values, and feelings of others,” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.31). Within the HRCRT materials, students are also given a formula for conflict resolution with peers, including, “Calm down... Identify the problem and talk about it... Explore possible solutions... Agree on one solution” (UNRWA, 2013a, p.32). The basis of interpersonal connection in the HRCRT materials is one of tolerance, with particular attention to interpersonal conflict as the premise of the program. This idea of tolerance and action in accordance with the UN’s definition of human rights projects the responsibility of tolerance onto Palestinian students in the context of learning, which stands in contrast to the reality that many Palestinian students have no ability to actualize their human rights under the powers and decisions of international bodies like the UN. The responsibility of tolerance is universal, but must be considered as of equitable responsibility in context. With UNRWA implementing this training to students who are currently displaced in the Palestinian diaspora, careful consideration must be placed to the underlying stories of power which impact the context of implementation. The responsibility placed on students to act in accordance with human rights is paralleled with the program’s restriction of historically accurate narratives in the classroom which reveal human rights violations against Palestinian students.

EducQuest Journey of a Question Initiative:

While the *Journey of a Question* initiative does not explicitly refer to risk mediation, structures of safety and humanization are incorporated into daily practice. Created to address learning access and quality for Egyptian students during an educational crisis, the initiative aimed to “generate a sense of safety amidst COVID through engaging and enjoyable learning” (EducQuest, 2021d). Safety for students is primarily conceptualized as the humanization of

learning, making learning enjoyable and part of everyday life. Facilitators are instructed to “communicate in a humane, effective, and compassionate manner using constructive remote learning techniques” (EducQuest, 2021d). One parent noted that their student “was very shy at first... so afraid to interact with her new friends at first, but now she interacts, expresses herself freely, openly and without fear. The initiative helped her not only intellectually but also on an emotional level,” (Abdulljawad & Younes, 2022). The lack of emphasis on risk mediation in favor of humanization in learning follows an asset-based approach, where learning is looked at as a positive tool for the growth and development of students. Further investigation is needed regarding the cultural relevance of ‘risk mediation’ in Egyptian learning.

As a core principle of EiE, risk mediation appears in differing implicit and explicit ways across the three programs. SHLS focuses on risk mediation through child protection, using the program as a bearer of safety for students which leans upon dynamics of saviorism. UNRWA navigates risk mediation in some facets by limiting open and critical dialogue surrounding the historical experience of Palestinian communities so as not to disrupt the integrity of the UN’s human rights which are perpetually denied to Palestinians. Both the SHLS and UNRWA programs lean on self-efficacy skills and interpersonal relationships as risk mediators, centering behaviors of tolerance and a sense of belonging for students in the classroom which break from neoliberal principles of hyper-individuation in learning spaces. *Journey of a Question* does not focus on risk mediation, but, rather, associates the humanization of learning with the cultivation of safety for students. Risk mediation as a criterion offers a lens into the relational dynamics of power in vulnerable contexts, and its conceptualization by program supports further investigation into dynamics of saviorism within the EiE sector.

Summary

In this study, three EiE programs were selected for analysis as representative of a global education program, a region-specific program, and a local/state-level EiE initiative. Program materials were analyzed on the basis of seven criteria: (1) *Purpose of learning*, (2) *Instructional methods*, (3) *Literacy and numeracy standards*, (4) *Legitimacy*, (5) *Teaching staff agency*, (6) *Parent/community engagement*, and (7) *Risk mediation*. In analysis of the purpose of learning, the programs differed significantly from the SHLS emphasis on child safety and protection, UNRWA's focus on the full development of identity and behavior aligned with human rights for Palestinian students, and *Journey of a Question*'s emphasis on students acquiring 21st century skills through critical inquiry. Each program exercised some elements of play-based instructional methods, but took contrasting approaches to their core methodologies, with SHLS emphasizing banking methods, UNRWA practicing limited problem-posing methods, and *Journey of a Question* exercising student-centered inquiry-based learning. Across standards of literacy and numeracy, SHLS and UNRWA documented detailed objectives and criteria which students would need to meet in reading and math skills with the intention of preparing students to be valuable to host countries with skills for labor and to fit societal norms through assimilation, while *Journey of a Question* used a scaffolding approach to incorporate literacy and numeracy skills as tools towards critical inquiry. In claiming legitimacy as an EiE program, SHLS and UNRWA emphasized association with other INGOs and compliance with global education standards as well as the reputation of funders, while *Journey of a Question* emphasized local-level legitimacy being created and implemented by Egyptian educators for Egyptian students. Each program conceptualized the agency of teaching staff differently, with SHLS practicing scripting and strict behavioral standards for teachers, UNRWA viewing teachers as experts in the delivery of learning to students, but also maintaining hierarchy within teaching staff, and

