

OXSCIE 2018

**2nd Oxford Symposium for Comparative and International
Education**

Uncertainty, Society, and Education

19th & 20th June 2018

Keble College, Oxford

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Uncertainty and the Changing Nature of Society, and the Implications thereof for Education

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Abstract

In this paper I wish to interrogate the *idea* as well as *practice* of Education in the context of refugees who are the most blatant markers of uncertainty in the modern world. People face bleak and difficult futures when they flee their home countries. They are politically disenfranchised, financially broken and socially disjunct in the new environments they enter. In this context, I argue that education is the most potent tool for refugee communities around the world for intellectual emancipation and political consciousness through native-and-creative pedagogy and local knowledge systems, financial stability in spaces of precarity and cultural cohesion and retainment in the face of conscious and unconscious attempts at homogenization which threaten their unique identity which is at once their boon and their bane. Education then becomes an ethical space where multiple identities, visions and futures are contested and negotiated.

The figure of the refugee creates a rupture in all forms of civilizational discourses. Our assumptions, structures and paradigms for a just and fair society, entailing duties, responsibilities and rights suffer a blow when the refugee appears as a silhouette against the cosmopolitan landscape of today. She tends to deconstruct the very foundations of our society and its institutions. As a figure of humanity stripped bare and powerless, with little to no safeguards or sound anchoring, *the refugee represents the harshest condition of uncertainty in today's world*. This entity, with nearly no political, legal and social standing in foreign lands lives for survival. Indeed, the most basic requirement for life to be becomes their most important aim to *be*. Far from any kind of secondary or tertiary debates and concerns, life becomes the rallying point for itself. This decade has seen the maximum number of refugees around the globe. How is education impacted in this intersection of bare life and extreme uncertainty of every kind-social, political and legal?

The appearance of an alien subject creates an environment of confusion in the local populations. The alien subject, i.e. the refugee itself is transfixed at crossroads of being in a strange land, many a times unwelcome. The challenge for the native inhabitants then becomes not only to recognize and acknowledge the Other, but also to recognize her agency in being the Other (Spivak). Acknowledgement of the refugee is not enough. Local knowledge systems in the native country in this case require the complete overhauling of visions and meanings which are prevalent in the society. The attempt at envisioning oneself along with the Other is a difficult task. This is especially true when there are socio-economic and ethnic differences between the two sides. Education here comes to play a role of remoulding the prevalent pedagogical apparatuses by creating an ethical space for those who have newly arrived for refuge. This can be done only if minute attention is paid to the kind of images and symbols that are used to define the things around us. Political discourses may be effective at a certain level but it is only basic education that ensures that the refugee is accepted in the new country. The process of acceptance is of course not smooth and it requires a lot of hard work on the part of the host governments as well as the civil societies in creating a discourse of acceptance in the local population.

The thrust, as has been mentioned already, is not just to acknowledge the presence of the Other, but also to recognize her agency. Acknowledgement of presence without the acknowledgement of agency serves little purpose. A case in point are the Rohingya refugees living in Karachi's Arkanabad area with no rights and safeguards. Many of them have been living in the area for decades now without any social security or official identity. In this statelessness, Education has to battle at two fronts; the first one is to provide a basic professional training to the stateless and the second is to preserve their identity. It is understood that the latter objective may or may not be fulfilled by the authorities hosting the refugees, yet the fact that the preservation of a distinct identity remains a legitimate issue is unavoidable. Whether or not the Rohingyas return to their homeland, it is necessary that their sense of self is retained so that already without any moorings, these rootless men and women have a distinct identity to latch on to. This preservation of difference may or may not be amenable to the question of smooth transition of the status of these people from being refugees to being citizens of the host country, it still remains important for their larger social identity. The implication is that despite the provision of basic education in this extreme uncertainty, the goal should never be a complete assimilation of the people living at the brink when it comes to education because that threatens their very identity.

Another example of a clash between economic and social role of education is seen in

Bangladesh. The drop-out rates in schools amongst the Rohingyas living there is very high and only eleven percent of those enrolled in primary schools manage to continue their secondary education (Prodip). This is primarily because of financial difficulties as Rohingya children are forced to find jobs in and outside the camps in which they live. Here is a double bind for education; economic and social factors play themselves out in the field of education. On one hand is the need to make these refugees financially stable. For that, they need to be provided with a professional education. On the other hand is the sociological need to make the differences palpable and bearable, and ultimately welcoming. Tibetan refugees in India have tried to carve out such a structure where a traditional base is provided to refugee children before they venture into modern education systems. But in their case as well, a dilemma is seen between the need to instil a consciousness of Tibetan culture through education and the need to make them professionally competent. Many a times Tibetan children face difficulty in transitioning from a traditional school to a modern school. Those who cannot afford a modern education fall into low paid jobs. Tibetan education system stresses on traditional subjects and is geared towards strengthening the identity of their people whereas the community as a whole faces economic and social challenges (Jordan). The professional education question becomes all the more important for Tibetans because their struggle for freedom is still active. As a result, despite living in India, many of them choose to not opt for Indian Identification papers.

What is needed then is a space of ethicality where modern education systems accommodate these desired differences. The social sciences play an important role in creating this space of ethicality where there is an interface between different cultural formations. This interface affords a recognition of the Other, not just as a variant of the self but as an entity in itself. At the most basic level, realization of this difference is played out through images, symbols and even metaphors that we train our children with. At both micro and macro levels, pedagogical apparatuses create certain social binaries along the lines of which populations then act in real life. These binaries could be, for example white-non white, Hindi speaking-non Hindi speaking etcetera. The aim is then to undo these binaries which have long term effects on the way governments and peoples treat the refugees arriving in their countries.

I do not propose a “liberal multiculturalism” through pedagogical apparatuses because that entails a certain hegemonizing and homogenizing thrust. On the contrary, our project aims at opening up ethical spaces where the Self and the Other come in contact, not in the mode of violence or competition, and not in a supplementary way even. The former case has been seen in detail in the process of colonization and imperialism. The latter is widespread in

the form of refugee communities living on the edge in host countries. The ethical space through pedagogical apparatuses then need to establish a certain complementarity between the Self and the Other. This will be the state where the foreign country not just acknowledges the presence of the refugees, but also their agency. This enables both parties to live in a constructive environment. A section of the population living in precarious conditions inevitably impacts the structure of the society as a whole. Therefore, the transition of the refugees from being aliens to being a component of the population in a heterogeneous manner is in the interests of both the parties.

The next challenge for education is the *positive movement* towards the other. This movement entails *knowing the Other* but comes with significant risks and misjudgements. The first risk involved is that of containing the Other in our own terms. This containment means that although one approaches the Other in order to build bridges and contacts, this movement might inevitably end up defining them. Therefore, the Other gets circumscribed in certain restricted modes-of-being. Education again, at all levels, straight from primary to higher levels is in power of defining and creating these modes-of-being. This implies that the perception towards the refugee community get moulded by certain stereotypes and notions. These may be positive or negative. In both the cases, such imposed modes of being lead to behavioral reactions and policy decisions towards them. An example of this is the Rohingya community in India. The mode-of-being imposed on them by certain sections of the Indian population are negative. As a result, their stay in the North-eastern parts of the country becomes impossible. In many cases, similar mode-of-being associated with criminality lead to the deportations of a large number of Bangladeshi migrants from the metropolitan cities of India.

Apart from the engagement with the refugees, another issue is that of local knowledge systems belonging to refugee populations. A good case in point regarding the need to engage with these systems is manifested in two places; North America and Africa. In the former case, native Americans were forced to attend the American Indian boarding schools where their cultural identity was systematically eroded in the name of education. This is the most potent example to show how education in itself is never without its political consequences and underpinnings. In order to assimilate them, certain harmful pedagogical apparatuses were used. This assimilation was done through a systematic education where all cultural markers were forcibly removed which inevitably left a deep social and psychological impact upon the native American community. Zitkala-Sa in her short story *Memories of Childhood* recounts how a militarized regimen was followed in order to strip her off of all her native American

being. We see here that the issue of education vis-a-vis the self and the Other is not a new one. It has merely accentuated now where the risks of destroying the other, not in terms of violence, but socially and epistemologically are all the more possible.

Another aspect of a flawed education which is different from the above example is a long-term epistemological crisis where populations voluntarily opt for a system which undermines their own identities. This process takes decades and its impact continues to be felt for a long period of time. Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* register the epistemological clash between the Igbo knowledge system and the European knowledge system. The novel is replete with images-of-education which are in fact epistemic violence unleashed upon the native population by an external agency. The challenge for education in this scenario is to move away from hegemonic modes of knowledge and strive for a more inclusive and localized mode of being. Things fall apart in the novel precisely because the encounter between the two kinds of subjectivities is not played out evenly in the ethical space. The best way to moderate this ethical space is through education. Eurocentric modes of being, colonial practices, images, and paradigms perpetuate a psychological fixity in the minds of the colonized as theorized by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his book *Decolonizing the Mind*. Ngugi does a minute study of the psychological effects of an education which is rooted in a different socio-cultural background. As a result, the children who undergo such an education are forced to think in a different language and articulate in a different language. The consequence being a psychological clash where education ultimately suffers, and not just the overall identity of the person. People fail to find pride in their own cultures whilst simultaneously failing to be like the erstwhile colonial masters. Consequently, erstwhile colonies are unable to find a holistic identity. This is seen most sharply in vulnerable people like the refugees who find themselves involuntarily at such cultural crossroads.

The problem of a misplaced identity is more general in post-colonial societies and most acute in refugee populations. I call it misplaced because people fail to situate themselves in terms of their socio-cultural moorings. "Decolonization of scholarship", as Spivak puts it, is one aspect of it. The reason why I stress on local knowledge systems and an interface between the native populations and the refugees in the space of education in such a way that the identities of the refugees is not bulldozed is that despite all efforts at accommodation of identities, the force of globalization is such that it comes with an effect of hegemony. The way the world is connected today in terms of global capital allows a very easy channeling of such an overwhelming influence of cultures that are economically stronger. Education in this scenario will have a *deliberate* role to play. Despite all compulsions and irresistible forces of

capital-driven (in the sense of a channel for movement) notions, which I call “images”, we need strong counter-hegemonic modes-of-being. These will retain their distinct identities in harmony with their immediate local contexts whilst simultaneously striving for a well-functioning and independent space in global connections. At the macro level, this could mean establishing connections such as the ones that we now see in concepts like the Global South (Mignolo). Education in this sense means a critical alliance of erstwhile colonies to build a counter-hegemonic narrative in a globalized world where an alliance is sought between fundamentally different countries in an ethical plane of *correlative* and *complimentary* “images” which are by no means super-imposing on each other. At the micro level, in terms of refugee populations arriving in foreign countries where a clash between cultures takes place, this alliance could mean a complex complementarity of recognizing the Other and its agency as well, as mentioned in an earlier part of the essay. This critical alliance of images strives for distinction in the midst of cohesion. It is fundamentally a space of complementary nonconformity. This is not to say, as has already been mentioned above, that distinction entails no forced change. Rather, the change should be organic and complementary where both the self and the Other engage in an ethical plane. This is modulated and moderated by pedagogical apparatuses, from the school-level teaching of basic values and symbols to postgraduate level syllabus in universities.

Education then has a responsibility of “intellectual emancipation”. Jacques Ranciere in his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* talks about such a project of equality. In the context of developing countries and especially the refugees, Ranciere has a lot to offer. His project at equality aims to dismantle binaries in pedagogy which ultimately echo at much higher levels. At the basic level of a classroom, the inequality exists between the teacher and the student. The knower, the explicator claims a certain superiority over the ones who don’t know. The moment of knowledge is always deferred by the virtue of the instructor always knowing more than the student. What Ranciere tries to establish here as a broader point is that education should be freed from any such hierarchy. Education can either be used to perpetuate inequality between these binaries or serve to do away with them. Hence, what education needs today is an “innovative” pedagogy, not just in terms of *what* knowledge is imparted, as has already been talked about above regarding decolonizing scholarship, but also *how* knowledge is imparted. Therefore, the act of education gains multiple dimensions and faces an array of challenges to not just train those who are the most vulnerable, but also to do so in such a manner that their presence and agency is regarded as an equal to any other. Education then becomes the most potent tool to deal to move towards intellectual, political and economic

emancipation. This is sharply realized in the form of the refugee who presents the most bare state of uncertainty. In today's modern world, the refugee then poses a number of problems and challenges for education. These are not just in terms of availability, but also flexibility, variety and tolerance. It demands from education an ethical space where subjectivities and visions get negotiated irrespective of whether one is powerful or not. As an ethical space, education then serves the purpose to effect change at multiple levels; social, economic, political and intellectual. This means not just change in terms of quality or quantity but in terms of ethics and humanity. It takes upon itself the responsibility to move towards equality in the absolute sense where the subject, irrespective of color or class or citizenship can exit the sphere of uncertainty towards a stable and just life.

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Navigating Education in a Troubled Time: A Critical Pluralist Discourse

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Abstract

Education is a conscious, complex, and open-ended process of human thinking and a place for continuous resistance and struggle between multiple relations of power. The complexity of modern social structures and relations of power in the present time, and the diverse needs of young people in the first and second decades of their lives, raise the need for a fresh and critical thought in education. This paper presents and then discusses the concept of ‘bio-rational pluralist education’ in order to explore and discuss the practice of education with regard to the multiple challenges and threats faced by education in the present era of uncertainty and rapid changes in the nature society. The concept presented is this author’s original idea that is inspired by Michel Foucault’s lectures on governmentality, the Qur’anic discourses of pluralism, and the observation of modern social realities. The concept treats students as living rational (bio-rational) beings, with diverse backgrounds and needs (pluralist), and as the true objects of education.

Inspired by the Qur’anic concept of pluralism and the observation of modern social realities, this paper emphasizes the concept and practice of pluralism in education. As pluralism is central to the role of religion, it is an equally important prerequisite for modern education. Similarly, extending Foucault’s conception and articulation of governmentality both as a practice and an art (Foucault, 1991: 87), this paper treats education as a practice and an art of creative resistance and struggle for change that presupposes rational thinking and a pluralist approach, which are prerequisites for producing fresh meanings, ideas, and discourses.

Pluralism

Conceptually, plurality and diversity constitute the essence of pluralism. They are descriptive terms without any particular normative value. As Aurélia Bardon *et al.* state, the term plurality captures differences and disagreements as social facts, the way they exist in society, without ascribing any positive or negative values to them (2015: 1-2). There is no normative

source to evaluate or limit them. Therefore, the descriptive plurality can be unlimited. However, diversity and plurality gain values and become transformed when different discourses begin to act and interact with one another within a network of statements and produce norms of behaviour, conduct, values, and limitations. In other words, pluralism consists of dialogue, interactions and reflections between different discourses, actors, speakers, and groups. Without dialogue, there will only be an open-ended diversity of differences (Baiza, 2018a: 201).

The Qur'an from its very first revealed verses and statements demonstrates the concept of pluralism in the form of interaction between different speakers, statements, and discourses of its time. As an example, the Qur'an not only refers to, and narrates, but also engages with the life and discourses of the previous prophets and divine revelations, namely the Old and the New Testaments and their interpretations. Also, the Qur'an engages with the contemporary non-Abrahamic discourses of its time (Baiza, 2018b: 5). Therefore, its statements and discourses are not always independent and value-free. The meaning and values the Qur'anic discourses express are the products of dialogue and interaction with other discourses and social realities of its time.

The Qur'anic network of statements and the discursive practice reflects social structures, and the power play, tension, and struggle between different truth discourses in society. As religious discourses and their claims on the truth change over the course of history, so do social realities and structures. As a specific example, increasing migration, developments in media and communication technology, the internet, and ease of travel have significantly changed the nature of all societies, interpretations of religions, and the views and discourses of religious communities towards themselves and others (Baiza, 2018a: 201). As societies are becoming increasingly pluralist in nature, there is a struggle in the social structures over the domination and monopoly of power in the emerging pluralist discourse. The question is no longer the choice of pluralism itself, but which discourse will dominate and determine the discourse of pluralism.

Discussion

One of the key tasks and challenges for policy-makers, educationists, and stakeholders in education, is how the practice of education may help young people to comprehend the changing nature of their societies, environments, and circumstances. To address this question, one may also ask who/which entity sets the tone, terms, and conditions for education. While both questions raise valid and critical points, there is no straightforward answer. The answer

varies from context to context. In developing countries, the tone and conditions for education are often influenced, if not dictated, by international donors, international non-governmental organizations, and financial institutions. National governments and educational entities are compelled to align their policies and programmes in line with international demands. Strong nation states do not encounter similar interventions. However, policies and the future direction of their education systems are often influenced by the local industries, international corporations, the global market economy, and neoliberal ideology and its political doctrine. Therefore, it should be noted that power is an important factor in formulating education policies and programmes. Although 'power' is not a central theme in education, and nor does education deal with power as a concept or as a social factor directly, power comes from many different directions and influences all aspects of education. For this reason, it is vital to understand how power operates, where it comes from, and how it intervenes in the affairs of education.

In his lectures on governmentality and his discussions on the emergence of the state in the sixteenth century and on the subsequent development in the eighteenth century, Foucault refers, among other things, to a mutual relationship between the individual and the state. He observes that in the sixteenth century the individual occupied a peripheral and marginalized position in the eyes of the state. A person's life and acts had a political utility. Foucault states that the life of an individual becomes relevant for the state as long as the individual can contribute even minimally to the strength of the state, or give his life for the state (2001: 409). Foucault observes that in the eighteenth century the individual occupied a central position in the state's activities. In his analysis of the works of von Justi, Foucault infers that by the end of the eighteenth century the state essentially takes care of people as a population. Since the state maintains and uses its power over living beings, its politics has to be biopolitics (2001: 416).

Extending Foucault's analysis of the eighteenth-century relationship between the state and the population to the current state of education, this paper focuses on how best education can strengthen and broaden the students' knowledge base and advance their practice of diverse aspects of knowledge. Therefore, it is the learners and, more importantly, their practice of knowledge that are the true objects of education. The proposed conceptual framework, particularly the notion of pluralism, highlights the urgency of catering for the young learners' diverse needs for knowledge, not just for the sake of strengthening the state's policies and those of the market economy but also, and more importantly, students' competence in understanding their environment, social and cultural diversities, and practicing education

within universally shared ethical norms and principles.

The proposed concept of bio-rational pluralist education is natural to both education and human life. Human beings are by nature thinking individuals and rationality is part of their intellectual processes. Similarly, dialogue and interaction with one another are a natural part of human life. However, this paper acknowledges that interaction, dialogue, and the creation of a network of discourses with a defined and targeted direction are not natural to normal daily life. Human thinking and rationality provide the necessary foundation and basis for dialogue and interaction. The creation of a web of discourses for specific purposes in education, for instance, has to be humanly and socially engineered. This task requires collective and complex actions, often on the part of the state's institutions, policy-makers, educationists, and other stakeholders.

Uncontrolled globalization and the state's market-oriented policy, aligned with neoliberal ideology and its political doctrine, do not serve the major needs of students. This paper questions globalization for the purpose of better understanding it and its impact on education. Without making any attempt to define what globalization is, a simple reading of the term in various genres of literature shows that it is often associated with the idea of global-to-local and local-to-global, of world village, and of global city, to name a few. As a result, one could describe globalization as a process of a technological and not geographical compression of time and space. The modern means of communications, for instance, have made it possible for people, goods, and transactions to cross the barriers of time and space at a much faster speed than ever before.

In addition, this paper provides a concise discussion of three variant dimensions of globalization. The first dimension refers to the intertwined practice of economy and technology, and approaches globalization from a rationalist and scientific perspective. The production of modern technologies, from communications to medicine and space technologies, are typical examples. The second dimension is the ideological and political formulations and practices of globalization. Neoliberal ideology and its political doctrine, particularly its economic politics, which is heavily market-centered, are sources of concern not only for this paper but also for analysts in the fields of education, politics, cultural studies, and economics.

An example of the third dimension is the idea of education for all. Two decades ago, UNESCO discussed the rationale of Education for All (EFA) at a world conference in Jomtien, Thailand, on 5-9 March 1990. Since then, UNESCO has been supporting member states, particularly in developing and war-torn countries, to meet the EFA goals by providing access to primary education for each child in each country of the world (UNICEF, 1990).

