The Role of Teachers in Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion

Synthesis Report on Findings from Myanmar, Pakistan, South Africa and Uganda

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The purpose of this synthesis report is twofold. First, it explores the role of teachers in peacebuilding and social cohesion in four distinct conflict affected environments (Myanmar, Pakistan, South Africa and Uganda). Second, it compares, summarises and critically reflects on key issues, policies and governance aspects that relate to how teachers might contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion processes. In doing so, we pay close attention to aspects of redistribution, representation, recognition and reconciliation (see: Novelli et al. 2015).

Analytical Framework and Methodology

The methodology for this report builds on:

- The consortium’s 4Rs theoretical framework: the role of key processes of redistribution (equity in the distribution of resources - economic), representation (participation in decision making - political), recognition (affirming the diversity of identities) and reconciliation (healing across divides) within peacebuilding and education sector planning and policy;
- The report is also informed by an initial literature review on the role of teachers in promoting peacebuilding and social cohesion (Horner et al, 2015).
- This was followed by fieldwork in all of the countries which included semi-structured interviews (individual and small group) with various actors at country level, including: government officials, UNICEF and any other UNCT staff, representatives of international donors and INGOs, academics, civil society organisations, schools officials and many other country- and context-specific actors.

Four Country Case Studies: Pakistan, Myanmar, South Africa and Uganda

The four country case studies (Pakistan, Myanmar, South Africa and Uganda) represent a variety of contexts relating to the relationship between education and peacebuilding, in terms of geographical diversity, the nature and temporality of the conflict and the drivers and root causes that underpin them. South Africa emerged out of the struggle against apartheid, a conflict rooted in racism and social exclusion, whose legacies and inequalities remain more than two decades after conflict. South Africa provides us with a rich resource to reflect more historically on the challenges and possibilities for the education system to contribute to promoting sustainable peacebuilding. Uganda, another country in Africa, remains divided between a peaceful South and Central Region and a Northern region that has suffered a series of punctuated armed conflicts for almost three decades. Pakistan, in South Asia, is a huge country that has suffered from a series of conflicts in recent years, linked to instability in Afghanistan, the global ‘war on terror’, regional tensions with its neighbour India, and violent internal political unrest. Finally, Myanmar presents us with a case study from South East Asia, of a country on the brink of entering a post-conflict period after decades of highly authoritarian military rule, challenged by a range of armed and non-armed ethnic and political movements. The rich diversity of research sites emphasises the need for conflict sensitive, contextually coherent approaches to enhancing the role of education in peacebuilding.
“The rich diversity of research sites emphasises the need for conflict sensitive, contextually coherent approaches to enhancing the role and potential of education in peacebuilding processes in each context, while serving to enrich globally relevant insights and reflections on the differing challenges, possibilities and potentials of education, as a key social sector, in the promotion of sustainable peace-promoting societies.”

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and potential of education in peacebuilding processes in each context, while serving to enrich globally relevant insights and reflections on the differing challenges, possibilities and potentials of education, as a key social sector, in the promotion of sustainable peace-promoting societies. In each of the countries attention is paid to:

1. Conceptions of teacher agency
2. Teachers and violence
3. Teacher governance focusing on teacher recruitment and deployment
4. Teacher accountability and trust
5. Teacher professional development (initial and continuing)
6. Curriculum and textbooks

10 Key Reflections on Teachers, Peacebuilding & Social Cohesion

Building on the findings of the study in relation to the key issues, 10 key reflections are offered to deepen the empirical findings and to raise key issues for dialogue and debate amongst researchers, policy-makers, teachers and teacher-educators committed to building peace and sustainable development in societies engaged in and emerging from conflict.