Journey of a Question viewing teachers as facilitators and providers of resources to support students' inquiry journey. Each program incorporated varying practices of parent and community engagement, with SHLS conceptualizing parents as a resource for the promotion of behavioral compliance in students, UNRWA considering the incorporation of community members as story-tellers in the classroom, and *Journey of a Question* actively considering how to collaborate with parents to bridge inquiry-based learning into everyday life for students. Finally, each program conceptualized risk mediation differently, with SHLS focusing on child protection, UNRWA constricting classroom dialogue to maintain focus on human rights, both centering student self-efficacy and relationship-building, and *Journey of a Question* focusing on student safety through humanizing learning. These findings provide deeper insight into the values of EiE as expressed in learning objectives and standards, EiE values in activities and curricular materials, teacher agency in EiE programs, and how community knowledge is bridged into learning, offering further implications for decolonizing and humanizing EiE programming.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With increased attention to global quality learning, the field of Education in Emergencies (EiE) has played a significant role in advocating for education in humanitarian settings. Education within settings of armed conflict or environmental crisis is largely underfunded in the scope of humanitarian relief (INEE, 2020), making the work of NGOs highly influential and significant to education delivery. This also subjects emergency learning spaces to the dynamics of global education development, funded and influenced by international development agencies like the World Bank, known in the field for influencing learning towards neoliberalism (Bromley & Andina, 2010). Values of neoliberalism permeate global education development through the close entanglement of learning and workforce development, where standards of learning are motivated by preparing students to contribute to the labor force and economic development of their country, or, in the case of EiE, their host country (Cardozo & Novelli, 2018). In the landscape of global development, the influences of colonial powers are masked in dynamics of “aid,” recreating colonial dependencies and conditions of exploitation (Fanon, 1967; Freire, 1970).

The influences of global development and colonial dynamics with the emergency learning sector have only recently started to gain research interest, and the role of NGOs in providing EiE remains largely under-investigated. NGOs have established their role in contributing to “Education for All” by forging partnerships with government schools (Tota, 2014), and have increased quality of learning by providing educational enrichment (Gali & Schechter, 2020) and educational facilities in areas and communities formerly disenfranchised from schooling (Saud & Ashfaq, 2021). They also serve as mediators between community values

and global standards of learning, in some cases using NGO resources to synthesize learning standards and development with community-relevant learning (Levitan & Johnson, 2020), and at other times replicating erasure and western domination by taking over learning without community buy-in (Seeberg et al., 2017). The delivery of learning in emergency contexts faces additional challenges of being highly politicized, challenged by navigating education responsibilities between home country and host country for students experiencing displacement (Rahman et al., 2020; Devonald et al., 2021), historical legacies of power and violence that contribute to conflict or crisis (Abiew, 2012; Abu Moghli, 2020), and contrasting motivations of learning as a tool to rebuild. Acting in the space between community learning and the responsibilities of states and the international community, NGOs exercise their agility and frugality to play a critical role in continued learning for students in emergencies, but only have the tools and funding to provide temporary solutions, navigating the fleeting global attention given to emergency contexts that are inherently protracted in nature (Creed & Morpeth, 2014).

EiE navigates the spaces between international development, global humanitarianism, and the project of universal quality education as a human right, but the role and motivations that arise from the NGO education sector and global development are largely under-investigated. In this study, three EiE programs were analyzed using qualitative content analysis on curricular materials including teacher training manuals, lesson plans, parent guides, and curriculum frameworks to examine the motivations of learning in emergencies and the role of NGOs in facilitating education. The three programs demonstrated differing approaches to learning in emergency contexts, exposing underlying dynamics of power, student and community agency, and the influence of colonial power dynamics in global education relations. While each program aimed to bridge quality learning with contextual factors, there are many lessons for the field of

EiE to glean from decolonial praxis. This study aimed to answer four key questions: *What values are explicit and implicit in the standards and learning objectives of EiE curriculum? What values are explicit and implicit in activities and materials of EiE curriculum? What dynamics of power emerge between the NGO and the learning community through teacher and administrative responsibilities? And, how does EiE curriculum connect to community beliefs, values, and knowledge?* The findings reveal important nuances to these questions, and expose a significant need for further research on the implementation of EiE programming.