Even though the prospect of achieving those objectives varies from country to country, as Jacques Hallak states, the relatively wealthy and peaceful societies achieve the objectives much more easily (Hallak, 1991: 2). The idea of giving each child an educational opportunity in itself is an outcome of globalization.

There are worrying elements in the growth of a heavily market-centered neoliberal ideology which concern the present and future development of education around the world. In its relationship with the state, the neoliberal political doctrine encompasses the marketization of the state itself. The state is no longer an entity whose main objective is the wellbeing of its citizens. The idea of the nation-state changes into the market-state as if outside the market economy there is no alternative discipline. The neoliberal economic politics of the privatization of the public sector and the reduction of social politics spending (cf. Bloom, 1987; Clarke, 2005) create a sense of insecurity and uncertainty among the population.

However, the key problem of education in the current age of uncertainty is not necessarily the problem of market theory and practice in politics. Equally, it is not the problem of globalization in modern theories of the state. Economists and sociologists have long been referring to the era of uncertainty. Ulrich Beck explained how industrial society produces and consumes risk and becomes a risk society (*Risikogesellschaft*), with unequal consumptions and lifestyles (Beck, 1986: 115-20). The problem of the risk society and uncertainty have been known for decades. However, the problem of education, in the view of this paper, is that most of the key stakeholders of education have adopted piecemeal approaches to it. The use of the word ‘piecemeal’ here is not a criticism of their educational programmes. Rather, it refers to the way stakeholders have positioned themselves regarding the education policies. Most of them are either dislocated in terms of not taking a conscious and active role in influencing education policies at decision-making levels, while taking a secondary role and spending their resources on education policies and programmes in which they primarily have a passive, or at best a budgetary, interest and not necessarily a policy- or decision- making voice. Those who operate inside the education systems, such as schools, universities, and teachers’ unions, either lack the necessary medium and support to influence policies or they have positioned themselves as passive recipients and active implementers of the state’s education policies. They may still raise their concerns or recommend changes and reforms, but their peripheral locations, regarding their decision-making positions, weaken their influence in making decisive policy impacts.

Recommendations

The concept of bio-rational pluralist education argues for the greater involvement of

stakeholders, and for the creation of a more tightly-knit network of discourses at the local and global levels. These measures can lead to the production of fresh meanings and strategies for improving the existing state of education and the direction of future developments. This paper encourages stakeholders to take the role of investors and educational entrepreneurs in the knowledge and ethical contents of education as opposed to the market-surplus value of education. It is the stakeholders' right and responsibility to invest in the universally shared values of knowledge and ethics and to become entrepreneurs of knowledge and ethics in education.

This symposium/gathering is one of the rare occasions which brings together stakeholders from different fields for the purpose of defining practicable goals in education. This gathering offers the opportunity for the interaction of ideas and thoughts and the opportunity of developing a working model for joint cooperation, coordination, and a comprehensive plan of action or simply a joint plan of action (JPOA). The JPOA will map the interests, experiences, expertise, areas of influence, and resources of each stakeholder in the first instance. It will then encourage them to enter a network of continuous dialogue and interaction to produce fresh ideas, meanings, and discourses for education. A bio-pluralist rationalist education could serve as a conceptual framework for developing such a model for a joint plan of action.

Currently, there is little pedagogical discussion or input on aligning the content of the education programmes with the requisite competencies for modern social realities. In most countries around the world, education programmes for young learners during the first and the second decades of their lives focus on literacy, mathematics, and science, with varying degrees of attention to civics, democracy, and basic life skills. Equally, there are little educational and pedagogical resources available for intellectually resisting and responding to the growing populist movements that pose serious threats to education and social cohesion among citizens.

Populism exacerbates emotive issues such as nationality, citizenship, religion, culture, race, and language. It chooses and uses these concepts to arrive at a narrow definition of the identity of the dominant group. The Brexit politics in the UK, Donald Trump's politics of white supremacy in the US, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's religious nationalism in Turkey are some contemporary examples. As a result, minority groups, non-citizens, and migrants begin to feel insecure and marginalized. As a specific example from the British education context, the practice of the Prevent duty, which became law in July 2015 and a major part of the UK anti-terrorism strategy, is a much-debated issue in the present context of education. This

policy puts pressure on teachers to identify students at risk of extremist grooming. Although the Prevent policy aims “to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism” (HM Government, 2015: 2-3; Department for Education, 2015: 4), the policy has severe negative implications on education and learners. Firstly, there is no direct relationship between religious conservatism and violence. Secondly, innocent children and young students become victims of such policies and of their teachers’ doubts. Robert Hindle states that the policy places teachers in the position of acting upon their ‘doubt and fear’ (Hindle, 2016) and not knowledge or understanding of their students. Undoubtedly, such programmes sap the positive energy from the classroom, not to speak of their lasting ramification on social cohesion, the shared values of citizenship, freedom and the development of rational thinking and expression of thought.

In conclusion, the modern curriculum hardly reflects the concepts and practices of globalization, populism, and pluralism at national and international levels. Young learners in the first and second decades of their lives need to learn and understand the principles of globally shared ethical values, pluralism, and how to become a member of humanity and not of an ideology. Also, they need to learn the various ways of becoming engaged in global citizenship, and of acquiring the tools for rational thinking, knowledge management, self-awareness, and leadership. These intellectual tools and skills will help them to understand the changing nature of society, and to develop an active interest in changing their societies for the better.

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The impact of uncertainty and the changing nature of society on schools, teachers and families during the first decade of children's lives and learning transitions.

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A vaccination for uncertainty

In medicine we know that a small amount of a weakened disease can stimulate the body's natural defence mechanisms to help develop immunity. Is there a parallel in education – a vaccination for uncertainty?

It must have appeared counterintuitive in the early 1800s to suggest that the best way to cure a disease was to inject people with a modified version of that disease. Yet, our discovery of vaccination and deeper understanding of how the human body defends itself has since saved hundreds of millions of lives. While there is no possibility of eradicating uncertainty, it is interesting to ask if this medical analogy may point at an effective way of preparing children for a life of uncertainty. Should education systems positively expose children to uncertainty so that they develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to deal with uncertainty from an early age?

Let's be clear – this is not the direction of travel for most education systems in the world. There are aspects of modern education heading in the opposite direction; actively reducing the levels of uncertainty to which children are exposed. This short essay explores a little of what we know about three skills related to uncertainty and looks at how some education systems actively seek to prepare children for an uncertain future.

Risk-taking, self-regulation and resilience

Risk-taking has been defined as intentional interaction with uncertainty¹. It has spawned an entire industry of 'risk management' as organisations seek to limit or eliminate risk, often with laudable goals (e.g. protection from injury as in 'health and safety', or protection of children as in 'safeguarding'). Yet, risk is also associated with reward (e.g. as in the financial industry) and innovation (e.g. as in research and development) where greater risk can lead to more benefits.

Talking positively about risk-taking is not an argument for carelessness or rashness. Intentional interaction with uncertainty requires a conscious weighing up of the risks and opportunities. It is not a skill we are born with, but one we need to develop over time. This development starts early ... as children learn to walk (and therefore fall) or to judge their ability to jump over a puddle of water (and sometimes get wet). As any parent or carer knows, there is a fine line between protecting a child from a potential accident and providing the space to learn about what works and doesn't. If we eliminated the risk of falling, would it still be possible to learn to walk?

Our understanding of the development of risk-taking skills is informed by evidence from neuroscience. Risk-taking behavior increases between childhood and adolescence and seems to be associated with changes in the prefrontal cortex². This region of the brain has been implicated in planning complex cognitive behavior, personality expression, decision making, and moderating social behavior. As children turn into teenagers, the consequences of risk-taking become more serious: car crashes, smoking, alcohol, drugs and violence for example. Indeed, the greatest dangers to teenage life are often entirely preventable and self-inflicted.

In these examples, conscious risk-taking depends not just on assessing a risk but also upon self-regulation (the ability to modulate emotional expression, control impulses and delay gratification). Promoting the development of self-regulation is not a mitigation for adolescent exuberance to be deployed at the first signs of trouble; the skills and attitudes need to be developed from a young age, starting in early childhood⁴. Indeed, this is not just about avoiding short-term danger; research has shown that self-regulation predicts longer-term health, wealth and relationships⁵. Even more significantly for education systems, approaches that promote metacognition and self-regulation have been shown to have consistently high levels of impact on academic outcomes (at low cost) in various high-quality meta-analyses.

Of course, a consequence of risk-taking and uncertainty is that things will go wrong. Resilience (the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress⁷) is what allows some people to view mistakes as opportunities to learn rather than just as failure. This can be particularly important in situations of extreme adversity⁸. An increasing understanding of the importance of resilience is leading educators to experiment with approaches that encourage children to overcome the fear of failure and to foster resilience as an explicit skill⁹.

Are schools risky enough?

With so much evidence that learning to manage uncertainty and risk matters, you might assume that teachers would be falling over each other (excuse the pun) to bring more uncertainty into school. Instead, young children live in an increasingly de-risked world, starting with the journey to school in the morning as ‘helicopter parents’ deliver their children to the school gate. During the school day, we have seen a decline in the outdoor activities¹⁰, lab experiments and field trips¹¹ which provide practical opportunities for learning about risk. While this decline is sometimes attributed to health and safety issues (or perception thereof), research identifies a wider variety of factors that include the availability of well-trained teachers, access to good quality facilities, the impact of theoretically focused examinations and a content heavy prescribed curriculum¹².

So, can education systems positively address risk? The programmes of the International Baccalaureate (IB) are an interesting example which explicitly aim to develop learners who are (among other characteristics) “risk-takers”¹³. The IB aims that its students “approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies; and are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change”. Teachers describe how they translate this sentiment into classroom behavior: “When a student has tried something new in class – whether participating in a group discussion or solving a problem in front of the class – I do not praise the result but praise the effort behind the action. I often link this positive praise with the word ‘courageous’ or ‘risk-taker’”¹⁴. But how do you achieve this in reality at a scale beyond the IB? And does this willingness to engage with risk go beyond merely intellectual risk-taking?

At a national level, Switzerland provides an a case study of a country that has positively resisted the development of a parent ‘taxi service’ through an annual campaign to promote even the youngest children walking to kindergarten or school. More than 75% of Swiss children walk to school, double the rate found in the UK and USA. The Swiss campaign targets parents, children and motorists and emphasizes the importance of physical activity, friendships, experiences and taking responsibility. In a coordinated approach which includes motorist organisations, police visit kindergartens early in the term to teach young children road safety skills and publish maps of safe routes to school¹⁵. Could such approaches be applicable in countries without the enviable safety record of Switzerland?

The nature of school itself may be a major contribution to our intolerance for taking risks. Researchers have found that “people overwhelmingly opt for certainty, regardless of whether that certainty is in the present or the future, or whether it pertains to gains or losses”. Such an attitude may be formed by our earliest experiences of school where there is notable

lack of risk or uncertainty. Bells ring. The timetable is known for months at a time. Rules are upheld by teachers. Traditions repeat annually. The curriculum is prescribed and organised around academic disciplines. Schools are institutions organised around principles of good order and discipline and most children are quickly institutionalised to conform.

Some schools have positively rejected aspects of this institutionalisation. High Tech High (USA) has adopted an approach where “students pursue their passions through projects, and reflect on their learning”. Project based learning is an approach which seeks to ‘break the mold’ of traditional education by linking learning to student interests and real-life issues rather than strict academic disciplines. In doing so, it encourages students to take more risks¹⁷. Why have such approaches failed to translate to mainstream education systems?

Schools like High Tech High are the exception. For many children, the first real interaction with risk will happen outside school in clubs and associations. For example, The Scout Association in the UK “helps over 450,000 young people every year enjoy new adventures; to experience the outdoors; interact with others, gain confidence and have the opportunity to reach their full potential”. Many of these activities – camping, abseiling, canoeing, hiking for example – are risky, but the Scouts are clear: “health and safety is very important but young people have to be able to take risks in a supported and managed way in order to develop themselves”¹⁸. Longitudinal research tracking Scouts and Guides to the age of 50 suggests that are long-term mental health benefits from developing resilience and social mobility at a young age¹⁹. Can the benefit of such experiences reach a wider demographic of children?

Conclusion

If uncertainty is ever to have a vaccine, then the development of a mature approach to risk, starting at an early age and evolving (with the developing brain) through adolescence will be part of the medicine. The inter-connections and associated life outcomes related to risk-taking, self-regulation and resilience suggest an important group of skills that are important areas to further investigate and incorporate in educational practice.

Our thinking about risk is often complicated by legitimate concerns over safety, but there are good examples that show it is possible to help children to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will better prepare them for a world of uncertainty.

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Inclusive Cities: Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development, Functional Transformation and Social Cohesion in Urban Slums

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Abstract

Urban slums are an integral part of many rapidly expanding cities in developing countries; and it is here where deprivation and inequality are at their most ubiquitous. But, by their very nature rapidly growing cities are marked by social and economic divisions and it is this that heightens their potential to become ‘learning cities’. So what opportunities for lifelong learning do cities offer the most marginalised city dwellers? And to what end? We re-examine closely in this paper both the nature of lifelong learning and the processes that make it possible in the times of uncertainty. Our starting point is that lifelong learning is oftentimes seen to be a programme of skills development oriented towards better life chances for individuals and groups. We argue instead, and with evidence that in the case of the most excluded geographies of the city – the urban slums - that the process of lifelong learning is collective rather than individual; aimed at city-wide sustainable development and environmental improvement where the benefits accrue to the city, and through a more structurally even city, to individuals and citizens who live therein. Our argument then, illustrated with reference to urban slums in Mumbai, Rio de Janeiro and Nairobi, is that it is through community action that communities learn collectively to identify common concerns

and to hammer out common solutions; to learn together as they learn to live together by engaging with the everyday changing realities of their personal, social, and political circumstances.

Keywords: lifelong learning, social cohesion, inclusion, cities, formal and non-formal learning, transformations

Introduction

This paper is concerned broadly with the concept of the learning cities, and more precisely how cities learn to make sense of inequality, of social difference and social exclusion; and how they learn to overcome the structural barriers to integration that if left unresolved is likely to tear the city apart. In short, it is a paper that addresses the question, how in deeply divided cities, we might learn to live and learn together.

At the centre of the paper is the notion of lifelong learning and our aim is to probe it sufficiently thoroughly to gain clarity about the form it might take in cities fractured by social inequality; and additionally, to reveal the processes by which it might promote social cohesion and inclusion for the most marginalised city dwellers. The paper takes as its starting point the proposition that ‘a learning city provides lifelong learning for all’ and that ‘lifelong learning lays the foundation for sustainable social, economic and environmental development’ (UNESCO 2015).

It is with reference to the Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities (2013) that UNESCO in its ‘Global Network of Learning Cities Guiding Document (2015) usefully offers a framework that establishes the foundations necessary to build a learning city: that there exists a political will and commitment; that all stakeholders are invited to participate; and that resources are mobilised and utilised’ (UNESCO 2015, p. 9). Further it proposes that a learning city is able to demonstrate that the education system is inclusive; that learning occurs in families and communities; that there is learning in the workplace; and that the city employs the use of modern learning technologies to achieve both quality of learning and the creation of a vibrant culture of learning across the life-span. The benefits that are likely to accrue are individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development (UNESCO 2015, p. 11). Compelling as the framework is, it masks a number of tensions that are interesting to examine here. For UNESCO (2015) it is clear that ‘we live in a complex, fast-changing world where social,

economic and political norms are constantly being redefined' and in finding a response to the challenges that this brings, it suggests that while it is at the international, national and regional levels that strategic visions and binding agreements are forged, and at the local level that implementation occurs, 'it is at the citizen's level (that) change begins' (UNESCO 2015, p. 4).

There are two problems with this conceptualisation. First, that while there is no doubt that we live in societies and cities that are in flux and riddled with uncertainties, surely it is the precisely the things that do not change, that are resistant to change, that offer the strongest possibilities for a 'curriculum' for lifelong learning? We shall return to this point. The second tension in the framework is the implicit assumption that it is the city authority that is the driver of learning and the implementers of change. The individual and community from whom, according to the framework, change begins, seems to occupy an unproblematic relationship to the city that 'ensures that every citizen has the opportunity to become literate and obtain basis skills' and who is enabled to participate in the public life of the city' (UNESCO 2015, p. 12).

These tensions we think constrain UNESCO's vision of what lifelong learning is and the processes by which it occurs.

So what then is lifelong learning? We offer three perspectives – (i) that its 'curriculum' is governed by both the 'new' problems associated with rapidly changing social, cultural and political circumstances (like rural-urban migration) and the 'old' problems of unequal development that seem resistant to change; (ii) that lifelong learning is a dialectical process between the environments that we inhabit and what we are compelled or driven to learn about. In short, in cities, it is the physical and social spaces that we occupy that shape what and how we learn; and (iii) that lifelong learning is a collective enterprise where people learn about common problems and learn to find common solutions; and although individuals learn throughout life, about many different things, it is only through collective learning and action that social change is possible.

To start with the first perspective, rapid changes in the way in which we live, for example the development of housing estates or high rise blocks to accommodate and increasing number of people migrating to cities from rural areas or other cities, collide sharply with 'old' unresolved problems, like insufficient public, educational and health facilities that we inadequate even before higher demand. Lifelong learning in our view is learning to navigate both old and new problems; and as these continuously twist and turn in shape and size, how and what we learn is diverse as it is continuous. That is, learning through

life is not only incremental such that we acquire more skills or learn more about particular things; it is also that we learn widely to make sense of rapidly evolving environmental, social and political challenges. Lifelong learning then is both perpetual and interspersed.

Our second proposition is that lifelong learning is a mutually constituting activity. In essence, it is the dialectic between learning and the cultural and social institutions in which it takes place (Jenkins et al. 2003; Longworth 2006). The argument is that dynamically evolving cities shape what we learn and what and how we learn in turn shapes the dynamism of the city (Glasson 2003). Lifelong learning is therefore not simply the provision and uptake of specific programmes or generic skills but meaningful social and cultural activity that evolves in tandem with the ever-changing dynamics of the modern city (UNESCO 1996).

Our contention is that how we think and act, and how and what we learn in the process is governed by our physical environments – by our social and political spaces; more precisely, that it is the architectural design and environmental spaces of cities that shape the nature of human activity, and consequently learning. Useful then is UNESCO's definition of lifelong learning (UNESCO 1996). That it is 'less about the teaching or training of certain things or specific skills, much more a way of describing a process of empowerment and mechanisms through which local communities are exposed to varied learning opportunities that helps to prepare them for anticipating the unknown and tackling the political and social uncertainties of tomorrow. In a word, it is that that prepares them for sustainable futures' (UNESCO 2015). For UNESCO the city is central to sustainable and inclusive development. Indeed, lifelong learning is the lifeblood of a 'learning city'.

What is perhaps less clear in the UNESCO definitions of lifelong learning, is the notion of 'citizen engagement'. This is at the heart of our third conceptual perspective about the nature of lifelong learning. Far too often, and in particular in most developing countries, cities mobilise their resources selectively. The most vulnerable communities often found in urban slums tend to benefit less, if at all from budget allocations and service provision; not necessarily because they were not budgeted for, more because the political will to extend such services often lacks. It is this fact that has inspired a strong social justice movement secure in the notion that if information about poor service delivery were made available to marginalised communities, they will use such information to think critically about the social condition and engage in action to challenge inequality and unfairness. The two most significant examples of this can be traced to Uganda and Porto Alegre in Brazil. In Uganda, a public expenditure tracking survey uncovered corruption in the delivery of educational services to the poor; but it was the fact that the government made the information available to

local communities and encouraged them through the use of radio broadcasts to demand from their local schools explanations about how the school budget was used that prompted social learning and social action (Reinikka & Svensson 2004; Sirker 2006; Johnson 2009). Giving citizens access to information allowed them to learn about and understand the workings of capital grants (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004). Wastage and leakage was reduced from 78% to 20% and 15,000 ‘ghost teachers’ were taken of the payroll (Johnson 2009). In Porte Alegre, where the provision of schools and other amenities were lacking for the poor, civil society groups and neighbourhood associations were formed to work with municipal councils to formulate and monitor local budgets. The number of schools that serve the poor doubled in the space of 7 years.