1. In transition moments there is a window of opportunity and space for a more explicit approach to peacebuilding and social cohesion in education

In contexts where countries are emerging out of armed conflict, the transitional period represents a real moment of possibility, whereby issues of social cohesion and peacebuilding can be placed at the top of the agenda. Of course this depends on the outcome of armed conflict, the balance of social forces, and the political will of emergent governments. But all post-conflict societies, to different degrees, will seek to address issues of reconciliation through policies of social cohesion and peacebuilding. Armed and non-armed opposition groups contesting governments in power have, as the country studies show, created and established schooling systems and possess a vision of a future education system. Such experiences include how they understand and approach peacebuilding and social cohesion in post-conflict contexts. As such there is no blank slate for developing education systems and policies orientated to peacebuilding and social cohesion. These experiences are crucial in shaping dialogue about the future. International agencies therefore need to acknowledge and recognise such experiences in their efforts at supporting post-conflict contexts. Moreover, as the case of Myanmar shows, the transition space is an important moment in embedding peacebuilding and social cohesion in education. In contrast, the South African case demonstrates the missed moment that was available to the opposition movements led by the ANC against apartheid in 1994 and in which they were to not able to fully develop a more progressive and more egalitarian education system making decisive choices about redistribution, recognition, and representation in and through education.
2. **Teacher agency for social cohesion and peacebuilding as determining and determined**

The cross-country study hints strongly towards the idea that teacher agency is conditioned in differentiated ways by the context they find themselves in. There are two interrelated ways in which this is manifest. The first is experiential determination. Social class and experiences of conflict determines much of the lived realities of teachers such as where they live, where they go to school, and who their friends are. This experiential determination is shaped by social class, race, religion, sexuality, gender, and geographical history. Peacebuilding and social cohesion as belonging and solidarity is thus to a large extent shaped by the social class determined basis of the everyday lived experience.

The second is determined within institutions of schooling and teacher education that shape what teacher and student teachers as future agents of peacebuilding and social cohesion experience. These institutions in diverse contexts continue to be shaped by contours of historic institutional configurations. Thus teachers and student teachers mediate understandings of policy aims and intentions, according to their institutional experiences which results in very differentiated and uneven approaches to peacebuilding and social cohesion.

Experiential determinations thus punctuate forms of agency in the different countries facilitating and inhibiting it in contingent and unequal measures. These determinations suggest that while efforts are made to create a united nation at the formal system level, there is separation at the individual school, community, institutional, and personal level. The agency of teachers then is often enacted in spaces that remain segmented and separated, with tools that are shaped by experience and institution, and in ways that are productive in as much as they are barren.

3. **State policy and capacity for enabling teacher agency for social cohesion and peacebuilding**

A vision of social cohesion and peacebuilding as transformative and transforming requires a policy framework that includes specific, measurable and achievable targets and indicators that measure activities, programmes, and events. It also has to be underpinned by a framework which challenges fixed and reified individual and group identities as exemplified by versions of liberal multi-culturalism. On the other hand, realising the laudable intentions of policy frameworks relies on the aggregate capacity of the system to manage and monitor. Aggregate system capacity rests on the knowledge, skills and dispositions of actors, which include national, provincial and district officials, school leaders and teachers, and school governing body members. Thus there is a need for an explicit focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion across government departments and within government departments. For example, in Myanmar and Uganda there is need for curriculum, ITE, and CPDT to communicate. It is always a challenge dealing with a particular thematic area such as peacebuilding and social cohesion that transverses the work of other government departments and
units, for example, there is mixed experience with regard to stand alone gender units in ministries of education. What appears important is the level of authority accorded to whoever is responsible for these cross-cutting themes such as peacebuilding or gender or equity. In addition, consideration might be given to a senior level Focal Point or champion who works within Ministries of Education and across other Ministries to provide a sustained focus on transversal concerns such as peacebuilding and social cohesion. Crucially, such champions need to be accorded a level of authority commensurate with the importance of this task to ensure effective mainstreaming. One way for this to be effective might be to nominate a single government department/unit tasked with peacebuilding and social cohesion in education.