EiE values in learning objectives and standards

The purpose of learning across the three programs revealed deeper values within the field of EiE. The IRC's SHLS program focused on providing safety for students in emergencies, emphasizing child protection and positive relationships with teachers as factors of risk mediation, but also expressing need for student obedience and self-regulation while meeting rigorous standards of literacy and numeracy. The UNRWA programs approached EiE from a human rights perspective, nurturing Palestinian identity in students but also setting the expectation that students would develop skills to contribute to the economies of host countries, and would assert the UN's vision of human rights while being denied the right to return. These global and regional implementations expose the influence of global education development and neoliberalism through explicit statement of literacy and numeracy standards, a construct of education standardization which came from the rise of neoliberalism (Apple, 1990), and by also proposing students' contribution to the workforce as a positive factor of programming. However, these also show a dichotomy present in the field between students as objects of economic development and a stated interest in the personal development and wellness of students through the cultivation of self-efficacy skills, identity-formation, and belonging.

Journey of a Question aids in the exposure of this dichotomy by posing no standards of literacy and numeracy, but, instead, uses core literacy and numeracy skills to scaffold students' research, emphasizing student agency as a core value that does not need to be entangled with what the students' could then contribute to global development. *Journey of a Question* prepares Egyptian students to navigate the modern world and growing fields of technology in Egypt, and does so by centering the student over the outcome. This may expose a belief within the field that education in emergencies is only fundable, or perceived as legitimate, if linked to a measurable financial gain, commodifying students as a labor force emerging from a highly politicized and vulnerable context. This inherently recreates exploitation and must be further researched to clarify if EiE is practiced with the values of whole-student learning towards education as a human right, or with the values of eliciting global development and economic profitability from students in humanitarian settings.

EiE values in activities and curricular materials

In examining curricular materials, this study focused on what three NGOs posed as their ideal implementation of EiE. As educators can attest, lesson plans and frameworks can often look very different in practice, offering opportunities for future research to observe the contrasts between the vision posed in materials versus what comes to be in practice. The materials examined do still reveal strong values within activities and lesson plans. The IRC's SHLS program offers a detailed vision of what ideal implementation of the program should be like, noting that teachers need to follow the scripts and structures verbatim, and that students must abide by the rules and expectations outlined in the materials with teachers activating positive discipline if students do not comply. This top-down approach from NGO to teacher, and then teacher to student could expose a lack of trust between the NGO and local education staff, but

could also indicate a belief that learning must be rigid in order to be legitimate in global implementation. This carries the implication that the NGO is more qualified to produce quality learning from their headquarters in the US than educators would be to meet the needs of their students in-context, recreating narratives of western superiority in education.

UNRWA and *Journey of a Question* contrast this dynamic through explicit mention of teachers and students as the experts of their learning, and the need of programming to be adaptable to context. The emphasis on student-centered learning and critical engagement where students drive learning demonstrates humanization within education, indicating that regional and local implementations may have a clearer understanding of student need in context, and more trust in educators to meet the needs of students.

All programs incorporated some element of play, creativity, or game-based learning, emphasizing how education in emergencies needs to center student engagement and expression. Scholars in the field have highlighted how education is a means of supporting students in coping with stress and processing the impacts of emergencies (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009), which has evidently become a norm each program shares in practice. Each of the three programs indicate a sense of responsibility for student well-being and healing through learning activities, demonstrating an understanding in the field that EiE must provide student support beyond traditional learning standards.