For us then, in a departure from UNESCO’s conceptualisation that ‘a learning city effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education’ and that it ‘revitalises learning in families and communities and facilitates learning in the workplace’ so that it ‘enhances individual empowerment and social inclusion, economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development’ (UNESCO, 2015), lifelong learning is socially meaningful activity undertaken by communities, especially the most vulnerable city dwellers, precisely to redress the failures of cities to provide resources or stimulate learning. Not that there is much wrong with UNESCO’s definition of the learning city if applied to countries where legislative frameworks, the political will and resources exist. But in most less-developed countries of the world where these conditions are less secure, we argue that the framework is less applicable.

We agree with the suggestion that lifelong learning begins with the individual and the community – that it is indeed vulnerable communities that marshal city authorities to learn, not the other way round. That lifelong learning in the least resourced parts of the city is inspired by collective social action; and that social inequality, insecurity, corruption and distorted social service provisions in cities offer a natural ‘curriculum’ around which lifelong learning takes place supported by a ‘pedagogy’ of critical dialogue and experimentation.

Research Questions

The questions that guide our study are best expressed as two propositions below:

1. That social inequality and uneven structural features offer cities and vulnerable city dwellers the most socially significant opportunities for lifelong learning.
2. That the reduction of structural inequalities and the promotion of social cohesion where citizens live together in peace and with respect to human dignity (Sinclair 2004) is enabled through community-led social action and joint action between slum dwellers

and city authorities.

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

To test these propositions we examine three case studies of urban slums in three contrasting cities – Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Mumbai (India), and Nairobi (Kenya). The method adopted in this paper is referred to in the social sciences, specifically in the field of comparative history, as a study in the parallel demonstration of theory. In its simplest form, the method involves an attempt to validate a set of propositions through juxtaposing a number of case studies in order to find similarities so as to illustrate that a given theory has common applicability (Johnson 2006).

A number of empirical studies and other writings on urban slums, particularly those that reported research and social development activities, drawn from the fields of Development Studies, Sociology, and Education were reviewed. Given that the parameters of the study were a preliminary library-based review of educational activities in urban slums, the review was not exhaustive.

Although much has been written on urban slums in developing countries, those texts that referred to educational activities distilled down to the three case studies discussed here. While in a more comprehensive study of this kind a larger corpus of writing drawn from a wider literature in the social sciences might be examined, the cases that we draw on offer the outlines of a conceptual framework for a thesis on learning cities and lifelong learning that is forged around collective social action.

There appears to be at least three distinct yet interrelated social ‘curriculum’ areas around which slum dwellers learn. The first and probably the most frequently referred to in the literature is access to basic services including water and sanitation and improvement of the physical environment. The second ‘learning area’ is social discord and insecurity brought about through drug trafficking, prostitution and extortion often tightly coordinated through rival criminal gangs. The third area of engagement is social welfare. This includes educational and health wellbeing and the development of small business enterprises that make the slums viable.

Our key argument is that it is around these three major social life worlds that cities learn (or not) through social engagement, dialogue, problem solving and experimentation. Those that do so successfully establish at least a basis for social cohesion. The three social focal points around which cities and urban slum dwellers might engage were common across our three case studies but given the limitations on word length we are only able highlight one

or more feature of social engagement. In reality, urban slums and the social dialogue (often action) between slum dwellers and city authorities cut across the areas of physical improvement, safety and security and social welfare.

‘Uncertainty and the Changing Nature of Society, and the implications thereof for Education’

Connie K. Chung, EdD

The rapidly changing shape of the global political landscape has created for people everywhere uncertainties about their social, economic, demographic and climatological futures. ‘How can we, through education, best shape and sustain a society that is at once plural and cosmopolitan, prosperous and inclusive, fair and responsible, and cohesive?’ For education to shape and sustain a society that is plural, cosmopolitan, prosperous, inclusive, fair, responsible, and cohesive, several shifts need to happen in education and beyond. Below, I outline a few of them, based on my years as a secondary school teacher and as a researcher studying and writing about policies, practices, and capacity building for education in the 21st century.

The biggest difference between the education systems of the 20th century and the 21st century might be moving from educating learners to become people who can fit into existing organizations and ways of life to people who can create new organizations and new ways of living well together. With rapidly expanding capabilities in technology, each person faces choices and possibilities that has not existed in other eras. In such a time, what mechanisms and mindsets need to shift so that education systems are more able to help learners become people who are able to think and act systematically, empathetically, ethically, wisely, with foresight and reflection, to work with others to handle complexity well and be good stewards of their lives and their communities? I offer a few suggestions below.

Success for learning needs to shift to be defined more broadly, to encompass goals beyond achieving high scores on tests, attending university, and doing well enough to attain social and economic advancement for oneself. It needs to include the components outlined in this essay prompt, with the explicit goal of not only becoming good members of one's community and country, but also learning to actively shape and sustain a global society that sees diversity as an asset, that mitigates the dangers of presently growing inequality by promoting equity, and that properly addresses the opportunities and threats of environmental and technological changes.

While readiness for life broadly conceived is often embedded into the stated purposes of education, it is not as explicit as it could be, as evidenced by continual debates about what schools ought to be responsible for teaching. I believe the debates arise in part because there is some overlap and lack of clarity between what schools ought to teach well and what students

ought to learn well as they develop throughout the course of their lives, beyond their experiences in formal schooling.

Young people learn in schools but they already also do so in other places, such as in families, religious institutions, afterschool programs, popular culture, online, from friends, and in the broader community. Thus, we might benefit from separating the discussion between what young people ought to learn throughout the course of their lives and what formal schools ought to teach, we might have a better chance at coming to an agreement about the broader purposes of learning (versus schooling).

We must more broadly define "learning organizations" to include places beyond schools, including workplaces, which must also make space and time for workers to continually learn. Thus far, many of the frames for discussing the purposes of education has been about employability, including whether students are "prepared" for workplaces, as though there is a single point in time at which readiness is assessed. New York Times journalist Tom Friedman notes in his book, *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, however, that the changes that are happening because of technology are great and rapid. Because of the inevitability of the changes that will happen during the course of a person's lifetime, learning has to be embedded ubiquitously, intentionally, and purposefully throughout one's life.

While the notion of "lifelong learning" has been popular for a while, it has mostly encompassed self-directed learning that takes place throughout one's life. What needs to shift is that lifelong learning must be institutionalized into workplaces and communities, into structures and resource allocations, including time, money, and people that are devoted to learning, broadly conceived. Just as we do not expect young people to bear the burden of learning in preschool through college individually, by family, I do not think it would be prudent to continue to ask adults to bear the sole responsibility to take time and effort outside of work to continually learn. The speed and scale at which relevant skills and knowledge are changing are so big, that individuals and K-16 schools would not be able to navigate and source learning opportunities on their own and businesses would not be able to rely on a definition of workplace "readiness" that focuses on a single point in time, i.e. end of university.

With the numbers of self-employed people rising throughout the world, we also cannot rely on the assumption that everyone will have a formal workplace that will invest in her growth. Governments and the social sector will also need to step in to enable and equip lifelong learners.

With the advent of the need for more widespread places and mechanisms for continual

learning, all learners will have to become more aware of what constitutes relevant and high-quality learning experiences and outcomes. Equipping young people with knowledge about how each of them learns; what strengths, needs, and interests each of them possesses; what different models and pathways to success exist; and helping them decide what a good life looks like for themselves and others ought to be considered as a central part of their learning. Giving all people the opportunities to experience and realize that the quality of their own lives is intertwined with the quality of other people's lives would be an important part of this endeavor.

Education itself is changing rapidly and exponentially, and while some are attempting to capture these changes for the purposes of distributing information, we do not yet have an objective and systematic way to capture all that is happening, including new developments in the learning sciences and practices. Inequity will increase if we do not pay attention. For example, who and how will we filter the vast amount of knowledge (knowledge that is doubling every year, according to some) that is pouring out of different research facilities and schools, identify unresolved questions and tensions, and disperse and monitor discussions and feedback from users of new technologies?

Perhaps we need to create new ways in which learning, innovation, and reflections about learning are ongoing, particularly about the ways things are changing and need to change; we need ways to democratize knowledge, which the internet and social media is already doing, but currently not in a systematic or systemic way. This is perhaps a place where artificial intelligence and machine learning is not such a frightening proposition, but if used well, can help – but human wisdom and prudence will have to guide it.

In addition to democratizing knowledge, we need more collaboratively informed, democratic, and long-term decision-making processes, which are multi-stakeholder and long-term, especially in schools, even as changes come to us rapidly. Many education programs, education ministries, and school districts already model this kind of shift in how decisions are made. For example, Singapore has an Academy of Singapore teachers that has a research component, taking academic research and translating it into something accessible for practitioners. We might also incorporate change mechanisms into the structure of learning organizations, including designing organizational time and spaces to institutionalize continual learning and on-site, embedded research.

Educators will have to take on new roles, perhaps adding new organizational roles to schools. Many of the organizations we studied about capacity building for teaching and learning in the 21st century had found new roles for staff members. For example, some were school

designers, working with school leaders and teachers to shape professional development and offer strategic advice to determine organizational priorities; others were instructional coaches, in charge of coaching teachers. Others headed community partnerships, identifying new funding sources and community organizations willing to partner with the schools to teach students skills such as public speaking and performance art; mentor students; and teach health and wellness.

Schools themselves had different roles, such as being identified as mentor schools that operated as models, inspirations, and resources for other schools in their networks. Still others were designated as pilot schools, able to try new pedagogical materials and methods with systematic evaluations to iterate new ideas and determine whether such materials and practices were valuable enough to share with other schools. We might do well with in-school positions in research and innovation...with people who filter for quality. We need change experts.

Indeed, organizational cultures and mindsets have to change to accommodate the shift to adopting new practices, including a new focus on not just building skills and knowledge but on building relational trust. Research about effective learning organizations found that hospitals in which there was high psychological safety and high challenges were where people grew the most. High psychological safety and no challenge, and there is little growth; low safety and low challenge breeds apathy; low safety and high challenge breeds anxiety, and people do not offer new ideas, try new things or ask colleagues for helpⁱ. This parallels how teachers in a network of American schools said to me over and over again how much they valued school cultures that enabled them to learn with others and to work together on try new projects and pedagogy in environments that encouraged learning and reflectionⁱⁱ. They note that relational trust “is built through day-to-day social exchanges in a school community; supports the moral imperative to take on the difficult work of school improvement; facilitates accountability for shared standards, while also allowing people to experience autonomy and mutual support for individual efforts; reduces the vulnerability that teachers feel when asked to take on tasks connected to reform; and facilitates the safety needed to experiment with new practices.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Researchers Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider^{iv}, and more recently, journalist Paul Tough^v have summarized research literature about how important culture and “relational trust” are in creating conditions in which learning and improving are part and parcel of working and learning in a school. Ben Levin has noted, “Because schools are social settings, change is not just a matter of giving people new ideas but of creating the social conditions that foster and support changed practices.”^{vi}

Capacity building for change is a collaborative and consensual process, and setting the parameters for mutual, relational work among different stakeholders, including teachers, principals, students, and community members, would be helpful^{vii}. Leaders undertaking initiatives in such a way that shows why it matters, and that it is not yet another fad that will soon pass, may be effective in offering ways to lead and work together beyond traditional command and control tactics. Indeed, change requires social and emotional competencies as much as a command of technical and specialist knowledge (see, for example, the research about meeting adaptive challenges by Ronald A. Heifetz^{viii}). Educational leaders might do well to pay attention to the fear, anxiety and hope that often accompany responses to proposed changes. How often do we look for social, emotional, and technical competencies in our school leaders, as well as in our teachers?

We will need courage on the part of education leaders and leaders who can listen to community members, experts, and other constituents to determine key priorities, and even to discard what is not so relevant anymore^{ix}. Singapore, for example, “slaughter[ed] a few sacred cows” in their steps to move their city-state to a 21st century learning model, accompanied by thoughtful strategy and careful attention to detail^x.

For these kinds of shifts to take place, we also need leaders who will create space for others to grow. Teaching and learning are about making mistakes and getting better; as rapid changes and the need to respond and lead these changes become ubiquitous, we would be helped with a greater focus on growing, not only on performing well. Trying to “hide” what we do not yet know and cannot yet do from others is like trying to fake being healthy to our doctors, while dying from cancer.

This idea has been captured most recently behind the idea of “growth mindset.”^{xi} As a novice teacher at a school noted to me, “The idea of the growth mindset is really prevalent [at my school, not just for students but also for teachers]. I’m not afraid to go to [another] teacher and say, I really didn’t do well in that class. Where did I go wrong?” He did not feel the need to hide that a lesson component did not go as well as it could have and felt that he could focus instead on improving his teaching practice. He reflected, “It’s been nice to be in a place where the focus is, ‘Hey, that wasn’t the best way you could have done that; here’s how to do it’ instead of ‘Now you’re on probation’ or ‘We’re watching you.’” He said that this kind of mindset and culture allowed him to focus on his growth and development as a teacher rather than focus on hiding so others “don’t hang” him.

Indeed, we need more of a focus on teacher development if we are to speak of student

development. Something we found in our research about programs who are moving to teaching broader sets of competencies, is an on-site and ongoing coaching model for teachers, where they are guided and helped in their thinking and implementation of new pedagogies and curricula. OECD's TALIS surveys show that teachers say they do not have enough time to experiment with and iterate and implement what they learn in professional development time. Teachers, too, have to be continual learners. And teachers, too, have fears and anxiety about learning new things, particularly when it impacts their students – and there is a need to create conditions in which they feel safe about trying new ways to not only teach but relate to their students.

With such a variety of new shifts that need to be made, a few critical questions need to be answered:

- a. How will we be able to recognize good teaching and learning when we see it? How do we learn to “assess” the conditions and processes of good teaching and learning, beyond test scores, with quantitative and qualitative benchmarks along the way? How do we use assessment to spur growth, not choke us from ever taking a step into unfamiliar ground, where we might not "perform well," at least, at first?
- b. Who gets to decide what is learned, how, when, and where? This discussion benefits from going beyond think tanks, thought papers, innovators, advocates, and the usual suspects, and involve teachers, parents, and students. These groups are central to executing the vision of 21st century teaching and learning, not just “nice to have” stakeholders who need to be appeased.
- c. Who are we teaching? Curriculum is as much about who we are teaching as it is about what we are teaching. Curriculum is not just what is in the textbooks, but how adults treat young people, how adults treat each other, how and when power is shared or not, how a school responds to young people’s mistakes, which young people's positive and negative acts receive attention and how, and the developmental experiences that aid a young person in his/her growth – what some call “the hidden curriculum.”

In a post-industrial era, one-size-fits-all education no longer serves us well, and we are just beginning to tap into the learning sciences of the multiple pathways of learning and growing

knowledge about neurodiversity. While we must keep concerns about equity at the forefront, we must also pay attention to adjusting for individual learners and needs in much more deliberate ways. Curriculum ought to be in the service of developing flourishing human beings, not students being squeezed into the narrow confines of a set curriculum, no matter how progressive.

How will we think about other components of education systems? We cannot change just one part of education, such as curriculum, without also paying attention to the other parts. Education systems themselves also are embedded within larger assumptions about how local and national economies and political systems work in different contexts. As these other components of society changes, there ought to be theories of change and action for the education system and society as a whole. For what kinds of outcomes are we striving for, what kind of role does each level and component of society and education system play, and how do teachers, learners, school leaders, the business community, parents, policymakers, and social entrepreneurs, and others work together in the development of enriching learning pathways?

In such complex times, we need to guide learners and ourselves in the project of hope and criticality for building education and social systems that meet the challenges and opportunities before us. Ongoing multi-stakeholder conversations and collaborative activities to answer these and other pertinent questions are keys to our ability to move forward together, to live well together to create a plural and cosmopolitan, prosperous and inclusive, fair and responsible, and cohesive future.

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The impact of uncertainty and the changing nature of society on schools, teachers, and families during the first decade of children's lives and learning transitions

Rupert Corbishley

Introduction

While it is important to note how uncertainty and social change are not new phenomena, there is broad recognition that forces related to, for example, increased social, economic, political, and cultural interactions and connectivity, rising global temperatures, and rapid technological advances, have increased the pace of change and heightened local to global uncertainties. Children today are being socialised within this uncertain and dynamic societal state. Schools and teachers, communities and parents have greatest influence on children, particularly during their formative years and first decade of life. But are education systems appropriately set-up to meet children's needs and are parents adequately enabled to meaningfully engage in their children's in and out of school learning and broader development? This paper will briefly outline how political and developmental shifts since the 1980s have driven a 'systems approach' to education and, in so doing, marginalised community and parents. However, while still practiced, there is increasing evidence and understanding of how important the contextual 'lifeworld' of a community is to enabling young children to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to navigate uncertainty.

Systemsworld

Centralised control of education is considered important to any governing political party as it enables one to influence curriculum content, underlying education philosophies, education provision as a public service or private good, and, ultimately, how children and young people are being socialised into society. This 'systemsworld' approach is, therefore, appealing as it provides the means to assert maximum control on the system. However, this, at best, limits the agency of communities and parents to effectively engage in their children's education and, at worst, vilifies parents or community elements that do not conform to the school's, thus system's, agenda.

In Western economies, the rise of the New Right led to emphasis being placed on participation derived on economic neo-liberal principals, thus away from collective action and toward individual client orientation as individual consumers.¹ The importance of collective actions deteriorated, an individual having the power to withdraw one's custom, not engage in the running or management of an organisation. Related to education, this meant parents dissatisfied with the quality of service from a public school had the power to remove their child, not engage in creating meaningful change within the school to address their concerns. Carol Vincent (1996) argues how this disproportionately impacted on families of lower socio-economic status as they were underrepresented on Parent Teacher Associations with teachers and parent members coming from higher socio-economic classes, predominately the middle class.²

In this way, schools started to become increasingly disconnected from the communities they claimed to serve. Indeed, if a parent or community were not aligned with the school's mission and agenda, they were determined as deviants. When staff at a school realised that:

No matter how much progress they made in the school day all their *good* work could be swiftly undone overnight, at the weekend, and in the holidays by *unsupportive* aspects of the community... The *only* solution which made sense was for the staff to both teach well and to reach out to the growth and strong points within the community to ensure that they became resilient enough to overcome the *negative* and support the *efforts of the school*. (Atkinson, 1994: 33, emphasis added). The clear message here is that parents and local communities should share in the school's, and by default the system's, agenda. The validity of knowing and wants of those who do not conform become secondary, invalid, if not vilified. This creates a cleavage and disjunction between home and school, a realism that undermines the ability of schools to deliver quality education with evidence showing the importance of parental and community engagement for this to be achieved (see below).

Within this political context, the developmental discourse also started to shift. Ideas of working through government systems, scalability, coordination, and value for money started to become increasingly central. In 2005, the Paris Declaration aimed at increasing aid effectiveness and impact and marked a shift in the *modus operandi* of the donor community, development

¹ Adler, M., Petch, A., and Tweedie, J. 1989. *Parental Choice and Education Policy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

² Vincent, C. 1996. *Parent and Teachers: Power and Participation*. London: The Falmer Press

partners, and NGO. Major bi-lateral donors were now seeking to deliver with and through government systems and structures with inter-donor and programme coordination of paramount importance. This is perhaps best exemplified by the Global Partnership of Education, funded by multiple countries and seeking to support governments implement their education sector plans. This re-thinking coincided with a rapid expansion of the education sector in the developing world as countries strived to realise their commitment to achieve universal access to free primary education by 2015.³ This placed substantial pressure on these governments to increase efficiencies within the education system, a reality further exacerbated by the pre-occupation of donor countries with value for money and beneficiary numbers to justify overseas development investment.