State capacity to effect peacebuilding and social cohesion is impacted by the nature of the system of governance. The country case studies reveal diverse approaches to the centralisation and decentralisation of education governance. Myanmar seems to be decentralising education governance as is Pakistan, with the Section 18th Amendment, as well as Uganda. In contrast South Africa, which has a long history of education decentralisation, revealed ongoing inequities and conflict across different school types and communities resulting from such a policy. Many of the interventions for effecting equity and social cohesion in and through education for teachers has come unstuck as result of the way the system of education decentralisation has unfolded which, as the country case suggests, is an outcome of the contestation and compromise made between different social forces. There is much lesson learning across the country contexts and in this regard an important lesson is the need to provide a robust and sound framework for empowering authentic forms of education decentralisation which do not, by design or default, result in exacerbating group tensions which may have divisive and conflict engendering consequences.

4. Developing a more radical conception of teacher agency for social cohesion and peacebuilding
Conceptually, and in policy and practice, the notion of peacebuilding and social cohesion is contested. As noted in the conceptual framework, there are those who advocate peacebuilding and social cohesion, in policy and practice, as awareness of the ‘other’ for which interaction strategies are proffered. This is manifest in, for example, celebrations of different religious days, and teaching which focuses on an understanding of different religions and groups, cross-racial camps, choral choirs and sport events. In this form, peacebuilding and social cohesion is premised on largely intact, stable and cohesive group and individual identities. Changes within these are focused on an awareness of how the ‘other’ lives, thinks, and practices. Understandings of the ‘other’ lay the foundation of a form of nation building that extols difference but seeks to secure consensus about common goals. Alternative conceptualisations of peacebuilding and social cohesion recognise the limitations of the above and seek to build an egalitarian and communitarian society in which identity and belonging is destabilised and critiqued. This approach questions ascribed and prescribed markers of
belonging that are taken-for-granted. In this sense peacebuilding and social cohesion in and through agency could be viewed as a continuum with benign multi-culturalism on the one extreme and radical anti-racism, anti-sexism, etc. on the other. Radical conceptions of teacher agency for peacebuilding and social cohesion move beyond teachers respecting each other and learners but also encompass strategies in and through teaching which confront the historic inequities and drivers of conflict. Along this continuum there are several variations of peacebuilding and social cohesion that seek to balance difference with commonality, social class interest with cross-class solidarity, individual interest with societal imperatives, and loyalty and fidelity to the state with critical forms of citizenship. Conflict and contestation is not inimical to the process. A transformative peacebuilding and social cohesion agenda seeks to effect social justice and relies on difference being destabilised and re-assembled in diverse ways, and identities traversing ascribed markers, which consequently engender conflict and contestation. Conflict represents an important element of ‘peacebuilding and social cohesion as process’ which at an individual level is psychological and, at the societal level, structural. As process, peacebuilding and social cohesion conceived of in this way is never final nor complete; it is an outcome that requires continuous renewal and is always in a state of flux.

Furthermore, if we are to seriously empower teachers to be agents of peacebuilding and social cohesion, then we need to address the salary, conditions of service, morale and status of the teaching profession.

5. The balance of social forces in different contexts shapes the conditions under which peacebuilding and social cohesion teacher related reforms are developed and implemented

Approaches to peacebuilding and social cohesion regarding teachers differ across the four countries. In South Africa there is an explicit approach to equity and redress. In Myanmar, the agenda is mainly externally driven and politically cautious. In Pakistan it is highly contradictory – education reforms, many of which are resisted by a range of forces. In Uganda the approach is rather slow and implicit. Thus efforts at peacebuilding and social cohesion which challenge inequity, as a key driver of conflict, must contend with the range of social forces with vested interests in maintaining privilege and inequities. Thus the policy formulation and implementation process should give due cognisance to power and competing interests which might undermine progressive intended goals. Ignoring the political economy context of policy runs the risk of marginalising concerns with peacebuilding and social cohesion.