Teacher agency in EiE programs

Teacher agency varied significantly between the three programs, indicating differing levels of trust in quality implementation at the site-level, and exposing top-down power dynamics in NGO-facilitated EiE. IRC's SHLS program materials outlined scripted lesson plans, and rigid implementation structures and objectives, indicating what Apple (1990) refers to as the

deskilling of teachers, positioning the NGO as the authority and teachers as deliverers of knowledge to students. This is contrasted by UNRWA's approach to teachers as experts in adapting learning to students' needs, addressing that materials would need to be adaptable and that teachers would be the most qualified to do this. However, hierarchy in teaching staff was still enforced, with Education Specialists at field offices and headquarters as the most senior, maintaining elements of top-down power in the delivery of learning. *Journey of a Question* contrasted this by framing education as driven by the students, with teachers as facilitators of learning by connecting students with relevant skills and perspectives to their interests and inquiry. This enabled teachers to not only adapt to context, but to adapt learning to the individual needs and interests of students, providing a personalized learning experience that equip students with research skills while also developing the whole student.

The agency of teachers offers clear insight into the perception and role of educators in context. The stripping of teacher agency could indicate a lack of trust in local educators, which reinforces global dynamics of legitimacy in knowledge production that privileges western knowledge and educational models. This may also expose a concern within EiE programming that adaptability may disrupt reputation, and the only way to ensure quality is aligned with the original conceptualization of the program which requires strict conformity to scripts and lesson guides. If this is the case, the field of EiE must consider who defines quality learning, what ends are intended, and why western learning systems are legitimized as globally-relevant models for education.

Community beliefs, values and knowledge in EiE programs

Community-relevant knowledge and learning is conceptualized and integrated into learning in distinctive ways across the three programs. In the SHLS program, hyper-

standardization and scripting provides limited opportunities to position learning meaningfully in context, with family and community involvement with learning limited to participation in student discipline and behavioral expectations (IRC, 2016a). There are notes for teachers to adapt content of some stories and examples within the program to be more relevant to students, but these notes are contradicted by other statements which prevent teachers from altering learning content. The SHLS program's emphasis on child protection also limits the presence of community knowledge and parental involvement with learning as educational spaces are viewed as an opportunity for students to experience safety that is not available within their communities, positioning the IRC as the bearers of safety for students in some respects from the lack of safety within their communities.

UNRWA views community knowledge as integral to its mission of developing students' Palestinian identity, but also indicates a lack of trust in direct community involvement. Teachers are advised that elders who enter the classroom to share their experiences and stories must not focus on historical events or critique the current state of the Palestinian diaspora, but, rather, only focus on positive aspects and resilience in the community. This directly participates in the erasure of Palestinian history, which Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) notes facilitates the perpetuation of colonial power.

In focusing explicitly on student inquiry, *Journey of a Question* does not directly engage community knowledge in learning, and has only recently started to explore parental involvement with program efficacy. However, with freedom to choose their research question, students can demonstrate interest in historic and culturally-relevant topics that impact their communities, demonstrating the program's readiness to support culturally-relevant learning if related to students' topics of interest.

Across the three programs, a lack of trust in community knowledge can be observed within the curricular materials, which position the program as expert in providing learning to students besides the community rather than within the community. This indicates a definitive area of growth for EiE as an inherently multicultural educational discipline which navigates highly political spaces, and offers an area for growth in the decolonization of emergency learning.

Recommendations

Through critical content analysis of three EiE programs implemented by global, regional, and local NGOs, three distinctive visions for ideal emergency learning exposed strengths, tensions, and opportunities for growth in the field. From these understandings, I offer three recommendations for educators, key actors, agencies, NGOs, and funders of EiE programming:

1. Trust student inquiry

The global emphasis on hyper-standardization of learning is largely built on a projection that western, neoliberal learning structures which center literacy and numeracy standards towards workforce readiness is the ultimate model for quality learning. This is reinforced by a distrust of community and indigenous knowledge systems, justifying the recreation of colonial power dynamics and western dominance under the guise of humanitarianism and international development. *Journey of a Question* demonstrates a way in which student inquiry can drive quality learning while maintaining teachers as experts in their craft and dismantling traditional power dynamics in learning spaces. However, learning led by student inquiry requires the guidance and support of skilled educators, with a need for quality teacher training to supercede quality student-driven learning. It is possible for inquiry-based learning to be scalable and an

opportunity for humanizing learning within EiE, but requires attention to be drawn to the need for quality teacher training to establish the environment for quality learning.