Therefore, a ‘systemworld’ approach aligned with the prevailing global philosophy and the immediate wants of both donor and recipient country governments. However, if every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets, this drive for efficiency has also been the catalyst for the erosion of quality so often associated with rapid expansion in student enrolment. Parents and communities became instrumentalised stakeholders in education, even when formalised in national policy.⁴ Pryor (2005) demonstrates how “schooling and community life are two distinct and differently structured fields.... (and) this acts as a severe constraint on attempts to mobilise community social capital for the improvement of the school” (2005: 193).⁵ Schools became a means to show large beneficiary numbers, producing one document that reached them all, no matter whether this reflected the actual needs of children, the everyday lived experiences in communities, or socio-cultural values. Schools became beacons to drive the social interests of global power brokers, for example gender, with no real connection to how these related to the lifeworld of communities. The school rose like a lighthouse out of the community, but it was this cleavage and disjuncture that has continued to contribute to the precipitous decline in quality of education and learning of children.

³ As agreed to under the Millennium Development Goals

⁴ Rose, P. 2003. ‘Community Participation in School Policy and Practice in Malawi: Balancing local knowledge, national policies and international agency priorities’. *A Journal for Comparative and International Education*. Vol 33:1. 47-64

⁵ Pryor, J. 2005. ‘Can community participation mobilise social capital for improvement of rural schooling? A case study from Ghana’. *A Journal for Comparative and International Education*. Vol 35:2. 193-203

Lifeworld

Recently, the need for schools to be more embedded with in the ‘lifeworld’ of the community and a realisation of citizen power has started to reverse this trend and demonstrate the importance and impact communities and parents can have on the quality of education when they are willing and able to participate in school life and their children’s education.⁶ Meaningful parent and community engagement in school life is particularly important in an uncertain world where increasingly fluid identities can undermine a child’s understanding of self and damage their psychological well-being.

Developing a positive school ethos and culture is arguably the foundation on which a common understanding between a school and the community it resides and serves. If culture can be defined as “a set of common understandings for organising actions and language and other symbolic vehicle for expressing common understanding” (Louis, 1980: 227), then it is clear the disjuncture between schools and communities threaten the very existence of developing a positive school culture.

Getting the culture right and paying attention to how parents, teachers, and students define and experience meaning are two widely accepted rules for creating effective schools. We still have to worry about standards, the curriculum, teacher professional developments... But these concerns will not matter unless the right culture is in place and unless parents, teachers, and students interact with the school in meaningful ways. (Sergiovanni, 2004: 14)

The implications of this are clear; without a positive school culture rooted in the lifeworld of the children, parents, and community, a school will not be effective and not provide quality.

Evidence of a resurgence in the agency of the lifeworld in education can be identified across the world and from the macro to the micro levels. In the United Kingdom, for example, the 2010 Academies Act entitled various bodies, including community organisations and parents, to open Free Schools supported by their Local Government Authority, but not be tied to national constructs, for example, the national curriculum. Parents and communities have also begun to react and assume their rights, recently evidenced in Kenya where parents took the government

⁶ Uemura, M. 1999. ‘Community Participation in Education: What do we know?’ The World Bank⁷ Arnett, J. Jeffery. 2003. ‘The Psychology of Globalisation’. American Psychological Association. Vol. 57: 10, 774–783

to court over illegal school fees⁸, and demand an education for their children that considers multiple ways of knowing and values local ways of knowing. This understanding, recognition, and realisation of the importance of the lifeworld is critical to improving schools, education, and in enabling children to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values they need to navigate uncertainties and become contributing members of society.

Bringing the two worlds together

As eluded to above, it is important not to create a false dichotomy between the ‘systemsworld’ and ‘lifeworld’. What is important to recognise that schools have both a systemsworld and lifeworld and the need is to effectively balance these. Where school purposes are determined by school means and policies, the systemsworld dominates the lifeworld, a situation Habermas refers to as the colonialization of the lifeworld by the systemsworld.⁹

The lifeworld is grown through ‘expressive’ and ‘normative’ action and the systemsworld through ‘teleological’ and ‘strategic’ action. Understanding this, therefore, Habermas’ theory demands that the “teleological and strategic action of the systemsworld should be determined by and should serve the expressive and normative actions of the lifeworld”.¹⁰ An example of how this can be done is through participatory school planning processes, in the development, delivery, and review of these plans. The Aga Khan Foundation’s (AKF) Whole School Approach is one such example of such an intervention, but there are many. These seek to develop a platform for schools to meaningfully engage parents and communities in developing the priorities for the school to improve the delivery of high quality, *relevant*, education for their children. Here an agreed expressive and normative actions are leading the teleological and strategic actions. Of course, when delivering these interventions at the school level, whether as a development actor or a government, it is important to consider Carol Vincent’s observation and ensure equal and representative parental and community

⁸ Kenyan parents sue ministers over illegal school fees. Cited the Guardian Newspaper. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jan/24/kenyan-parents-sue-illegal-school-fees>

⁹ Habermas, J. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action (Vol. 2)*, T. McCarthy (Trans.). Boston: Boston Press

¹⁰ Sergiovanni, T.J. 2004. *The Lifeworld at the Centre: Values and Action in Educational Leadership*. Bennet, Crawford, and Cartwright (Eds.) ‘Effective Educational Leadership’. Cromwell Press Ltd.: Towbridge

participation to avoid a narrow sub-sector of the community taking ownership of the educational space defined on a narrow understanding of 'community' interests and values.

A second area that will require attention by systems focused development organisations and governments is the need to be committed to a genuine shift in power from the central authorities and institutions to the communities, parent, schools, and teachers who are central to the socialisation of children. While understood National Curricula must be national, it is important to make these meaningful and relevant to a very diverse population that exists across a country. How then can a national document be implemented in a context relevant manner, yet still achieve the same goals. Two suggestions can be made.

For the first, one must insure the curriculum is embedded in the values and local ways of knowing. In the 1980s the Madrasa Early Childhood Programme (MECP) was faced with a similar dilemma. When developing a pre-primary curriculum for preschools in the Coast of Kenya, MECP assessed global good practice and identified the High Scope curriculum as the basis to provide a foundation for this curriculum. However, this was followed by an extensive consultation process with communities on the coast to ensure this was embedded in their lifeworld and positive value system. This curriculum was, therefore, globally informed, but locally rooted so was relevant to the children and respected by parents and communities.

For the second, there is a need to review teacher professional development delivery models. While the preferred method of teacher professional development has been the cascade model due to its ability to reach large numbers of teachers in a cost-effective manner, this has become increasingly criticised for several reasons resulting in the "watering down and/or misinterpretation of crucial information".¹¹ This leads to increased inequality as those receiving training nearer the top of the cascade tend to be more centralised and/or in positions of greater power than those they are expected to train. Thus "experience of cascade is more often reduced to a trickle by the time it reaches the classroom teacher, on whom the success of curricula change depends".¹² What is needed is to understand how teachers can become local experts and be the creators of content rather than the recipients of top-down interventions. Teachers are better placed to understand how to make centralised curricula relevant to the children in

¹¹ Fiske, E.B. & Ladd HF. 2004. *Elusive Equity: Education Reform in Post-apartheid South Africa*. Washington: DC: Brookings Institute.

¹² Hayes, D. 2000. Cascade Training and Teachers' Professional Development. In *ELT Journal*; 54:2 pp.135

their classroom and support others to do the same. By making the systemsworld curriculum relevant to the lifeworld of the community, children will be more able to engage with the content and so develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to navigate uncertainties and become contributing member of society.

Conclusion

The objective if this paper has not been to devalue the role of national systems and procedures, create any false dichotomies, or assert that local ways of knowing are always the best ways of knowing. Indeed, with respect to the latter, it is imperative to challenge negative social norms that perpetuate social exclusion wherever they exist and that these cannot be excused through a veneer of cultural relativism. What is proposed here is the need for the lifeworld, 'expressive' and 'normative' actions to drive the systemsworld 'teleological' and 'strategic' action. While the system must be valued for its ability to provide strategic direction, reach large numbers of children and teachers, and achieve scale, there must be a commitment to acknowledging the complexity of diversity, enabling space to positively engage with this diversity, a disposition to value diversity, and the humility to accept that one size does not fit all. In this way the systemsworld and lifeworld can engage with and understand multiple ways of knowing in a positive manner, not dismiss or fear these. In this way schools can become beacons for positive within the community that enable positive social change and social resilience within a time of uncertainty. In addition, when content and competencies are developed with meaning and relevance, children will not only develop the knowledge skills, attitudes and values needed to navigate uncertainties, but also develop pluralistic dispositions to embrace change and diversity, not develop a fear of diversity that perpetuates socio-cultural cleavages and conflicts. As His Highness, the Aga Khan reminds us, "Pluralism is no longer simply and asset or pre- requisite for progress and development; it is vital to our existence".¹³

An education that transcends and transforms

While discussions around the role of education seem to be focused on the future, I propose reclaiming an idea of education that was presented by a compatriot of mine exactly 50 years ago. In his classic book 'Pedagogy of the oppressed' published in Brazil in 1968,

¹³ His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, Speech at the Ceremony to Inaugurate the Restored Humayun's Tomb Gardens - New Delhi, India, April 15, 2003

Paulo Freire introduces a concept of education that is liberating and humanizing. He considers the core task of education to teach people to reflect, and through reflection to transform their realities. The ideas that Freire articulates are just as relevant now as they were in the period when the book was launched. In this essay, I will discuss the key concepts from his book in light of the current context of rapid changing realities and the role of education in this scenario. I argue that education has to move from attributing too much focus on teaching the 'what' instead of teaching the 'how'. This would mean to an education aimed at developing reflection and critical thinking. I start with an introduction of the transformative role of education and the problems that arise from an education that constrains rather than liberates. Then, I suggest education should not be conceived in utilitarian terms, attempting only to develop the skills we need to compete in the future labour market. Finally, I conclude that in order to occupy a central role in our future and remain relevant, education needs to transcend present and future needs, accepting reality as ever changing and claiming its true transformative potential as a life-long process of practicing reflection and critical thinking.

The current role of education, that of transmitting information, is increasingly being contested in all corners of the world. This traditional model was conceived for a society that has long ceased to exist. Globalization and technological advancements have increased the pace in which changes happen and the world is constantly changing. In this scenario, particularly in regard to the threats of artificial intelligence having deep effects in the labour market, many say we should focus on developing skills that magnify those attributes that make us humans. An education that focuses on developing our 'humanity' is thought to help us be better suited for work and more able to 'compete' with machines in the near future. Thus, thinking critically, creativity, problem solving abilities and emotional intelligence are some of the skills thought to be essential for our future. All of these have been by the World Economic Forum as key abilities in the report 'The Future of Jobs' (2016).

Still, despite the relevance of the argument, which is based on the idea that sufficient remaining jobs will be created, this corresponds to a very utilitarian view of education. If education is conceived just for the sake of making individuals fit a specific context, it is likely that it will soon be 'outdated' again. James Ferguson problematizes the idea that the labour market is going to be capable of including all (2015) and states that it is inevitable that some will be left out, therefore in need of other forms of support. If that is so, shouldn't we be thinking about education in a transcendent way, one that can be sustained throughout the ever-changing nature of our world? An education that focuses on the how to learn rather than what to learn has the potential to be more sustainable in light of the ongoing changes society goes

through.

The transformative role of education, in its alternative models, different from the information transmission one, is often highlighted and praised. This potential for transformation comes not from what is taught but from how it is done. Focusing on how people learn and giving them the skills to ‘learn how to learn’ can be the way to handle uncertainties and overcome adversities. As such, education has a key role to play in our societies. Though it will not show us the way education can make us better prepared to deal with whatever happens. For Freire (2000), education is an act of liberation, which could only be done by adopting reflection as the core element of the education process. He also described reality as being in constant change and capable of being affected through reflection, since according to him, reflection leads to action (Freire, 2000). As such, education has the potential to transform reality by teaching people to reflect about it. Along the same lines I believe in order to achieve its transformative potential education has to concentrate in giving students tools to think critically about their realities and become capable of acting over them. An education that treats students passively filling them with information is dominating rather than liberating and prevents them from acting (Freire, 2000), thus constraining their agency over reality. It is thus imperative that we reconsider the purpose of education.

Beyond this, teaching people how rather than what and focusing on promoting reflection is capable of leading to the development of the same capabilities listed as key skills for the future. Freire describes education as a process that can help us achieve true humanity, reflecting on our incompleteness and being aware of it is what makes education ‘an exclusively human manifestation’ (2000, p. 84). Education should be a life lasting exercise in which people learn to reflect and analyse concepts and facts critically recognizing that themselves and reality are both in constant transformation. Hence, adopting this transformative view of education is in line with recent trends, as it can develop capabilities that will be increasingly important, while at the same time providing a conceptualization of education as a process that can transcend reality, regardless of the changes society goes through. Perhaps the increased uncertainty and constant external effects we currently see can be catalysers for this change to happen.

Finally, education certainly has a key role in the ever-changing nature of our societies, it is through the process of education that we can learn to navigate and transform this reality ensuring a better a better future for all of us. However, this is only possible if we rethink the purpose of education freeing it from the constrains of responding to demands from a specific moment in time. Though discussion seem to be moving in the right direction, with increasing

focus on our ‘humanity’ and developing capabilities that make individuals ‘whole’, they are still doing so for the wrong reason. Accepting reality as constantly changing means conceiving an education that is able to transcend it. Rethinking the purpose of education in the terms proposed here can help us realize it as a human right, it can be a process that help us evolve and adapt creating more cohesive and inclusive societies for all regardless of external influences and constantly changing contexts.

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The Benefits of Mindfulness in Times of Social Change and Uncertainty

Bethany Cunningham

Mindfulness and Uncertainty

Mindfulness provides us with tools we need to strengthen connections in our brain allowing us to see opportunities within a cloud of difficulties. This brings greater acceptance of new ideas and promotes learning through creative experiences. The impact of uncertainty and the changing nature of society has put a tremendous burden on teachers, families, and schools.

Uncertainty frequently manifests itself in the form of strong emotions of fear, anxiety, frustration or a combination of them all. Our brain responds to these difficult emotions by anticipating danger. We become reactionary instead of responsive and our thinking shifts and focuses solely on the perceived threat. If students come to the classroom in this state, it becomes extremely difficult for them to learn and process new information.

When there is a perceived lack of control or uncertainty, that condition creates the basis for anxiety. Our brain reacts to this with a sense of fear and triggers a response in the body expecting imminent threat. We begin to feel compelled to prepare ourselves for the worst and develop a trust and a habit of worrying. This circumstance results in a neural response that limits one's ability to learn, and greatly narrows the focus of our understanding and thinking processes. We can get caught up in this habit of worrying or we can train ourselves to thoughtfully respond to an unsettling moment. Mindfulness is a tool that trains our brain to respond and stay focused amid the cloud of uncertainty. It creates new neural networks that re-wire habits of thinking and reactions, allowing our brain to more thoughtfully respond to the uncertainty we face.

A critical component of mindfulness training is the examination of our emotional and physiological responses to situations through an objective lens and a curious viewpoint. Present moment awareness provides us with an ability to recognize our state of mind in a given moment and prepares our brain to respond rather than react to a challenging or traumatic event. We then have the choice to react with fear or respond with curiosity to these difficult moments.

When circumstances of uncertainty can be viewed with an open and curious mind, it has the potential to lead to opportunity and growth, acceptance and understanding. It opens the mind to learning in creative and useful approaches. Mindfulness allows one to develop the skill of navigating difficult moments in thoughtful and responsive ways. It provides the space to understand ourselves and those around us with greater clarity. In so doing, we find commonality among our differences.

Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Education has the unique ability to impact students, families, and communities over generations. Teachers and schools that function through inclusive and cohesive systems impact students and communities in transformative ways. Mindfulness is an essential component to enhancing the nature of learning, promoting empathy and compassion, and improving how we understand emotions and regulate behaviors. The implementation of mindfulness in classroom curricula reduces stress for teachers and students and allows them to connect on a deeper level, providing more time to learn and to more easily navigate the challenges and uncertainties in their lives.

Programs incorporating SEL are further enhanced by implementing mindfulness strategies. These techniques work together collaboratively to provide students with tools to navigate challenges. SEL programs instruct students with specific tools on what to do, and mindfulness builds the skills necessary to access the learned information when in the heat of a strong emotion. While SEL teaches us what to say and how to respond, it is impossible for us to access that information when our brain is operating from a fight or flight response out of fear. When we connect with the rhythm of our breathing, recognize sensations in our body, or bring awareness to our senses in the present moment, we engage the higher executive functioning area of our brain that helps us to navigate overwhelming feelings of stress and anxiety. Mindfulness is critical in this regard, as it strengthens our ability to recognize our state of mind, pause, and purposely choose a thoughtful response rather than a thoughtless reaction.

Mindfulness can strengthen our ability to approach others with compassion and understanding, and to examine uncertainty and change with curiosity. When our minds are open, we can appreciate and accept adversity and differing viewpoints. We are open to new ideas and concepts. We see other's perspectives for what they are and we understand that emotions don't equate to facts. If we meet those experiences with fear, our judgment is likely to become clouded. It becomes difficult to see changing circumstances or the opinions of others objectively. We tie emotions to situations which can impede our understanding and

restrict our thinking to very narrow viewpoints.

Mindfulness and Classrooms

Many of the world's students lack the skills necessary to recognize their stress and the behaviors that arise as a result. The outcome for some of these students is often disruptive and sometimes violent behavior, thus impacting their cognitive abilities and, concurrently, their classmates' ability to learn. A teacher trained in mindfulness can assist these students in not only identifying stress induced situations, but, also in how to manage their emotions while responding to a given situation more thoughtfully.

Teachers are frequently tasked with educating youth who enter their classrooms unprepared to learn. Students bring the stresses of poverty, peer-pressure, anxiety, trauma, exposure to violence, and mental health issues with them to classes each day. This, compounded by the teacher's own stress, can result in a classroom where students feel disengaged, have difficulty paying attention, and lack empathy for others.

If a teacher is under stress and that environment is shared with students also experiencing stress and trauma, this condition could create a disruptive and potentially violent learning environment. Students caught up in a stress response are ill-equipped to focus, regulate their behavior, or display empathy to those around them. Without the proper training and skills, a teacher may fall back on poor methods of classroom management by focusing on weaknesses and vulnerabilities in the class. This may prompt unintentional trauma through the use of shame, yelling, and humiliation tactics to manage an unruly or challenging classroom.

Teachers practicing mindfulness are better equipped to manage the challenges they face in their work. A teacher who has the necessary training and support in mindfulness, conducts classes objectively and with compassion. A mindful teacher focuses on the strengths and potentials of the learners. Students attune themselves to this model and become better observers and more prepared to navigate uncertainty with a present-moment awareness that benefits themselves and those around them. Teachers feel less stress and are more capable of adapting lessons to suit the unique learning styles of the children in their care.

Teachers who are fully present, engaged with their students, and responsive in non-judgmental ways, cultivate supportive learning environments. Mindfulness fosters not only a love of learning, but also plants the seeds of personal understanding, self-regulation, and acceptance.

Mindfulness and Community

Incorporating mindfulness into current systems of education fosters well-being beyond the school walls and into the community. When children learn, and are supported in, mindfulness, they develop healthy coping skills that are utilized both inside and outside of the classroom. Many of my students report using mindfulness strategies outside of school - while playing sports, at the doctor's office, and while communicating with family members and friends. They teach their siblings and encourage their parents to practice noticing sounds and following their breathing together. It empowers even the youngest of school-age children with tools to not only manage their own stress, but; to help others calm themselves as well.

Providing safe opportunities to explore mindfulness skills and techniques in the classroom, allows for consistent reinforcement by teachers, school staff, and by their peers. Informing and educating parents in how to effectively support mindfulness at home benefits families by fostering stronger relationships and improved communication. This can create a ripple-effect within the community; as a result of their interactions with others both as individuals and as a family.

Mindfulness allows for greater awareness of ourselves and the world around us. It helps us to see that we are part of a community and a culture that takes multiple parts and people coming together to affect change in positive, reinforcing, meaningful, and sustainable ways. Through mindfulness we learn to cultivate the importance of compassion for ourselves and extending that compassion and support to each other. It promotes a sense of connection and care to the world around us.

