In the context of debates relating to teachers’ role in educational outcomes, accountability and management, this literature review explores their potential to be active agents of peacebuilding. Specifically, the review aims to explore their role in promoting peace, reconciliation, social cohesion and violence mitigation, recognising that literature specifically relating to teachers and peacebuilding was limited. The review is based on a framework (Naylor and Sayed, 2014) which conceives teachers as active agents located in particular global, national and local policy contexts and structures.

Main Findings

• While it was recognised that teachers underpin the success of any education system, exactly what role teachers play and how they play it, varies across the different bodies of literature. As transformative agents the review discusses how teachers may use their agency to resist change as well as facilitate change, to promote peacebuilding and to stoke conflict - the double sided nature of teacher agency was apparent across their peacebuilding roles.
• Teachers can be both perpetrators and victims of violence. The recognition of the teacher themselves as agents who both experience and affect conflict highlights the need for understanding the dual role of teachers in post conflict contexts.
• Teacher governance is an important component of the review, interrogating efforts to ensure teacher supply and deployment in post conflict contexts, specifically, issues surrounding qualifications, recruitment of women, appointment of teachers from historically marginalised groups, the role of contract teachers and conditions of service.
• Across the literature, teacher professional development is considered vital in supporting teachers in order to ensure equity, peace and social cohesion.
• Teachers, as key agents in education systems, are assigned the role of agents of social cohesion whereby they address the legacy of civil conflicts in contexts where ethnicity, race or religion have mitigated against the promotion of social cohesion.
• Textbooks as key mechanisms for the curriculum are not used in isolation, and their content is mediated by teachers and students to create meaning in specific social contexts and in classrooms. The degree of agreement or discrepancy between textbook content and a teachers own positionality and experiences will result in a degree of negotiation between the teacher and the textbook.
• The way teachers teach is as important as what they teach in facilitating the knowledge, skills and attitudes that facilitate or obscure peaceful futures.
• Teachers are part of both the school community and the wider community where the school is situated. Regarding the formal school community, Codes of Conduct play an important role in accountability and increasingly the role of parents and the wider community to be involved in the construction of teacher Codes of Conduct is advocated.
The review concludes by drawing out the dilemmas and tensions in the literature and considering them from the perspectives of the Research Consortium’s ‘4R’ approach to sustainable peacebuilding (Novelli et al, 2015), exploring how teachers may become active agents of peace or impact upon them.

Read the Full Review - here

Read the Executive Summary here

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Between July 2014 and December 2015 the Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding, a partnership between UNICEF and the University of Amsterdam, the University of Sussex, Ulster University and in-country partners, will address one of the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme (PBEA) key objectives – ‘contributing to the generation and use of evidence and knowledge in policies and programming related to education, conflict and peacebuilding’.

The Consortium will carry out research on three thematic areas:

- The integration of education into peacebuilding processes at global and country levels.
- The role of teachers in peacebuilding.
- The role of formal and non-formal peacebuilding education programmes focusing on youth.

In addition, throughout the research project and as a cross cutting theme in all three areas, the research project aims to understand the dynamics and impact of various forms of direct and indirect violence in relation to education systems and educational actors in situations of conflict. Each thematic focus will also include a gender analysis.

The research seeks to generate evidence that can inform policy and practice aimed at the global and national peacebuilding community, and the global and national education and international development communities.

Find out more about the Consortium at the dedicated Research Portal

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