2. Activate teacher agency and lateral student-teacher relationships

In humanitarian contexts especially, skilled and adaptable educators are vital in providing students with the skills and environment needed to navigate emergencies. This requires adequate funding in order to offer fair pay for educators in emergencies, and a recognition that high quality education cannot be facilitated solely through volunteers. With quality educators and adequate teacher training tools, programs will be more equipped to address the evolving needs of students, and to offer more meaningful holistic learning.

As literature in the field reinforces, EiE must facilitate continued education for students, but must also address student healing and coping skills as routine and safety are disrupted. Lateral power shared between students and teachers centers trust within learning spaces, modeling to students that they can be trusted to define their learning interests and that they can trust their teachers with providing resources and skills for their success. Teacher and student agency in emergency contexts better equip learning spaces to be adaptable, and for learning to extend beyond the classroom into students' actions and agency within their daily lives.

3. Decolonize humanitarianism

The global and regional programs investigated through this content analysis reveal pervasive dynamics of saviorism within the field of EiE, where communities are not trusted in providing safety nor quality learning to students, reinforcing dependency and dynamics of colonial paternalism. The field must initiate open and challenging conversations about the presence of colonial dynamics in EiE programming, and critically contemplate if student healing and holistic development can be considered a core value of the field while reinforcing the

commodification of students as an emerging labor force. There is resistance to this conversation within the field as it requires that the guise of benevolence which has protected humanitarianism from necessary critique be dismantled, revealing uncomfortable truths about how the field has perpetuated violence. There is a simultaneous global reality in which students must be prepared to navigate neoliberal markets, and employment is quite literally a pathway to safety and stability. Local initiatives provide meaningful models for engagement in decolonial education practices within EiE, and further community-driven learnings for the field must contemplate what the deeper motivations of learning are in emergency contexts, and how to best equip students to navigate the world.

This study explores many shortcomings of the field of EiE, but also reveals how the field is consistently evolving, with local initiatives providing distinctive models for how decolonial education can better equip students with skills they need in humanitarian contexts. It is my hope that this study sparks continued decolonial scholarship surrounding the motivations of learning in emergencies, and offers an opportunity for more local initiatives and student-centered models of learning to be integrated into broad practices in the field. EiE has the potential to establish access to quality education as community-relevant and whole-student centered, and could set a new tone for the role of NGOs in global education from facilitators of neoliberal learning to agile resource-sharers participating in global shifts in power and decolonial learning.

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Appendix A

Qualitative Content Analysis Matrix

Criteria	EducQuest	IRC	UNRWA	NOTES (power, saviorism, colonial legacy, agency)
Name	<i>Journey of a Question Initiative</i>	<i>Safe Healing and Learning Spaces</i>	<i>Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) Toolkit and UNRWA Self-Learning Programme</i>	
Structure	Distance/remote learning; 6-week interactive learning program July-August	Non-formal learning	UNRWA schools and distance learning tools for education in emergencies through self-learning guides, online interactive learning, and UNRWA TV via YouTube	
Age range	7-17 years	6-11 years	Grades 1-9 (6-14 years)	
Development	Developed for Egyptian students by five Egyptian educators amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as Egypt implemented new research-based learning standards and national remote learning operations	Developed in the IRC headquarters in the United States by three curriculum specialists in conjunction with materials produced by Save the Children's <i>Psychological First Aid</i> training program	Materials developed by UNRWA headquarters and field offices to address Human Rights Education and education in emergencies solutions for Palestinian students in Gaza and West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan	
Year	2020	2016	2012, 2019	
Purpose of Learning (To what end?)				

<p>Literacy & Numeracy Standards (Whose standards? Towards what end? Mastery defined as...)</p>				
<p>Legitimacy (How the program gains external credibility in providing programs for students in emergencies)</p>				
<p>Teaching Staff Agency (Lesson planning, content, pedagogy)</p>				
<p>Instructional Methods (Banking, problem-posing, indigenous knowledge/ whole student)</p>				
<p>Parental/ Community engagement (How are parents included in learning? How is community knowledge incorporated?)</p>				
<p>Risk Mediation (Context-relevant skills for navigating emergency; key words ‘belonging,’ ‘protection,’ ‘risk,’ ‘coping’)</p>				