Mindfulness in Practice

I understand first-hand the impact mindfulness can have on schools and communities. I am familiar with the benefits, as well as the challenges, that arise from incorporating mindfulness into classrooms and into familial dynamics. I have practiced mindfulness since 2001 and I began teaching the strategies in schools in 2014. Additionally, in 2017, I began teaching family and parenting mindfulness classes. I developed and continue to evolve my own mindfulness curriculum. My students range in age from 3-years old to senior citizens.

Children today are experiencing differences in brain development and learning abilities from those growing up just a couple of decades ago. I'm witness to the need to educate schools, families, and communities on these differences and provide them with the tools necessary to understand and support these changes. In schools, this often takes the form of combining social emotional learning with mindfulness. SEL skills provide strategies for addressing people and situations that challenge us, while mindfulness increases compassion, reinforces self- regulation, enhances creativity and provides intellectual space for choosing

meaningful responses to challenging situations.

The social impacts I've witnessed are: an overall self-reported reduction in stress, a recognition of unproductive habits, an increased empathy and compassion for others, and noticeably improved communication skills. Parents and teachers who practice mindfulness check their own states of mind before responding to children who are struggling to regulate themselves. It is in these moments of pause, taking a few breaths and proceeding in a calm and responsive manner that a child learns self-regulation and acceptance. They begin to learn how to resolve difficulties by attuning to and modeling the behavior they see in the adults who care for them. This begins the process of reinforcing helpful habits and brain health that serve to create pathways to improved cognitive functioning, acceptance of differences, and compassion for those who are suffering.

As one of my teachers shared, "Mindfulness helps me center myself for anything ahead in my day. I have balance when dealing with issues that arise with my middle school students. Mindfulness can conquer angst, anxiety, fear. It is life affirming." (Sue McCuller, Grade 8 Teacher, St. Brigid School). Changes in our society and the uncertainties we face are inevitable consequences of our existence. Through mindfulness, we learn to view these challenges with circumspection and see the potential for opportunity when faced with anxiety and adversity.

Recommendations

Integrating mindfulness into education and family support systems provides a holistic approach to learning and cultivates greater compassion and care for ourselves and for those around us. It allows us to view difficult situations through an objective and curious mindset. Adults who practice mindfulness model the values, acceptance and patience necessary to support a new generation of creative thinkers, problem solvers and global citizens. It promotes a community of collaboration and well-being that is sustainable and open to opportunity.

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Growing conflict, growing uncertainties – Where do we start to define the educational response?

Aqeela Datto

'To help society fully comprehend this [peaceful] nature of humanity and work towards restoring the hope that it is possible to exploit the good side of this humanity, the challenge is thrown to teachers' (Njoroge 2007:218).

Conflicts have increased sharply since 2010 and with them have brought a multitude of uncertainties – uncertainties regarding governance and security, uncertainties about interpersonal relations, uncertainties for the millions of displaced communities, and uncertainties about the economic stability of the country. What role can education play in ensuring students are resilient in the face of these uncertainties? To answer this, we must recognise that education systems are mirrors of the society they are situated within – schools are not 'empty vessels' that are 'value-free' (Corbett, et al. 1987:57). Indeed, uncertainties often permeate the school boundaries and present themselves within schools and classrooms.

This paper argues that for education to play a role in shaping and sustaining a society that is resilient to political, economic and social uncertainties, emphasis must be placed on making school systems resilient. The focus therefore must be placed first and foremost on working with school head teachers and teachers to build a culture of resilience. Based on my PhD research, conducted with head and teachers in Kericho and Nakuru following the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya, this paper discusses the merit in taking a more gradual approach and providing teachers the space to confront their own biases and prejudices in order to assume and internalise these new skills and attitudes to teach resilience. The case of Kenya offers a suitable context in which to research this particular phenomenon because of its continuous association with violence, which has caused consistent political, economic and social uncertainties, and resulted in the corrosion of interpersonal relations and increasing ethnic tensions in education systems.

Examining uncertainties in Kenya and effects of the violence

In 1991 Kenya began its transition from a one-party system to multi-party democracy triggering widespread violence. To this date, violence has continued to erupt in several

pockets of the region, notably during elections as was witnessed in the post-election violence of 2007. These events of violence, which are characterised by forced land seizures, displacement and purposive targeting of certain groups, often present themselves along the lines of ethnicity. This has been a result of the politicisation of ethnicity in Kenya by colonialists as well as the Kenyan elite, who used it as a tool to usurp and maintain political control over economic resources (Azarya, 2003; Osamba, 2001; Oucho, 2002; Rutten and Owuor, 2009). Land rights have played a particularly important role in shaping ethnic consciousness given that Kenya is essentially an agrarian society. Politicians often manipulate fears and insecurities regarding land in order to cleanse regions from opposition voters as well as maintain political control over resources.

These uncertainties and insecurities were once again at the forefront in the post-election violence of 2007. Yet again politicians played a role in drawing on historical grievances regarding land, which aided in enhancing ethnic consciousness of various groups (Anderson & Lochery, 2008; Roberts, 2009; Kanyinga, 2009). However, the intensity of this conflict, not witnessed before in Kenya's post-colonial history, could also be attributed to the role of youth gangs, which offered an attractive alternative to disenfranchised youth struggling with economic stagnation and uncertainties regarding job prospects in Kenya (KNHCR, 2007; Waki, 2008).

The Human Rights Watch report released in 2011 ascertained that at least 663,921 people were displaced and around 1,133 persons were killed between December 27, 2007 and the end of February 2008 (HRW 2011:13). In addition to this, 3,561 people were injured and 117,216 instances of property destruction were reported (Waki 2008:346). In reference to school children, over a third of those displaced were children and an estimated 1.1 million secondary school students were affected by the conflict, either due to displacement, lack of teachers or school closures (Onsongo 2008:3).

The effects of the violence on schools varied from those that were more technical such as a lack of resources, books, and benches given the surge of displaced students to psychosocial effects like fear, trauma and aggressive behaviour among students. Teachers too personally experienced the conflict and many continued to exhibit feelings of discomfort, grief, and fear regarding these events. Several young male students were absorbed into youth gangs during the violence and a few continued to maintain associations with them, which was particularly troublesome for teachers. Lastly, ethnic tensions and hostilities were prevalent in the school environment and witnessed not just between colleagues, but also between teachers and students. Several teachers also continued to categorise individuals as 'perpetrator' versus

‘victim’ or ‘us’ versus ‘them’.

Responses to the violence and resulting uncertainties

On account of the scale of the violence and involvement of youth, directives proposed by the Ministry of Education, local NGOs and churches created a shift in discourses on learning in schools. NGOs and prominent members of society repeatedly emphasised the need to include ‘peace’ and ‘conflict resolution’ in the curriculum. During the Kenya Secondary School Head conference in Mombasa in July 2009, the issue of including peace education in the curriculum was discussed (as reported by teacher interviewees). Subsequently, at an inter-regional conference in September 2009 Education Minister Sam Ongeru announced that peace education would be introduced as a compulsory subject in the school system noting that ‘the main aim of peace education is to empower citizens with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed for harmonious existence’ (Mwajefa 2009). Additionally, in 2009 the Ministry of Education introduced Life Skills education for secondary schools, which is designed to be a daily subject for students from Form 1 to Form 4 and focuses on building relevant skills for navigating the challenges and uncertainties of adolescent life as well as preparing them for the independence they will encounter after school.

Lastly, it emerged that local churches and NGOs were conducting teacher workshops in counselling, peace, and conflict resolution in the hope that this knowledge would aid teachers in dealing with the effects of the violence and resulting social uncertainties. A number of head teachers also mentioned encouraging teachers to attend these workshops so that schools could design appropriate solutions to the violence. Evidently, external actors were urging a shift in teachers’ traditional roles. Not only were they expected to manage the effects of the violence, but they were also required to do so as counsellors, conflict resolution experts, Life Skills teachers and peace educators.

Within schools, teachers were keen on bringing their students back to schools in order to avoid any disturbances to their education, often constructing positive solutions such as the barter system to replace fees or seeking out housing for students who were displaced due to the violence. Several teachers also took an active role in gathering the necessary resources from community members for students who were in IDP camps or orphaned due to the conflict.

In relation to the psychosocial effects of the conflict, while most teachers acknowledged the existence of these effects, comparatively fewer were able to discuss the ways in which they dealt with these as well as other issues like rape, sexual abuse, and aggressive behaviour among students. They were more likely to refer these questions to the counsellor.

However, school counsellors are often not professionally trained for their role; therefore, their responses were also improvised and inconsistent, and not a reliable measure of an effective response to these effects of the violence. Based on analysis of teachers' responses to the conflict, the research concluded that teachers did not sufficiently deal with the presence of ethnic tensions, fears, and hostilities in the school environment. Neither was sufficient emphasis placed on managing the effects of the conflict on their personal well-being or involving community members in their responses.

Identifying the missing pieces

An analysis of the research highlighted that teachers were rather hesitant and resistant to take on new roles owing to the realities they face in their classrooms. They are often ill-equipped, do not possess the necessary skills to respond to their new roles, are unclear whether the school culture permits these changes in their role (over a focus on school examinations), or were simply motivated by their own personal views and beliefs. Teachers therefore require support in assuming a transformed role to manage the effects of violence and its resulting uncertainties, which is often entirely absent in the design of these responses.

Teacher workshops organised by the state, NGOs or, in the case of Kenya, churches focused only on providing them with content-related knowledge regarding peace, conflict resolution and life skills to relay these concepts to their students. This sense of urgency to introduce remedial strategies shifted focus away from adequately preparing teachers for the required changes in their role and skills. Analysis of the data depicted that while teachers were provided with theoretical information about peace, conflict resolution and life skills, not enough emphasis was placed on equipping them with new methodologies that are more conducive for teaching these skills. When explaining how they taught these concepts, teachers made little mention of interactive discussions or other participatory strategies. Only a handful of counsellors, who possess an advanced degree in psychology, guided their students through structured activities such as drawing, painting, drama, and dance to discuss peace and unity.

Along with an emphasis on content, there is a need to transform the methodological skills teachers employ in their classrooms. In the absence of this knowledge, teachers continue to rely on traditional methods such as rote memorisation and an authoritarian teaching style, which are not conducive for teaching about peace and conflict resolution. Moreover, research concludes that these teaching styles prevent students from feeling safe and secure in their classrooms as well as serve to reinforce the sense of powerlessness students already feel in environments riddled with uncertainties (Sommers, 2002; Davies, 2004).

To adopt new methodologies, teachers require periodic training and guidance. These new teaching styles significantly alter the hierarchical structure of the teacher-student relationship they are commonly attuned to in their culture and such transformations cannot be expected swiftly. Similarly, in relation to content training as well, analysis of the data determined that teachers who attended workshops organised by churches and local NGOs felt more confident about their role, yet their grasp over these concepts was extremely weak. This led to their responses being quite linear. Therefore, rather than provide one-off training, as was customarily provided to teachers in Kenya, there is a need for multiple workshops in both content and methodologies. A focus on the latter ensures a more stable foundation upon which to introduce the concept of 'peace' and 'resilience' as well as the related skills, attitudes and values into the climate of learning.

Importantly, such concepts cannot be taught in isolation. Instead, it is necessary that the culture of the school be built on similar ideals in order to reinforce these principles. In a post-conflict context where school resources are strained and political and social uncertainties continue to fester, it is understandable that teachers display biased and prejudiced behaviours towards their colleagues and students. Indeed, teachers are a part of the society they serve and maintain a reflexive relationship with their community. They are therefore not immune to displaying attitudes that are in conflict with the goal of creating positive behaviours among students. It is therefore valuable to organise workshops where teachers are able to confront their own biases and prejudices at an early stage to enable them to internalise values and skills conducive to resilience and peacebuilding, thereby transform their traditional roles to agents of peace, tolerance and conflict resolution. By exhibiting and adopting values and behaviours that are conducive to peace and resilience, these concepts may be effectively internalised by students. Expectedly, this necessitates adopting a school-wide approach in which the shift in the culture and 'climate of learning' is accepted and supported by all members.

Various scholars ascertain that the principal plays an imperative part in defining and maintaining this culture (Hoy and Tarter, 1997; Engles *et al.*, 2008). Research from this study concluded that school leaders must collaborate with their teachers and school counsellors in order to create a culture of collegiality as well as encourage teachers to gain a sense of ownership of any new initiatives. This is beneficial for two reasons. Firstly, by involving all teachers in the decision-making process, innovations may be introduced with the support and commitment of teachers. Secondly, and more importantly, in a country where ethnic relations are frail collaboration and teamwork aids in unifying teachers towards a common goal thus combatting tensions and hostility in the school environment. It is essential that head teachers

develop a shared vision for their school with the contribution of their teachers and clearly communicate this vision regularly. This aids in providing teachers with a sense of clarity, direction, and purpose in a climate of uncertainty.

Conclusion: A way forward

There is tendency to turn to education as a suitable avenue through which to counter the effects of political, economic and social instability. This leads to the introduction of various curricula and programmes into the 'climate of learning'. However, such isolated initiatives are often not useful for managing interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. Therefore, there is a need to redefine the strategies employed by NGOs and governments to be more sensitive to the realities within which teachers work.

This paper argues that a greater focus must be placed on providing teachers with the space to challenge their pre-existing prejudices and biases, which will enable them to transcend mentalities of victimhood, helplessness, low self-confidence and indeed, the notion of 'us' versus 'them'. It also determines that a greater emphasis is required on transforming the methodologies teachers employ in their classroom to create a safe and secure climate rather than one built on the use of fear and corporal punishment.

Given that concepts such as 'peace' and 'resilience' cannot be taught in isolation and require teachers to inculcate and exhibit behaviours that are conducive to achieve this, a school-wide approach is necessary to create a climate that reinforces the learning of these skills. Therefore, it would be beneficial to ensure that all teachers obtain relevant knowledge and skills by increasing the collaboration between colleagues. In the same vein, it would also be valuable to offer training to head teachers, which would enable them to transform their administrative and instructional role to include leadership skills that allow for more flexibility and innovation, which is required to achieve a shift in the school culture to build peace and resilience.

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Some College, No Degree: A look at the changing nature of higher education and the uncertain future of employment preparation in the United States

Rachel Dowling

In the United States today, 70% of Americans older than the age of 25 do not have a bachelors or associates degree. A subset of that group - some 37 million adults, comprising 15% of the working age population -- have 'some college, no degree'. In an increasingly knowledge-worker economy, where automation and machine learning are reducing the number of jobs available to workers without a college degree, this group faces an uncertain future. What skills, credentials, and educational preparation will be required for this generation? What importance will be placed on a bachelors or associates degree? What other types of credentials will signal to employers that an employee is qualified to do a job? And what is the value of completing their degree versus attempting to learn a new skill on the job, in a new tech bootcamp, in an apprenticeship, or some other educational opportunity?

The role of un-degreed and partially degreed students in the current economic and political landscape is outsized given the large financial impact student loans have played in shaping our current economic outlook. It's worthwhile examining how our nation and society will be shaped by this phenomenon insofar as it impacts America's national competitiveness, production and economic productivity. Equally pressing is the uncertainty facing individuals themselves. How will adults think about higher education choices as they plan for the future given the cost of college, the uncertainty of what a degree will ensure, and the compelling alternatives emerging in the marketplace from startups? While there is much uncertainty, there is a lot of reason to hope that in the midst of uncertain needs in the labor market, resiliency and creativity will prevail to bring new educational responses to the needs in front of us.

Enrollment in college is at an all-time high, topping 40% of 18-24 year olds (Pew Research Center). Yet non completion, and debt are also at all-time highs which are contributing to the large population of partially degreed adults. A cultural expectation that high school graduates attend university to gain entry into the middle class, lax admission policies from for-profit universities that are incentivized to increase enrollment numbers, and easy credit have created an environment where many millions of students and adults fell easily into debt and were not able to finish a degree.

Types of colleges

For-profit colleges don't measure up to traditional four-year institutions.

GRADUATION RATE

Freshmen entering school in 2006 who had graduated by 2012



EMPLOYMENT

2008 graduates* who had a job in 2012



*Excluding those pursuing advanced degrees

DEBT

Percent of students who used loans to help pay for college (2013)



Average amount of debt (2007-08 school year)



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

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The rise of for-profit universities in particular, with their low graduation and employment rates (see above) have contributed significantly to this phenomenon. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics shows that enrollment in private for-profit institutions have quadrupled from 403,000 to 1.7 million from 2000 to 2010 (in contrast, public higher education institutions have seen a rise in enrollment of 30 percent and private nonprofit institutions have seen a rise of 20 percent over that same time). And according to the US Department of Education, while less than 15% of students attend for-profit schools, they account for almost a third of all student loans and are responsible for 51% of all student loan defaults.

For the nation as a whole, student loan debt now exceeds \$1.4 trillion, affecting 44 million borrowers who have an average outstanding loan balance of \$37,172. Student debt is the number two source of household debt after housing in the US. Alarmingly, a new report from the [Brookings Institute](#) shows that this debt may be lower quality than previously estimated, and may need to be downgraded. If current default trends hold, the default rate of the cohort of students who entered college in 2003 could be as high as 40% by 2023. Further, it appears that this increasing default rate is not being driven by high levels of debt per student; rather, default rates are highest from low earning drop outs, and for-profit enrolled students who incur smaller debts than from those who borrow more, since this typically indicates higher levels of college attainment. In other words, significant heterogeneity exists in the quality of student loan debt, which adds significant risk to the financial asset because it has not been adequately disaggregated, and opens the possibility for market corrections at an unpredictable time. Beyond market volatility or risk, expected regular student loan repayment expenses slow down families' ability to save for retirement, buy consumer goods, or prepare for homeownership, which in aggregate, has a slowing effect on the economy and national growth. The role of education in ensuring that students are able to graduate, and are prepared to get a job are critical for managing economic uncertainty and facilitating economic growth.

On an individual or household level, having a bachelor's degree offers significant monetary benefits over not having one (the median gap in annual earnings between a high school and college graduate is \$19,550, and unemployment rates among workers with a bachelor's degree are 41 percent lower than those with an associate's degree or some college, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics). The current white collar job market in many ways treats a bachelor's degree as table-stakes for entry into the knowledge economy. Understandably then, many students, even if they dropped out at one time, decide to return to college to complete their degree. Yet cost, time, and transferability of credits are unknowns that must be navigated to a large extent by students themselves. Mapping out a degree program, researching course providers, comparing costs to find economical ways to earn credits, and time managing coursework into a working adult's life can be daunting. Enrollment advisors of course providers and peer to peer online forums like [Degree Forum](#) help students share anecdotes, ask questions, and get advice on how to patchwork together the remainder of their college degree from a variety of sources -- universities, community colleges and online or distance education courses. It isn't easy, and it takes significant dedication on the part of students to navigate this process. There is still a significant unmet need in the form of college counseling for this population that could perhaps be filled by civic services or public libraries or schools.

In this milieu of uncertainty, a fascinating variety of new educational innovations are working to respond to these issues. Local city and state governments are beginning to offer free or heavily subsidized community college for motivated and qualified students. Taking up the mantle, cities like [San Francisco](#), and states like Tennessee and [Oregon](#) have started programs to offer residents a college degree for free. Some of the programs being several years in have seen strong use and are [struggling to meet](#) demand. Tennessee's [Tennessee Reconnect](#) program focuses on supporting adult learners returning to school, first time students, and veterans. These efforts are making important inroads in the discrepancy between adults seeking higher education, and their ability to pay for it. These are strides toward achieving a more prosperous, inclusive educational response to the uncertainty of partially degreed adults.

1) Technology has developed to the point where online courses are able to be accredited for college credit. There are several accrediting bodies ([American Council on Education](#), [National College Credit Recommendation Service](#)) that review courses for quality and difficulty and recommend courses for transferable credit. Generally courses are self paced, essays and projects are graded by hired TAs, and careful exam proctoring happens via webcam to prevent cheating. This type of technology has opened the door for third party content providers (ex: [Study.com](#), [Straighterline](#), [Aleks](#), [Shmoop](#) among others) to make college level courses more accessible, less expensive, and more flexible for students.