6. Affective shift in education evident, but under-developed

Evidence from the country case studies supports the idea that there is increasing global interest in education’s role in promoting peacebuilding and social cohesion,
reflecting broader global and national concerns around conflict, social strife, economic and political crisis and rising inequality, which all threaten stability. This slow, uneven shift to the social and affective is a welcome rebalancing to educational concerns linked to economic growth, efficiency and broader neoliberal reforms – a shift that needs nurturing and sustaining. As such the study highlights a shift in policy and practice as a response to on-going physical and symbolic violence, xenophobia, and the denial of the rights of groups such as LGBTIQ and migrants and refugees. This affective turn, this report notes, occurs in a context of an expanded notion of education quality nationally and globally as noted within the 2030 Sustainable development agenda. The specification of social cohesion as an important part of, but separate to, the education quality agenda is important as it ensures that affective goals in education are not delegitimated in favour of a strategy which privileges ‘litnum’ (literacy and numeracy). Yet, as noted above, there is a danger that the lack of specification of the peacebuilding and social cohesion goal in the 2030 agenda runs a risk of according peacebuilding and social cohesion less priority.

In this context the report argues that good quality education, particularly for the poor, is a foundational element of creating the bond of solidarity, belonging and critical citizenship that is necessary for social cohesion. Good quality education therefore is intimately connected to the promotion of peacebuilding and social cohesion. Moreover redressing inequities in society should remain a core priority of good quality education. Furthermore, the report argues that peacebuilding and social cohesion is an education policy objective in and of itself. Thus, this report argues that there is no trade-off between the objectives of peacebuilding and social cohesion and equity and quality. However, strategies as discussed in this report remain partial, under-developed and need more collective and concerted action. In the case of teachers, it is clear that if we wish teachers to play their full role as agents of peacebuilding and social cohesion they require an enabling economic, political and social environment as well as reining in both the affective and the cognitive. Thus, it is imperative the affective turn in education discourses is solidified and privileged.

7. Moving beyond interaction and contact for peacebuilding and social cohesion

A starting point for peacebuilding and social cohesion policy and practice as the country studies suggest, recognises the salience of individual and group contact. Dialogue and mutual interaction is the sine qua non of peacebuilding and social cohesion and is reflected in several programmes and interventions in teacher education across the countries studied. But a social justice approach requires more than contact. It requires effort, as the TRC in South Africa showed, albeit very partially, to confront the past and redress social inequities.

At the individual level, strong forms of peacebuilding and social cohesion involve challenging identities and confronting the privilege and benefits that individuals, including teachers and teacher educators, accrued and accumulated from systems designed to benefit some at the expense of others. Moreover intergroup contact must be founded on approaches that do not deny the past, and which do not practice a
‘politics of avoidance’ that preclude discussion of group and individual investments in systems of privilege. Thus, peacebuilding and social cohesion beyond inter-group contact is psychological as much as it is structural.

At the societal level this necessitates more proactive forms of redistribution within programmes of affirmative action. Such programmes should not simply be short-term strategic interventions; they must be founded on the principles of social justice to redress substantive rights that were denied to a majority-oppressed population. They must also be more than ‘leveling the playing field’, and rather, to extend the metaphor, should be about ‘changing the game and the rules of the game’. In essence, this may require an approach to peacebuilding and social cohesion founded in alternative progressive economic growth and development paths and visions.

8. An explicit focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion in teacher professional development

Across the case studies social cohesion and peacebuilding are treated unevenly and in a variety of ways. They range from implicit to explicit interventions, and from the generic to the specific. As such some interventions specifically focus on attaining peacebuilding and social cohesion whereas in others these objectives are subsumed as part of more general professional development support for teachers. To ensure that peacebuilding and social cohesion concerns are not delegitimated and de-prioritised it is important to ensure that they are integrated in all policies and practices focused on teachers.