Students can take courses at their own pace that fits into their day in short, modular lessons and once the course is complete, they can request their credit to be transferred to their degree granting institution in which they are enrolled. Prices are much lower than they would be at brick and mortar colleges (ranging from \$100-300 per course, or \$150-300 monthly fee for unlimited course access). Students report high satisfaction with this model but challenges remain. Student-to-student peer interaction is much more limited, projects and essays are graded by TAs that may not have a relationship with students, and office hours are often limited or unavailable. Unit transferability continues to be the biggest hurdle for this system where degree granting institutions often do not know what course equivalencies to give to an online course (what it would map to in their course catalog). Admission and enrollment counselors can help with this problem to ensure students get the most benefit from all the work that they have put in.

2) Modern vocational training programs incubated in Silicon Valley have also shown to be an interesting and hopeful response to the educational uncertainty of our age. Coding bootcamps (ex: [Hack Reactor](#), [General Assembly](#), [Flatiron](#), and [many others](#)) offer a way for motivated students to reinvent their career without earning a traditional BA or certificate. Ranging from \$15,000-\$20,000 and lasting between 6 weeks and 3 months, they offer complete programs to prepare students for jobs in engineering, user experience design, data science, product management, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and more. These programs have shown to be [adequate preparation](#) for the workforce, although significant variability in exists depending on student skill, prior preparation and employer needs. Hiring companies largely undertake their own examination of employability with a rigorous interview process, so the focus is less about credentialing and signalling, and more about skill and knowledge gained.

In summary, significant challenges and uncertainties are present for adults who have earned some college credit but have not finished their degree. Students who previously enrolled in for-profit universities are more vulnerable to loan default, low wages, and difficulty finding employment. Challenges faced on an individual level, when scaled to 37 million adults in the United States today, present macroeconomic uncertainty for the country at large. This multifaceted uncertainty can be met with an educational response -- providing support for students to complete a bachelor's degree, finding alternative educational achievement opportunities, and preparing for the workforce of tomorrow. Indeed, the education sector has the opportunity to provide not only personal help to individuals left behind with a partial degree and student debt, but also to stabilize the economic outlook for the US in the 21st century. Fortunately many interesting civic, non governmental, employer led, and tech-

forward solutions that are stepping forward to provide educational leadership and experiment with new models for teaching and learning.

The Certainty of Uncertainty in Lebanon

Sandra El Hadi

On May 6, 2018, Lebanon held its first parliamentary elections since 2009. For many young voters, including myself, this marked their first time voting as the parliament had self-extended its term twice. With my blue observer vest on, I was eager to monitor the electoral process as a volunteer for the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE). At the door of the polling stations, I noticed papers with different sects on them taped to the walls: voters in Lebanon are assigned to polling stations not only based on their civil registration number, but also based on their sect - Maronite Christians vote in one room, Sunni Muslims vote in another, and so on. Although this may come as a surprise for most people, it does not shock the Lebanese. At only 10,452 km², Lebanon is home to a population of approximately four million citizens from 18 different sects. In order to ensure that all sects are politically represented, the Ta'if Agreement was reached to end the country's fifteen-year civil war (1975-1990) and establish a consociational democracy, based on power-sharing among the different confessions whereby parliamentary seats are divided across Lebanon's different sects. While the 18 sects generally coexist peacefully, remnants of the civil war and sectarian tensions have yet to disappear. Indeed, the Lebanese are reminded of their differences on a daily basis, and their sect-based assignment to polling stations is only one example of such reminders.

In the mandatory Civic Education classes that Lebanese students take throughout primary and secondary school, students are taught to tolerate and accept others, to embrace their country's religious diversity, and to respect people of all religions. Yet, what students learn about in the curriculum (which, incidentally, has not been updated since 1997) is quite different from what they experience in their country politically, legally, and socially. To illustrate, political parties continue to employ sectarian rhetoric and incite fear of the other in order to establish their position as saviors who will "protect" their electoral base from other sects' aspirations of political control. Instead of a unified personal status law for all citizens, the country has separate personal status courts for each sect, constituted of members of the clergy. Inter-religious marriage is impossible unless one converts to his/her spouse's religion, as civil marriage is still illegal.

In a country where differences are marked at multiple levels, where sectarianism is rife, and where socioeconomic livelihood is dependent on the whims of the political elite, the only thing that is certain is uncertainty. The Lebanese live in fear of an outbreak of another devastating civil war and are anxious about what political drama the future might bring. The influx of over million Syrian refugees since the onset of the Syrian crisis has exacerbated these anxieties, and has resulted in even greater tension, both on a religious and a nationality basis.

Amidst this complex context, the Lebanese government had to establish a comprehensive crisis

response plan as the host of the largest refugee per capita population in the world. With the influx of approximately 587,000 Syrians between 3 and 18 years old, the education sector played a major role in the crisis response. In 2014, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) established the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) strategy, which aimed to increase the enrolment of Lebanese and non-Lebanese children in formal education. It opened a second shift of afternoon sessions for non-Lebanese students, and it established regulated Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP) to help non-Lebanese students return into formal education. Under RACE II (2017-2021), a five-year plan created with the international community, 349 Lebanese public schools are operating a second shift for non-Lebanese students.¹ With MEHE's considerable efforts to increase access to education for both Lebanese and non-Lebanese school-aged children, the number of students enrolled in Lebanese public schools has more than doubled since the onset of the Lebanese crisis.² The Ministry realized numerous achievements such as formulating an inter-ministerial Child Protection Policy in collaboration with UNICEF and the ministries of Justice and Social Affairs, developing regulated non-formal education programs, and piloting cash and school feeding programs with partners in order to increase child retention in schools.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been piloting a project aiming to enhance school-based management in Lebanese public schools through the design and implementation of a School Improvement Plan (SIP). Principals from 5 pilot schools traveled to Japan to learn about the Japanese education system, and they received training on school-based management and School Improvement Plans. The principals then formed SIP committees at their schools composed of the principals themselves, two teachers or supervisors, two parents, and two students, and trained the committees on SIP design and implementation. After setting an Education Development Goal (EDG), the schools conducted a School Self-Assessment (SSA), identified their weakest areas, and created activities accordingly. They were provided with a financial grant from JICA that covered some of the planned activities.

Through my work as the project coordinator, I learned that uncertainty was a main factor in parents' and students' concerns. Syrian parents and students were worried about their future: Are they going to stay in the same school? Are they going to return to their home country? Will they be able to readjust to the curriculum in Syria?³ Lebanese parents and students were also worried about their future: Will the Syrians continue to outnumber the Lebanese in public schools? Will the Syrians ever

¹ Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017-2021). Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2018. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62763>

² Ibid

³ Schools in Lebanon teach Mathematics and Sciences in English or French, whereas these subjects are taught in Arabic in Syria.

leave? If the Syrians leave, will international donors and NGO's stop funding the schools? Will the public-school registration fee waiver be stopped once the Syrians return to their country?

With the opening of a second shift in public schools came the inception of inter-shift rivalry. The students are competitive – and sometimes violent – not only on a nationality basis (Lebanese vs. Non-Lebanese), but also on a shift-basis. Syrians who have lived in Lebanon for several years, especially those who were already in the country before the crisis, have been fully assimilated into the culture. Indeed, I have met a number of Syrian students who spoke impeccable Lebanese Arabic. These Syrians are enrolled in the first shift with Lebanese students, and some of them tend to patronize “new” Syrians, i.e. Syrian refugees who came to Lebanon due to the crisis. Inter-shift violence and hostility are not uncommon concerns among schools, so some schools have resorted to separating the entrance and exit of first-shift and second-shift students in order to avoid fights and arguments between students during the shift- change process.

However, complete separation might not be the best solution. Principals who created joint activities for both the morning (first) and afternoon (second) shifts noticed that relationships between the shifts have improved. Students from both shifts usually do not meet except during the shift change period, unless the entrance and exit are separated (as explained above), in which case they don't meet at all. Through joint activities, whether something as simple as attending supplementary study sessions during the weekend or going on a field trip to another city together, students came to realize that their similarities outnumber their differences, and that inter-shift friendships are as easy to foster as same-shift friendships. Students' concerns and worries about “students in the other shift” were diminished, and their prejudices were proven wrong.

In a country where uncertainty is the norm, education plays a key role in alleviating the ramifications of constant uncertainty on students, and in responding to the effects of any changes, whether minor developments or major crises. It is our duty, then, as academics, policymakers, and education professionals, to think about what that role would encompass. How can we provide students with the psychosocial support they need in order to navigate the tumultuous environment of the country they live in? How can we make sure that uncertainty does not push students into finding comfort in similarity and rejecting diversity? What steps need to be taken to ensure that violence in the battlefield is not translated into hostility in the school playground, and political conflicts do not translate into classroom aggression? How can we ensure that increased unemployment in Lebanon does not turn into a blame game, with refugees often used as scapegoats?

Years of mandatory Civic Education do not seem to have made a significant impact on sectarianism in Lebanon, and students continue to uphold sectarian values. Simply telling students to accept others from different nationalities or teaching them content about diversity will not suffice.

Creating activities that bring together Lebanese and non-Lebanese parents, students, and local community actors might be a good start towards acceptance and coexistence. Lebanese curricula need to be updated to suit the present context, and more emphasis on diversity, tolerance, and acceptance should be made through more relatable content and active learning as opposed to dry material and lecturing. For impactful and long-term change, this should be coupled with steps towards improving Lebanon's political formula and legal system, understanding the economic situation of the country and identifying solutions, and implementing nation-wide projects to fight sectarianism and discrimination.

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¹ *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017-2021)*. Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2018.

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62763>

² Ibid.

³ Schools in Lebanon teach Mathematics and Sciences in English or French, whereas these subjects are taught in Arabic in Syria.

POSTINDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION QUALITY: PROBLEM DEFINITION

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Abstract

Nowadays it is topical to address to the specificity of forming educational space under the conditions generally characterized as postmodern epoch and post-industrial society. The paper deals with the problems of scientific comprehension whether postmodernism has the possibilities for the creation of new approaches to learning in modern education. The authors consider assessment in general and education quality evaluation in particular, from the point of view of the subjective perspectives for the process of education. The questions set forth for the consideration include the problem of search for the tools for assessment and education quality evaluation. Authors suggest using the idea of rhizome for their design. The paper defines the further search directions and the objectives for the scientific comprehension.

Keywords: postmodernism, evaluation, assessment, education quality.

Introduction

The problem of education quality has attracted attention of researchers for a long time, and it is especially topical at present, when all over the world society increases demands for both the professionals and their education. To train a creative person able to study independently it is necessary to apply innovative methods of education. It is important to note that modern society places higher demands for qualification and education of personnel which results in the increase of the number of people busy in intellectual spheres, change of people's interest towards creative development and, therefore, change of the society structure itself; growth of the demands for the quality and level of education. Understanding this issue is especially important for the system of education, with regard to

the problems of subjectiveness.

The subject acts as a non-eliminated element of the educational space. Via subjectiveness, manifesting itself in activity, educational space is being formed as well as social and economic conditions of its existence and further development. The most important descriptions of the epoch manifest themselves in the level of social and economic development of the society. State policy, internal and external environment, geopolitical situation and economic conditions directly influence social conditions for the vital functions of the society; one of the most important indices of the modern society level of the development is connected with the educational quality. How does education respond to this challenge of the time and conditions?

Problem Statement

This paper has the goal mainly to state the problem, to define certain current objectives for scientific comprehension and point out the contradictions in the practice of educators, both those who try to understand postmodernist concepts and who do not think about it. At the same time we should state that analysis of the problem of reflection of postmodernism in pedagogy and philosophy of education is rather incomplete in Russian scientific literature at present. We would name several (influencing all the rest) conditions offered by postmodernism: self-sufficing function of the text as, at large, the creator of the new reality in each moment of the objective reality (Derrida, 1991), (Derrida, 1992); independent interpretation limited not so much by the framework of achieved general scientific knowledge and common human values as by the vision of these frameworks and values, which can change personal worldview to great extent; individualization as the presence of an individual in everything which could have never foreseen the subjectivity of one of the participants of a certain activity like in case of educational process. Traditionally object-subject relations were maintained during educational process. Under the modern conditions we cannot help allotting the subject during education.

We see the situation in education as follows. In the opinion of all its researchers, post-industrial industry craves for highly skilled experts, making increasing demands on the quality of education (Jamison, 2016), (Ilyin, 2001). Herewith classical learning theories, traditional educational technologies cannot offer anything new to the new society. In this case course of action is known: if we are talking about quality and growth, it is necessary to strengthen the control.

Truly, all over the world the quality of education is seen to strengthen, its forms become more complicated; the learning content is unified under the control requirements. However, if we remember features and “phantoms” of the epoch when we live, and take into account certain explicit postmodern calls (Vainshtein, 1993), then these measures in the education system look quite helpless to solve the problem, because now previous methodological bases for its solution have no effect. And both the problem of education quality itself in its present understanding and the ways of its solution belong to a

close to us, but a different era – a time of modernity and industrial society. Modern educational space which does not meet fully the requirements of the future but is willing to change, needs the other pedagogical approaches. It is obvious that the science of pedagogy faces new challenges.

Purpose of the Study

Russian and foreign researchers are concerned with finding solutions for the existing contradictions in educational practice. Thus, the modern theories of education, in particular, heutagogy, constructivism, and the “learning-to-learn” concept assume the ability to learn to become the most important. In post-industrial society the priority even in comparison with the achievement of learning outcomes is given to the participation of the student in the educational process. Emerging “hybrid” pedagogy considers the combination of “real” and “virtual” activity in the sphere of formal and non-formal education. Modern education increasingly encounters and interacts with the real educational space and the virtual one; formal and non-formal education; face-to-face training and online training; permanent study groups and learning communities; the classical school and open education; interdisciplinarity and monodisciplinarity; the “analog” and “digital” pedagogy, etc. Each of these oppositions is considered by “hybrid” pedagogy with the aim of deconstructing the existing pedagogy. Hybridity manifests itself in the moment of interaction, which involves the both oppositions, intersecting and mutually influencing each other until they accept a new configuration, and so on to infinity. “Hybrid” pedagogy describes not only the outcomes that can be achieved by training, but also the process of formation of the student consciousness. An important part of the educational process is the creation of a favorable atmosphere in the training, using various including “digital” teaching methods, the promotion of collective interaction. This model focuses on the division of responsibilities between all participants, whose aim is an intellectual exchange and critical comprehension of training. Digital educational technology is not simply a group work where each student performs his part of the job. This is the embodiment of multiple subjectivity, when a joint work is the result of responsibility of all participants of educational process, collaborative decision-making and creative activity exclusively under the condition of collaboration between students (“Hybrid Pedagogy” – Digital Pedagogy Lab, 2015), (A Marked Improvement, 2012), (*ASKe (Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange)*, 2015), (*Student learning assessment options and resources*, 2015).

Here are the other examples of pedagogical activities, improving the quality of education. Thus, in Russian and foreign pedagogy and psychology studies of many scientists are dedicated to the creation of an atmosphere favourable for learning. These are the scientists who develop ideas about the facilitation of teacher’s activity (Zeer, 2014; Ivanova, 1997; Petrovskii, 2007; Rodgers & Freiberg, 2002; Romashina & Maier, 2013).

We repeat in other words: isn’t it more correct to measure the quality of education with the quality

of relations of subjects of educational process, the quality of life of the graduate, his relation to his life and his achievements?

Research Methods

However, how to find such measuring tools? Can the quality of education be measured? Probably it is possible, if the tools are prepared for rhizomatic structures. This idea is difficult to be realized, however, the researchers have already addressed it. In this study, we use qualitative methodological analysis to define possible directions of the further development for the education quality evaluation in the modern society.

Findings

The ideas about rhizomatic learning began to take shape, mainly in connection with the development of massive open online courses (MOOCs). Interpreted theoretically, “rhizomatic learning” emerges in practice. It is understood as the creation of a situation within which both the educational process and knowledge are constructed by the participants in the learning community. Learning experience is gained as the result of communication or discussion with the members of wide learning community net, uniting formal and non-formal sources of information (Innovating Pedagogy, 2012). Rapid development of the distant education technologies, on the one hand, allows simplifying education; on the other hand, there is a certain danger in this close communication between a man and computer. One of the risks of information society is the exclusion of live communication, dialogue, from learning when information technologies are used (Ivanova, 2016). Within the framework of our paper we discuss assessment of learning outcomes, and in this regard, it is important to understand how to “fit” subject orientation, i.e. the dialogue itself, in this process, and how to assess its outcomes.

Philosophers of education assume education in post-industrial society to be the situations of communication. Emerging dialogue between the learner and educator needs “relatively possible equality of the participants’ position”, a paradoxical (for our work) conclusion being the following: assessment in this situation is difficult because it violates the principles of equality and trust, makes the student be afraid of giving the wrong answer. However verbal general appraisal is possible at the final stages (Ivanova, 2012). In our opinion, this point needs a certain clarification: assessment of student achievement should exist, because the teacher can understand, whether the student has mastered new knowledge or a new skill, only having compared to his/her previous achievements. In this case the assessment procedure as well as appraisal itself can have not only quantitative but qualitative nature, and it can be applied to stimulate the learner to continue his/her education, not only to reckon up at the definite stage. Deep internal motivation to continue learning is the “driving force” for the learner. Accountability for their own learning necessitates reflection on the academic achievements, so along

with the “external” expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer assessment become core components of the overall assessment of learning outcomes (Elkina, 2012). In terms of the resource-rich educational environment, using a wide range of techniques and teaching methods, it is impossible to limit the assessment of learning outcomes with the usual tests, control works, etc. Quantification, even if it is calculated on a 100-point grading scale, does not exhaust all possibilities of comparison of student academic achievement with the definite benchmark outcome.

We see in the modern educational process, that the role of the learner as a subject strengthens, as his/her interest to develop his/her own personality grows. It is more interesting than the correlation of real learning outcomes with the expected learning outcomes of some ideal model of the student inherent in the educational programs. Consequently, the question of assessment is deeper: how to associate the idea of assessment, for example, with the concept of rhizomatic learning, where it is difficult to assume a predetermined result of the training? D.Cormier, the author of the term “rhizomatic learning”, suggests paying attention to the efforts of the learner to find and mastery the new knowledge, the links he/she establishes with the other subjects, etc. (Cormier, 2014). We can assume that the estimation of effort or interaction the quantitative assessment is unlikely to be able to give at least some idea of what the student achieved in learning. In this situation, qualitative assessment is most likely to be effective.

Student self-esteem may serve as an example of the qualitative appraisal. It is one of the features inherent to the personality. The combined use of qualitative assessment of the teacher and self-evaluation the student evaluation process can be implemented in a single system of assessment of learning outcomes. We suppose qualitative appraisal to appear in the dialogue of a learner, teacher, learning community and the group of experts taking part in the work of this learning community. Researchers admit that qualitative appraisal would be more efficient if the learners also know its criteria beforehand (Student learning assessment options and resources, 2015). During learning in a community (a concept of rhizomatic learning means this very kind of education) peer-assessment also has a great significance and it should be included into the system of assessment. Peer-assessment is expressed as a qualitative appraisal; it will also further the creation of atmosphere favouring education (Elkina, 2012).

However, in general, confidence in the qualitative appraisal has not been formed yet in the community of educators. Under the current organization of the learning process quantitative mark / rating grade is taken into account officially while qualitative appraisal is included into final attestation only in several educational institutions; the problem of its acknowledgement is closely connected with substantiation of validity and reliability of the quantitative assessment methods. Psychologically it is not easy to recognize that qualitative appraisal is the same significant as the quantitative one. For the qualitative appraisal to be trusted it is necessary that expert or educator should have trust, too, as well as educational institution, which gives the possibility to take education regardless the country where educational process takes place. Then there is a need for international criteria of education quality (e.g.,

they are developed in the framework of the Bologna process). In such conditions, educational space really becomes barrier free, which corresponds to the notions of rhizomatic learning.

In the existing pedagogical practice, educational programs are developed through specially chosen for studying educational content; educational and cognitive interests, needs and motivation of the student are not taken into account in the development of the programs. The student may be involved only in the procedure of assessment of learning outcomes, provided that his self-assessment and peer assessment of participants learning communities is taken into account. However, the manifestation of subjectivity in learning, interest of students in this process and its results is one of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of training. All this has a direct relationship to the quality of education, understood as the quality of the process and the quality of its outcomes.

Conclusion

Postmodernism blurs the category of quality, despite the fact that this category is associated not only with theory but also with real life (Kuritsyn, 1992). In all constructions of postmodernism, when renouncing the seriousness people's perceptions of their happiness, their future cannot be abrogated, forcing them to abandon a serious relationship to their personal fate. When it is personal, for a person there are no refusal, interpretations and simulacra.

The postmodernist, "playful" denial of gravity ceases to exist when it comes to assessing the quality of education that is always associated with the fate of man. The symbolic meaning of the quality assessment (in the postmodern sense of the sign!) manifests itself to some extent inherent in contemporary approaches to education quality evaluation test nature, validity, and other of deeply professional characters of the education quality control.

We can assume that the simulacrum is not possible during organization of procedures of the unified state exam, however, the mechanism and procedure create the transparency or visibility of transparency (and this is probably a simulacrum!), but do not contribute to the truth that lies in the content and which is strongly rejected by postmodernism.

Today we see the trend to strengthen the assessment of the quality of education and make it a means of addressing the issues of the existence of the educational institutions (in the case of universities), personnel matters (in all cases), assessment of personal achievements of graduates (which determines their fate). Such objectives cannot help leading to bureaucratization, formalization of education quality assessment, which is contrary to the conditions of the time. On the other hand, there is a tendency to obtain personal obvious results of the implementation of the Federal standards that are incorporated methodologically through competence-based approach, but it still does not have the methodological, technological mechanisms and tools.

These are, in our view, multidirectional goals, and we ought rather to decide what kind of task we solve in each specific cultural and historical phase, which defines the goals and objectives of education.

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Value of school mathematics as represented in films and policy

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Introduction

Uncertainties surround our lives in multiple ways, and each day while accessing our different social and financial capitals, we try to ‘contain’ uncertainties reducing our current and future vulnerabilities. Uncertainties have different shapes and contours for millions in countries such as India – who suffer from poverty, structural exclusion based on caste, religion, region and gender and other forms of discrimination. Access to education is one sphere where segregation of the society becomes acutely visible. In India, socioeconomic background depends which school children have access to – from elite private schools to government schools where the poorest children go to (Srivastava, 2008). The course of the children’s schooling and hence future paths are often uncertain, with parents constantly making important decisions about whether to send children to school, which school to send them, which child to send to school – while factoring important financial and social decisions. The precarity of the students’ education does not end there, there are often various structural barriers to be overcome. As we collectively start (re)thinking the significance of education in ‘uncertain’ circumstances, perhaps we might get closer to understanding the age-old question of – what is the value of education?

In this essay, I focus on exploring mathematics education in India and how it is imagined in society through films and policy. Using Williams' (2011) categorisation of use and exchange value of mathematics education, I will examine one *official policy document* as well one *mainstream Hindi film*. Films often reflect how the society internalizes some of these uncertainties that surround individuals and provides representation through strong storytelling. In India, we see an increasing number of mainstream films addressing the state of education highlighting its relevance as a key social concern. The film under discussion is a 2015 successful mainstream Hindi film - *Nil Batte Sannata*, telling the story of an urban poor school going girl, struggling with her studies, especially mathematics. It follows the pursuit of the girl’s mother to ensure her academic success. On the other hand, policy documents set the ideal aims of mathematics education, and the policy document being discussed here is the most recent National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF 2005) (NCERT, 2006).

What do you want – win or a lose in mathematics?

Success in school mathematics determines future life chances for a large majority of students in the Indian education system. Pursuing the subject till the end of schooling and scoring well (grade 12) determines entry into high status and competitive area of studies such as engineering, medicine,

computer programming, architecture, accountancy and many more. Williams (2011) calls this the *exchange* value of mathematics, viewed as a currency to be exchanged. Very early on in the film, mathematics' status as an important capital¹ becomes clear. The mother views the future of her daughter to depend on how well she does in mathematics. She consults her educated employer (with greater social and financial capital) to seek ways of 'cracking' the system – for instance by taking expensive private tuitions and then finally by starting to study herself again to motivate her daughter. The educated employer's suggestion of two ways of becoming successful is significant here. She remarks that either luck (*kismet*) or hard work (*mehnat*) makes one successful. The mother knows her lack of 'luck' and focuses on the hard work. This I argue is the first recognition of the "arbitrary" nature of the capital in the educational field (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 89). There is a recognition that there is in place some structure which is accessed by those who have the right capital to 'crack' it (lucky ones). Yet, a solution of obtaining the exchange value is still seen in the individual's 'hard work'.

Even in the school, the mathematics teacher reinforces this (this time not recognising any other structural issues) and describes grade 10 as being pivotal in the students' lives. Whether one wants to become a winner/race horse (*lambi race ka ghoda*) or a loser/mule (*khacchar*), all depends on the student and hands the responsibility of their destiny to the them. Thus, the structural barriers within the educational field is imagined to be overcome by individual hard work. This ignores the fact that in the first place, many of the students have probably already dropped out of school after compulsory schooling (grade 8) due to social structural reasons, and few will further choose to continue to do mathematics after grade 10 due to again lack of institutional capacity of schools. In Delhi for instance, very few children in the government schooling system (almost exclusively accessed by the poorest) actually choose mathematics after this point. This is further made difficult by fact that fewer schools offer sciences and mathematics at all in government schools post grade 10 (Sethi, 2017). Despite the explicit emphasis on individual hard work, the film throughout also implicitly promotes the tactical use of social capital wherever possible. The mother for instance at several occasions uses the support of her employer's social capital by – contacting a tuition teacher, getting through the school's principal and even her accessing a local civil servant. There is thus an acceptance that hard work needs to be also complemented by tactical use of social capital in any way possible.

Is there a third option? – beyond winning or losing in mathematics

This brings us to the other value of mathematics – the 'use' value (Williams, 2011). Williams describes this as the intrinsic value of learning disciplinary mathematics which contributes in the psychosocial development of the learner. This attributes value to the learning of disciplines itself as contributing to the development of the learner and enabling them to access "humanity's culturally most advanced, scientific knowledge" (p.62). Thus, mathematics education is seen to provide the learner something more than just its exchange value. The latest framework National

¹ Williams uses Bourdieu (1977) who focuses on the exchange value of education claiming it reproduces social hierarchies in society. Those with access to capital (educational capital and mathematics capital) succeed in the fields of education.

Curriculum Framework 2005 in India also supports this argument. Using Polya's (2002) aims of mathematics education it delineates – ‘higher’ and ‘narrower’ aims of mathematics. The narrower aims are seen to link notions of employability with mathematics education, however the ‘higher’ aim seeks to develop the “inner resources” (p. 1) of the child. Thus, the position paper also sets in dichotomy two aims, parallel to the exchange and use value of Williams (2011). However, the NCF clearly gives priority to the ‘higher’ aim of mathematics teaching – and makes recommendations aligned with it. It

actively discourage pedagogies often associated with the narrower aims such as ‘procedural learning’ or ‘rote learning’. And then it goes on to describe what must be this ‘high quality’ mathematics for all children with the aim that “all students *can* learn mathematics and that all students *need* to learn mathematics” (NCERT, 2006a, p.vi).

Interestingly, the film also peripherally addresses some ideas surrounding the ‘use’ aspect of mathematics – exploring what makes mathematics difficult. As discussed above the onus of hard work lies on the student, and thus the ability of changing perceptions surrounding disciplinary mathematics is also the students’ responsibility. A critical conversation between the struggling daughter and a studious classmate, goes as follows:

Girl: Why is mathematics so difficult? (Girl: *Maths itna difficult kyun hai?*)

Boy: You don’t understand maths, because you have never tried to understand it. Try and become friends with maths, there is nothing more fun than that.

(*Maths tumhe isliye samajh me nahi aata, kyunki tumne kabhi use samajhne ki koshish hi nahi ki. Ekbaar math se dosti kar ke dekho, usse mazedar aur kuch bhi nahi hai*)

In other conversations too, the precocious boy goes on to give suggestions like – link the mathematics with your life, read the question carefully as the answers to the mathematics problem lies within the question, and finally to keep on practicing. As the mother-daughter learn ways of studying mathematics under the tutelage of the boy, we see them memorising formulas and practicing mathematics. The suggestion to link daily life connection is materialised in a superficial way, such as using local language-based abbreviations to help memorise formulas and procedures. We also see them going to the markets and doing other daily routines but ‘noticing’ mathematics, indicating that they are able to connect to the math and also enjoy it around them. These are interesting pedagogical suggestions for mathematical learning and though might be reinforcing rote based procedural learning, there is an effort to create a new perception of mathematics as fun and relatable to daily life.

Children belonging to underprivileged communities often engage in economic activities or come from cultural communities which have different mathematics knowledge systems which the child is often exposed to. Studies in India²² by Khan (2004), Sitabkhan (2009), Bose & Subramaniam,

²² Outside India, there are various studies that have explored out-of-school mathematical practices. See Saxe, 1991; Nunes et al., 1993; Posner, 1982.

(2013) and Panda (2007) have looked at communities in tribal, rural as well as urban areas wherein children engage in different cultural and economic mathematical activities different from those being taught in schools. It is thus not unreasonable to engage in these ideas of integrating school and out-of-school mathematics.

The NCF too attempts to introduce in many ways newer pedagogies including linking mathematics to students' lives and language to enable access to school mathematics. However unlike the film whose aim remains to crack the exams, and innovative pedagogies are just seen as ways to achieving those, the NCF aims to make learning of disciplinary mathematics an aim of its own. Such an idea can be seen in alignment with the 'ambitious mathematics'³ ideals of the larger mathematics education community, which aims to develop mathematical facilities which are seen as being at the core of the discipline of mathematics.

Yet some researchers criticise NCF's 'higher aims'. For instance Subramanian (2015) claims that despite the fact the recommendations of NCF 2005, aims to take away attention focused purely on 'narrower' aims of procedural learning, the hierarchy and the structure of the syllabus and the content remains more or less aligned with earlier content arrangement - structured to become a pathway for higher education as well as professions. She thus argues that the recommendations of the NCF are still "narrow visions of higher aims" (p. 268).

Mathematics is not being viewed purely from the economic returns perspective, yet it is privileging the knowledge of the discipline that can eventually be 'used' as a commodity owned by the student. This is where most mathematics educators as well as the NCF comes to a road block. The NCF recognises the structural issues related to the 'exchange' value of mathematics and thus wants to move away from the narrower aims of employability, yet it ascribes a kind of 'use' value to it, which continues to define school mathematics from the disciplinary perspective. From this perspective, perhaps the pedagogical suggestions in the film are not too inaccurate in terms of what might still work for students to crack examinations.

This is where we must revisit the fundamental contradiction which Williams refers to between exchange and use values. Within the paradigm of exchange value of mathematics education, there is a reproduction of social and structural hierarchies which determines who gets to access the benefits of this exchange value. So how much can the 'use' value and its understanding be changed to make this exchange value less hegemonic? Some critical educators believe that the hegemony of the 'academic mathematics' needs to be dismantled altogether to make mathematics truly equitable. This becomes especially relevant for the majority of students who end up not pursuing mathematics in higher education, amounting up to 90% of children in India (Subramanian, 2015). The reinforcement of exchange value (as done in the film) as well as the limited definition of use value (as defined in the NCF) leads to a large scale craze (especially in middle and lower middle classes) who aim to access these higher status professions, and also continue to marginalise those who see no future in them.

³ The NCF even uses the term 'ambitious' mathematics which is often used in the context of US curricular reforms. This is not surprising since NCF 2005 explicitly mentions the influence of USA based National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) reforms.

Subramaniam (2015) looks to ethnomathematics and critical mathematics education for some answers – culturally relevant curriculum (Greer, Mukhopadhyay, Powell, & Nelson-Barber, 2009) or developing socio-political consciousness in tandem with mathematics learning (Gutstein, 2006) being a few of them. Even from William’s perspective the only way to have a joint-theory is to leave open the possibility that there is a possibility of “cultural use value”(Williams & Choudry, 2016, p. 3) of mathematics learning despite the predominance of exchange value. These are important ideas to pursue while researching the Indian context.

Conclusion – Reimagining the mathematical use value

Mathematics education in the Indian context is both barely researched empirically or explored theoretically. However, India with its aims of becoming a knowledge superpower, and has become the ground for millions aspiring to enter the fields of technology and other high status science professions. In this essay using the example of a mainstream Hindi film I have attempted to demonstrate the contradictions which lie within the policy discourse as well as everyday understanding of what mathematics can do for students attending schools in huge numbers. The underprivileged child is often deprived of support and resources that children from middle and elite class backgrounds receive, thus making it harder for them to do well in school mathematics which in turn impacts their life chances and employment opportunities. This situation is accentuated in a context where often ‘failure’ in the subject is ascribed to the ‘ability’ of the individual child rather than the social conditions (Khan, 2015). Such a view of mathematical ability (or inability or deficit) is predominant in the way teachers view the subject and the child. Thus, even though mathematics provides a systemic filter, its failure is seen to lie with the individual students’ inability. From this perspective, the strong message in the film that the failure in the subject can be overcome by ‘hard work’ is slightly unsettling since such discourse again turns the blame on to the child.

The expectation of mathematics as being the solution to social immobility is probably highly exaggerated (such as the film), yet its potential use value is barely understood. The recent policy documents have attempted to reimagine aims of mathematics and have taken the path of other reforms across the world to locate the ‘use’ in academic mathematics. It is yet to seen, if this can be of any use to the many marginalised students who will most likely not either pursue mathematics or mathematics related professions. The one notion related to the use value which comes out strongly both in the film and the policy document is – connecting mathematics to daily life. This theme which seems to be explored superficially in the film, can become the starting point of research on what mathematics can mean for the majority. Research in the field of understanding how children’s out-of-school mathematics knowledge can both become basis for accessing ‘academic mathematics’ and simultaneously re-imagining other use values of mathematics for the majority of the marginalised needs to become the priority for mathematics educators. Unless these are explicitly researched, mathematics’ exchange value will continue to dominate the large majority who will continue to live in uncertain circumstances with the hope that mathematics will set them free.

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Committing to Complexity: The Changing Nature of Childhood in Peru and Vietnam

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Introduction

In 2015 the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth a global mandate for countries to provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. The reality is that for many children, schools remain sites of violence, and experiencing violence negatively impacts on children's educational outcomes – from lower grades and test scores to dropout (Fry et al., 2018). Recent research highlights how different forms of violence in childhood contribute to inequalities in education—for both boys and girls and that an increased investment in prevention is needed in order to meet the SDGs.

The INSPIRE framework – seven strategies proven or highly likely to prevent VAC developed by the WHO, UNICEF, CDC, Together for Girls, PEPFAR and other stakeholders suggests that multiple types of interventions implemented simultaneously are the most successful (WHO et al., 2016). The seven strategies--Implementation and enforcement of laws; Norms and values; Safe environments; Parent and caregiver support; Income and economic strengthening; Response and support services; and Education and life skills— are less understood in Low and Middle-Income Country (LMIC) contexts. For example, of all child maltreatment and youth violence prevention outcome evaluation studies published from 2007–2016, just 9% of those on child maltreatment, and 6% of those on youth violence, related to prevention programmes in LMICs (Hughes et al., 2014).

Perhaps INSPIRE's most widely cited and best available school-based intervention for

preventing violence against children in LMICs is ‘The Good Schools Toolkit’, the only African developed school-based intervention to prevent violence against children (developed by Ugandan NGO Raising Voices). The intervention, randomly tested in 42 schools in Luwero District, Uganda, was found to be effective in reducing past week physical violence against children by 40% in the participating schools (Devries et al., 2015). No adverse events related to the intervention were detected, but 434 children were referred to child protective services because of what they disclosed in the follow-up survey (Devries et al., 2015). This intervention includes a package of activities implemented by the whole school community effectively integrating numerous stakeholders (KNOW Violence in Childhood, 2017). The Toolkit intervention is open access and freely available.

Recent studies suggest that understanding what drives violence, essentially why and how violence manifests in children’s lives is important (KNOW Violence in Childhood, 2017). In 2014, the *Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children* in Italy, Peru, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe set out to understand these dynamics in children’s homes, schools and communities, and what can be done to prevent it. The Study analysed the structural and institutional forces, or drivers of violence, in relation to a variety of risk factors identified at the community, interpersonal and individual levels. Employing a child-centred integrated framework, the Study results show how structural factors such as rapid socio-economic change and migration, can shape how violence in schools manifests for both girls and boys. The same Study also demonstrates how children’s vulnerability and ability to protect themselves from violence changes as they move through childhood and into adolescence and that experiences of violence may be very different for boys than for girls.

Mapping Violence: The Changing Nature of Society and Childhood

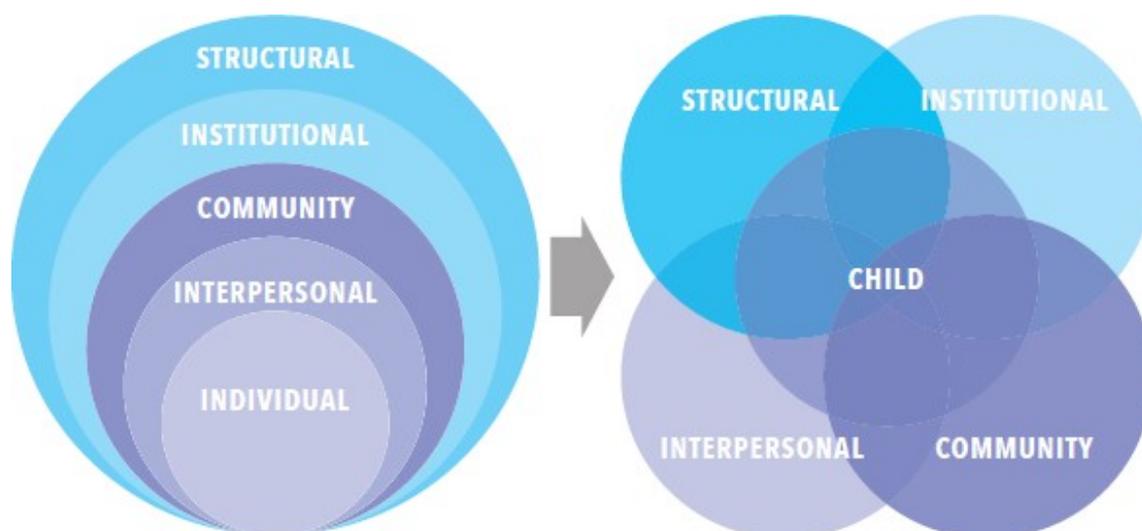
The *Drivers Study* approach relies on national engagement with and discussion around secondary analyses of national data sets triangulated with national and international literature to assist policymakers, NGOs and other actors to understand the greatest threats to children. When data is analysed and interpreted on national soil, stakeholders gain confidence and an important sense of accountability.

During the course of the study we applied and subsequently adapted two frameworks – the socio-ecological model and an age/gender framework – to show how violence conspires unevenly across childhood to create and maintain inequalities between and within societies.

Using a revised version of the socio-ecological framework, the study explores the how the **drivers of violence** or the institutional and structural level factors that create the conditions in which violence is more (or less) interact with the **risk and protective factors** which reflect the likelihood of violence occurring due to characteristics most often measured at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels (Maternowska & Potts, 2017). Our findings support the idea that no single level within the socio-ecological model, and no single factor (drivers or risk/protective factors) within or between those levels, determines or explains an act of interpersonal violence involving a child. Instead each factor, when combined with one or more other factors, can put children at risk. One of the most important findings is that violence is a fluid and shifting phenomenon in children’s lives as they move between the places where they live, play, sleep and learn.

The child-centered and integrated socio-ecological framework, builds on the work of several scholars and acknowledges that behavior is shaped by multiple, inter-related influences within multiple domain (Maternowska & Potts, 2017). Designed to assist practitioners in visualizing how drivers and risk and protective factors interact (see Figure 1), it maintains the child at the center—interacting, interfacing and overlapping with a variety of drivers, risk and protective factors throughout the lifespan.