The report also highlights the importance of teacher educators and facilitators of training who support future and existing teachers in peacebuilding and social cohesion activities. However, as noted, they have histories and experiences of conflict both as victims and perpetrators, and carry with them prejudices and biases against others who do not share their identity and belonging. Thus, a focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion must provide support to teacher educators and facilitators of training as well as the institutions they are located in. In order for this to occur, institutions and providers need to be supported through policy, resources and the provision of professional development opportunities for teacher educators and facilitators. Whilst the country case studies show varied and differentiated CPTD opportunities for teachers to engage in their professional learning and in opportunities to empower them to become agents of peace and social cohesion, these opportunities remain fragmented, uncoordinated and often driven by international donors. To this end, there is a need to develop a more systematic, coordinated and integrated CPTD system for peacebuilding and social cohesion as part of a wider set of education reforms.

9. An explicit peacebuilding and social cohesion curriculum focus

Like teacher professional development, issues of peacebuilding and social cohesion in curriculum and textbooks is often present implicitly, located in a range of carrier subjects, and often under-prioritised. Moreover, there is a dilemma between weak/generic and strong/specific approaches. The former emphasise skills such as respect and building trust. The latter focuses on the skills of conflict management, conflict
resolution and resilience and works towards engaging more critically with the diverse identities and belongings which, in many contexts, are the drivers of conflict. Similarly to issues of gender, there is a debate to be had about whether issues of peacebuilding and social cohesion should be embedded in all subjects and across the curriculum and therefore, textbooks, or whether it should have a single carrier subject. Whilst these tensions and dilemmas are recognised, the reality is that a more comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and social cohesion will ensure that the textbooks and curricula are not in anyway biased or prejudiced. The country analyses show how the curricula and textbooks in both conflict and post conflict contexts project exclusivist, narrow nationalistic and biased singular identities and conceptions of the other. There is thus a need to both mainstream issues of peacebuilding and social cohesion as well as ensuring it has dedicated curriculum space, and a dedicated carrier subject. However, the dedicated subject (whoever is chosen) must be given equal status to STEM subjects and must be examinable, as non-assessment of a carrier subject delegitimises the focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion as the different case studies demonstrate.

Language policy and Language of Instruction policy is crucial to how peacebuilding and social cohesion is dealt with in the curriculum. The marginalisation of language is, in many contexts, a driver of conflict.

The country studies reveal, albeit differently and unevenly, the strong influence of international agencies and donor organisations on education policy in general, and peacebuilding and social cohesion interventions in particular in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In Myanmar, Pakistan, and Uganda, for example, international agencies play a key role is shaping the nature and form of such interventions. However, such support should be aligned and led by national governments. This requires national governments developing comprehensive and holistic teacher policies which foreground issues of peace and social cohesion. Moreover, in the context of the 2030 global education and development agenda, it is crucial that agencies such as UNICEF maintain a focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion to ensure that it does not get marginalised in favour of a narrower focus on literacy and numeracy.
Enabling and Necessary Conditions for Enhancing Teachers Agency for Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion

Realising the options above, and any others, requires a number of important and necessary conditions for effective implementation, though the provided list is not exhaustive.

1. Political will

The report highlights the need for political will coupled with a progressive bureaucracy invested in change linked to the affective turn in social cohesion and peacebuilding. Political will is demonstrated in leadership that places transformative peacebuilding and social cohesion at the heart of system-wide reform focused on improving education quality. Such leadership needs to work across government, and in provincial and national departments of education, to develop proactive strategies of education redistribution in favour of the marginalised. Of course, political will is not some magic potion that emerges independently from the ether, but instead emerges out of political economy factors, social struggles and local, national and global dynamics. However, arguments need to be made consistently that the cost of renewed armed conflict, both in financial and human terms, and for both the national and international community, far outweighs the costs necessary for redressing the inequities that drive conflicts in different places. Promoting social cohesion and peacebuilding is a cost-effective preventative measure and prevention needs to be prioritised. This requires thinking about peacebuilding and social cohesion friendly education governance, policy and practice in development programming, not just in terms of ‘emergency and protracted crisis’ as it is currently framed in international debates.

2. Shared consensus and participation

For the sake of policy efficacy key stakeholders need to be committed to and involved in policy efforts to promote peacebuilding and social cohesion, and understand its meaning, potential and the role that education and education systems can play therein. This is particularly so when the strategy, as proposed in this report, seeks to redistribute, recognise, represent and reconcile, in favour of the most marginalised. To this end it is necessary in the countries which comprise this study to develop dialogue fora and consultative roundtables. These would inform the creation of a robust policy framework that includes a detailed and adequately funded plan for the implementation of a range of actions that address the issues that inhibit teacher agency, as identified in this report. Such a framework should, whilst recognising context, consider a variety of promising social cohesion and peacebuilding interventions. And in this regard, the voice and agency of social movements and civil society organisations is crucial to holding government, institutions, companies, and actors to account.
3. Mutual trust and binding behaviours

Policies, action plans, institutional reconfigurations, targets, and indicators are all important for promoting social cohesion. However, none of these will matter if individuals and groups do not trust each other or hold each other to account for agreed actions. Mutual trust and binding behaviours by groups and individuals are the basic building blocks of a transformative social justice agenda.

To conclude, realising social justice in societies emerging out of the shadows of conflict and violence, will necessitate a far more radical conception of peacebuilding and social cohesion, one which tackles inequities which are often the drivers of conflict. Such an approach should recognise how violence and conflict is mediated through widely different contexts, which themselves reflect broader societal norms and values and complex histories of violence within which teachers are located. In this regard, attention must be paid, as this report argues, to how teachers are trained, deployed, supported and motivated to become effective agents of peace and social cohesion. This in turn requires an enabling policy environment and effective teacher professional development delivery system with well trained and motivated teacher educators and facilitators. In this way the analysis and proposals suggested in this report animate and invigorate a social justice, peace building and social cohesion transformation agenda for teachers that is premised on the 4Rs framework drawing and building upon reforms already in motion.
Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), University of Amsterdam
The AISSR Programme Group Governance and Inclusive Development (http://aissr.uva.nl/programmegroups/item/governance-and-inclusive-development.html) consists of an interdisciplinary team of researchers focusing on issues relating to global and local issues of governance and development. The Research Cluster Governance of Education, Development and Social Justice focuses on multilevel politics of education and development, with a specific focus on processes of peacebuilding in relation to socio-economic, political and cultural (in)justices. The research group since 2006 has maintained a particular research focus on education, conflict and peacebuilding, as part of its co-funded ‘IS Academie’ research project with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Centre for International Education, University of Sussex
The Centre for International Education (CIE) (www.sussex.ac.uk/education/cie) was founded in 1989 on the premise that education is a basic human right that lies at the heart of development processes aimed at social justice, equity, social and civic participation, improved wellbeing, health, economic growth and poverty reduction. It is recognised as one of the premiere research centres working on education and international development in Europe. The Centre has also secured a prestigious UK ESRC/DFID grant to carry out research on the Role of Teachers in Peacebuilding in Conflict Affected Contexts, which aligns directly with the research strategy of the PBEA programme and will form part of the broader research partnership.

UNESCO Centre at Ulster University
Established in 2002 the UNESCO Centre (www.unescocentre.ulster.ac.uk) at the University of Ulster provides specialist expertise in education, conflict and international development. It builds on a strong track record of research and policy analysis related to education and conflict in Northern Ireland. Over the past ten years the UNESCO Centre has increasingly used this expertise in international development contexts, working with DFID, GIZ, Norad, Save the Children, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, providing research on education and social cohesion, the role of education in reconciliation and analysis of aid to education in fragile and conflict affected situations.

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