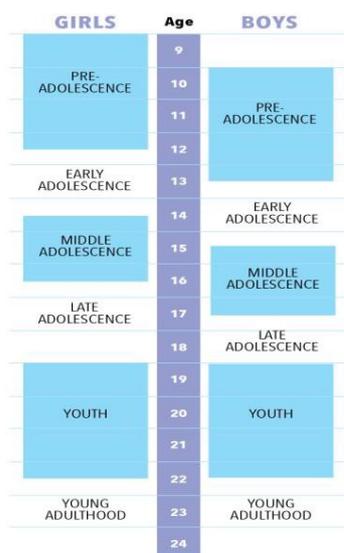
Figure 1. A Child-Centred Framework for Violence Prevention



Too often understanding of violence dynamics fail to take into account of the extraordinary

implications of age and its nexus with gender: *children grow, their capacities and vulnerabilities evolve and change*. For example, what drives violence against a two-year old girl may be quite different than that which affects a 14-year old boy, with different societal and individual consequences.

Figure 2. Age and Gender Analyses



A child’s vulnerability and ability to protect herself from violence changes over time with her evolving capacities. It is important to recognise how girls and boys may develop differently especially as they move through childhood and into adolescence. There is no global consensus around categorizing children’s and young people’s stages of life, and regional or sub-regional variations may also be expected. The timeline used here is based on a classification by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to illustrate how boys and girls may proceed through the stages of adolescence at different times.

The *Drivers Study* gathered, analysed and synthesized available existing data across four study sites including over 500 primary research studies and 10 datasets on violence against children with multi-

disciplinary national teams to interpret the findings (for detailed methodology see Maternowska & Fry, 2015). The dialogue that ensued allowed stakeholders to clarify their national findings acknowledging national contextual issues. Rather than focus on topical issues—such as child labour or sex trafficking--national teams were encouraged to step back and analyse what factors might be *driving* children into such unsafe conditions. Secondary analyses of surveys measuring and the prevalence of violence in different settings were of value, but ultimately understanding how and when violence takes place requires more than what traditional surveys can offer. In each country, national teams employed a mixed methods

approach to yield a deeper understanding of the processes and patterns of violence, the findings of which are presented here.

The following section presents findings from two countries – Peru and Vietnam. Our findings from Peru focus on the changing nature of age and gender while our findings Viet Nam demonstrate how particular structural and institutional factors have created the environments where violence is more likely to occur with risk factors at individual, interpersonal and community levels. Analysing findings guided by these frameworks provides important contextual information so that the adaptation of interventions is effectively planned.

Applying the age and gender framework to understand children’s changing risk of violence in Peruvian schools

Corporal punishment is illegal in Peruvian schools, but evidence suggests it is still highly prevalent. Several data sets and studies—including Young Lives and the National Survey on Social Relations (ENARES, by its Spanish acronym) - were analysed to understand the ways in which age and gender may affect children’s outcomes in school. The Young Lives Study, led by a team at the University of Oxford, is an international longitudinal study of childhood poverty following the changing lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru and Viet Nam over 15 years. This study collected quantitative and qualitative data on the same children over multiple survey waves. A secondary analysis of this data, particularly on the intersections of children’s experiences of violence in schools, informed our findings.

In Peru, corporal punishment appears to decline as children grow older. Over half of 8-year-old respondents reported that they had witnessed a teacher administering corporal punishment in the last week (51%) and 30 per cent reported they had experienced corporal punishment themselves (Portlea & Pells, 2015). This declines sharply among the same respondents at age 15, when only 19 per cent reported they had witnessed a teacher administering corporal punishment in the last week and 7 per cent had experienced it themselves in the past week. These findings are important because corporal punishment at age 8 was also found to have negative associations with cognitive outcomes (measured by scores on math and vocabulary tests) at age 12. Children from rural areas, poorer children, and boys were more likely to report corporal punishment.

Bullying also appears to be common in Peruvian schools. According to the ENARES study in Peru, about 70 per cent of girls and boys reported ever experiencing psychological abuse such as teasing from peers, and about half reported experiencing physical violence from their peers (INEI, 2013; 2015). Comparatively, the *Young Lives* study found that about a third of students at age 15 reported they had been verbally (34%) or indirectly (32%) bullied, such as being humiliated or shamed (Pells, Portela, & Espinoza, 2016). Less than one in ten reported they had experienced physical bullying (8%). In general, boys are more likely to be involved in physical bullying compared to girls, whereas girls are more likely to experience forms of indirect bullying, such as having their personal belongings stolen or having other children refuse to talk to them (Pells, Portela, & Espinoza, 2016). When looking at age, older boys are more likely to perpetrate physical violence against their peers compared to younger boys aged 9-11 years. For girls, they experience psychological and physical violence from peers more frequently when they are young compared to girls over the age of 12.

This data shows how boys and girls experience violence in schools differently and how this changes as they move through childhood and into adolescence. This is an important layer of analysis for understanding how to build effective age and gender appropriate prevention interventions.

Applying the Child-Centred Integrated Framework: Children's experiences of violence at Vietnamese schools

Corporal punishment and bullying are also prevalent in Vietnamese schools—in fact, the *Young Lives* study found that experiencing violence in schools was children's number one reason for not liking school. Our analyses demonstrate how these experiences of violence in schools are connected to larger institutional and structural factors that shape children's lives (see Figure 1).

Over 40 per cent of Vietnam's roughly 93 million people are under the age of 24 (World Bank, 2017), a potentially dynamic youthful force for national development. However, Vietnamese children are growing up in a very different world than their parents and grandparents did. Over the past thirty years, Vietnam has experienced significant socio-economic transformation. In 1986, the government introduced a package of economic reforms known as *Doi Moi*, or renovation, which transformed the previously planned, vertically oriented, largely agricultural economy into a market system in which trade was opened up to

the rest of the world. By 2013, Viet Nam became a lower middle-income country with a highly diversified economy and per capita income of US\$1,960 (Viet Nam Academy of Social Science, 2014).

But the effects of Doi Moi were not only economic; it also opened the country up to new ideas and attitudes. Traditional values have shifted, including concepts of gender and violence. This process has been accelerated by Viet Nam's fast-growing ICT industry, rapid expansion of internet access and one of the highest rates of mobile phone saturation in the world (CIA, 2014). This rapid economic development and increasing global connectedness have brought many benefits for children, but also new risks. Numerous scholars of Viet Nam show, how traditionally, Vietnamese family structures were strongly influenced by patriarchy and Confucian values conferring upon men power over women and children in the family, community and society (GSO, 2010; MOLISA & UNICEF, 2011; Dao The Duc et al., 2012; Rydström, 2006a). While these traditional values have been challenged by socialist ideologies of equality, and, since Doi Moi, greater economic opportunities for women and exposure to global social movements for gender equity social norms in Viet Nam are deeply rooted.

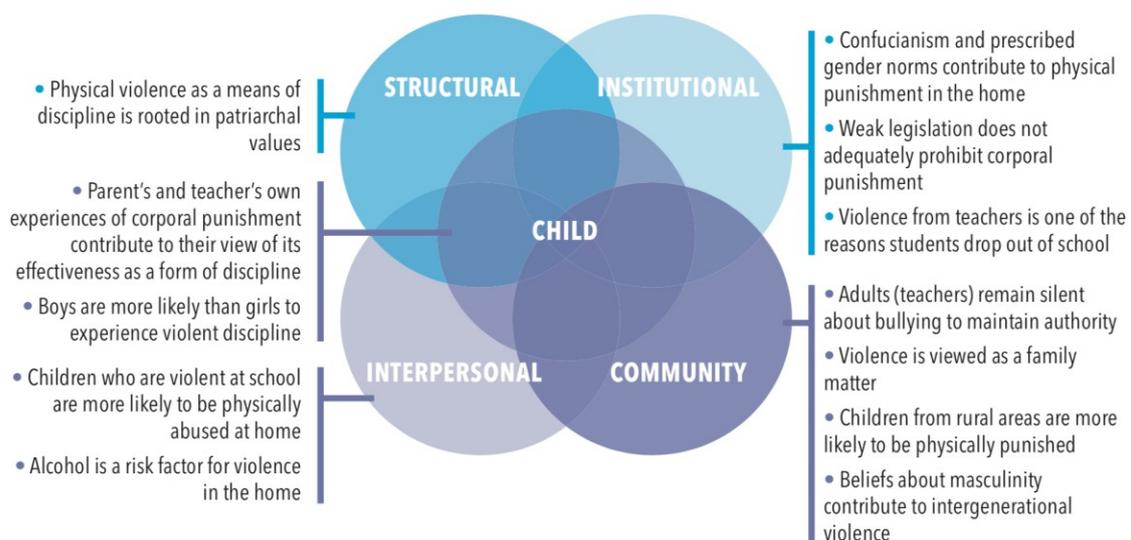
Relatively rapid socio-economic change, which has catapulted Viet Nam into an emerging middle-income country (Viet Nam Academy of Social Science, 2014) has fueled a number of significant shifts at the structural and institutional levels of society and these appear to be linked to risk factors for violence against children. For example, rapid urban migration, diminished community cohesion and traditional values, increased commercialism, and changes in the nature of social relationships are posing new threats to children's wellbeing (UNICEF, 2010a; Rydström, 2006b; Emery, Trung, & Wu, 2013; Save the Children, 2005; CSAGA, 2004; Tran Thi Minh Thi, 2015). According to Young Lives analyses, urban children report more corporal punishment than rural children.

International and rural-urban migration has had significant implications for children. While increased job opportunities for young women in the textile and hospitality sectors has led to a "feminization of migration" (Anh, Vu, Bonfoh and Schelling, 2012, Resurreccion & Ha, 2007), this migration of young mothers has created a generation of "left behind" children who are living with single parents or other relatives (Hoang & Yeoh, 2012; Hoang, Lam, Yeoh, & Graham, 2015, Tran Thi Minh Thi, 2015). The effects of parental stress—due to changing family structures - appears to be contributing to violence in the home.

Findings also show that for most Vietnamese children, violence in one setting impacts on

experiencing violence in other settings. For example, violence at home is a risk factor for physical violence in other settings including schools—which usually takes the form of bullying or fighting with peers. And vice-versa, students who are violent at schools are often from families where they have been abused emotionally or physically abuse by their parents or other siblings (Hoàng Bá Thịnh, 2007; Martin et al., 2013). **Figure 3** below shows how findings from Viet Nam, plotted against the integrated child-centred framework makes clear the way violence manifests in children’s lives—at all levels. Accounting for this complexity is likely to create more effective interventions that address the dynamic and contextual factors that are the backdrop of Viet Nam today

Figure 3: The Integrated Child-Centred Framework: Viet Nam



Conclusion

The ambitious post- 2015 commitments on children’s education, health and wellbeing set high standards for the field of education. We argue that an increased investment of evidence-based prevention interventions which address the key drivers of violence affecting children is needed in order to meet the SDGs. While scholars and practitioners agree that prevention requires an understanding of all the factors that influence violence, too frequently these factors are ascribed to one level or another of society or one domain or another in children’s

lives, creating a static, if not simplistic interpretation of a very complex social phenomenon. Using two different but related frameworks—the integrated child-centred framework and understandings of age and gender—we demonstrate how violence manifests in children’s lives. Drawing on studies from the Americas and Asia makes clear that children’s inclusive education is at risk as ‘ever changing external influences and uncertainties threaten the nature of society’. The ‘impact of this uncertainty on schools, teachers and families’ during the first decade of children’s lives and throughout children’s learning transitions are profound.

While the challenge of addressing violence is daunting, recent evidence shows that preventing violence *is* possible, though not necessarily straightforward. In some cases, macro-level reforms in policing and economic development have been linked to violence reduction (Finkeholr & Jones, 2006). In other cases, evidence of reduced interpersonal violence has been linked to community-level interventions focused on health, economic support and power inequity (Kim et al., 2007). Finally, interventions targeted towards individuals and families in the areas of education, awareness raising and behavior change have, in some cases, also shown reductions in violent crime, partner violence and negative parenting practices (Allen, 2011; Kerr, Gardner & Cluver, 2011). Committing to this complexity is the first step in ensuring change in homes and schools around the world.

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The Gender Consciousness Project: Building the Resistance to Gender Oppression in High School

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Introduction

The intractable inequality of women in every corner of the world has been the subject of many waves of activism, programs, policies and research. Today it has become again a focus of discussion and outrage, with many protests largely in response to rape and sexual assault. This is particularly relevant in India and in the West with high profile women “outing” famous men who have all at the moment been called upon to face the consequences of their actions by losing their jobs or by apologizing and moving away from the center. In the meantime women’s rights are being eroded by draconian laws which affect their right to choose (in the US, in Latin America, in Eastern Europe etc.) and they have been the most affected by the rising religious fundamentalism. This discourse can go on for pages with many examples and references, but suffice it to say that it is a fact that women’s inequality remains pervasive regardless of the status of the country.

There have been many programs through governments, international institutions, ngos, and individuals grappling with his problem at every level but with each step forward there seems always an inexorable wave of the systemic forces of patriarchy. I have worked on projects of women’s agency all my life on the front lines and in academia. In both places I see young women saying the most wonderful things about their ambitions and the ways they will not be dominated yet they for the most part fall away and subsumed by a historic and cultural force which place men at the center.

I have in high schools for the last three years developed and piloted the Gender Consciousness Project which attempts to use a Freirean approach to consciousness in girls from 15 years old. It is important to separate this idea from the many women’s projects that speak about empowerment which invariably conceive of the intervention as education based, that once girls become educated that the quality of their lives improve on many levels. While this is true

education does not remove gender discrimination. That women can be successful and still be underpaid, suffer from becoming mothers and also remain silent because they are fearful of losing their jobs, they have no understanding of resistance and to see and recognize the micro derogations which are often left unchallenged. It is here that their voice and agency are needed and it is here that we can begin to erode the normalization of everyday acts of gender discrimination that women experience.

GCP

The Gender Consciousness Project (GCP) is a grassroots program that builds awareness of the complexities of gender discrimination faced by young women simply because they are female. By understanding the societal forces that shape them, we build their agency to create a foundation for the struggle against injustices that they will face. Utilizing the principle of consciousness raising—that women themselves must understand their own oppression and, more importantly, how they themselves participate in their own oppression—the GCP engages high school females in conceptualizing how gender, with other identities, impact various facets of their lives. There are speeches, posters, tweets, etc. about gender injustice; however, the frontlines work to educate women to see these injustices is episodic and thin. This is a commitment to make women's injustice the work of women themselves (starting as early as possible), who must develop and articulate agency through small and labor intensive work. The communities on which the GCP focuses are girls of color who are in struggling communities or religious and ethnic minorities. We are in a pilot in Jamaica, since we believe that the deep injustices women face simply because they are women is not just an American issue. Putting girls who experience innumerable discriminations in the world at the center of the project is critical. We grow the consciousness of each group to facilitate those who will struggle for their own communities.

I have spent my entire professional life on the injustices of race gender and health. Indeed a great deal of this in the area of HIV prevention, which reinforced the unrelenting problem of gender injustice. Women cannot negotiate safe sex because of their unequal status This reality and many more have convinced me that for the rest of my life that I must do meaningful work in shifting the foundation of gender inequality. What has been accomplished so far has been great inroads on legalities which are important but this is of little consequence if you are poor, a woman of color or embedded in cultures where your oppressed existence is normalized. This is true for women at

any level including privileged women. It must start with young women for as they evolve into adulthood they become agents of their oppressors. That education may give you a career and economic security but no recognition of being fully human, that you may work at google and still must sue for equal pay. Hence the project of gender consciousness, that unless Women begin to see the injustices they face and the ways in which they participate in colluding with these injustices, we cannot progress. It is women who must resist and it is women who must be able to see the very first step that they take as they start on that road to victimhood. It is only when they see the real world that these young women can help to dismantle and rebuild it. By participating in this project it is expected that the U of M students will also grow their own consciousness while working to develop that of the high school girls.

Establishing dialogue-based discourses with primarily young women of color(15-17), led by critically-thinking facilitators who guide participants in understanding the sociopolitical context of their individual experiences as women. These curated discussions over several months, alongside a final technology-based project is at the heart of the GCP. An academic feminism has “replaced the consciousness-raising group as the primary site for the transmission of feminist thinking and strategies for social change, thus losing its mass based appeal” (bell hooks). Through several schools, five girls are selected and then asked to pick a topic for a blog site that they will develop. The project cannot start unless the girls’ ideas are central, not the facilitator's. for example, Nadia writes about her grandmother who was too light for the black kids and too dark for the white kids. This then led to a dialogue about race and color in the African American community. Katie said “I always present myself as smaller and quiet, because of my darker skin. The complexities of aesthetics for black girls and what pushes them away from blackness are then passionately discussed. The topics span the gamut from hair to reproduction which are interrogated using Freireian techniques. From this they set up their own website as a shaper of social media rather than just a consumer. As the older students graduate they recruit the next cohort. This use of social media is critical since it is the tablet of this generation.

The objectives of the GCP

The objectives of the Gender Consciousness Project are the following:

1. Raise the awareness or more candidly how gender consciousness and body consciousness of its participants are inextricably linked

2. Set up specific curriculum for discussion and dialogue.
3. Ensure that special attention is paid to students of color and ethnic and religious minorities.
4. Engage in creative digital projects that both critique and engage others in dialogue around gender and health that will be published on social media
5. Document the process and transformation on issues of gender and health as they evolve.
6. Evaluate the outcomes of the project.
7. Train U of M students in the conduct of such work and develop through AAS 443, their critical awareness of the theoretical and scholarly foundations of the praxis of democracy, progressive women's activism and examine their reflexive participation in their own oppression.
8. Establish groups that include young women of color with curricula developed around the nexus of race, religion, gender and ethnicity. These competing areas of discrimination must also be included.
9. At the end of the year, a one day girls consciousness symposium will be organized to present their voices and collaborations on their ideas of gender consciousness and how their plans have been shaped by the presence of the GCP in their school.

Modernizing the Consciousness Raising Group/Progress on the Project

Because technology is critical to young people, this project then structures a technology component. They build a website and create blogs that deal specifically, with race, religion and gender from the point of view of young women 15-17 years old. Working with four schools, Central Academy in Ann Arbor (a predominantly Muslim School), Ypsilanti High School, Washtenaw International High School, Belleville High School. In all there are 30 girls involved

in the Gender consciousness Project which started with three at The Belleville High School in 2016. The girls are asked to pick a topic for a blog site that they will develop.

The groups so far have begun this exercise with the following websites

This way the girls develop their positions on the injustices they face first by recognizing them and then work on ways of dismantling these discriminations either in conspicuous or inconspicuous ways. The blog here is being used as a tool for consciousness since it is the culminating event of many dialogues about topics which they themselves have raised. The discussions with the U of M students then ensues. This process then leads to their blog after they have engaged in dialogues about the challenges of race and gender and the stereotypes that affect their perception of themselves. Here we try to develop how we ourselves participate in these stereotypes and ways that we can resist and part of the resistance is extricating ourselves from colluding in these practices that erode our Human rights and the rights of other women to be fully human.

Each group has their own approach to the gender consciousness project. The most developed site is the one started by Belleville High School called POWER. Their mission statement tells the story of the progress and impact of the Gender Consciousness Project. It should be noted that the students write under aliases since we want to protect their identities as they are still under 18 years old. This is the blog statement from the first blog started in 2016 by the Belleville group:

Peers for Optimum Women's Empowerment and Rights, widely recognized as P.O.W.E.R, is a blog and informational tool created by teen girls for teen girls. Our goal is to bring up social issues from all different aspects of women's suffering . By doing so, we hope to keep teen girls informed of real world issues that affect our lives as a whole and can continue to affect our lives as our future draws near. We want to inspire our girls to take a stand in society and bring together a bond as we transform from girls to women. In this process we need each other and need not to be blindsided by the issues of today's society. We want to create a comfortable

conversational place for women to speak and write about issues personal to them and debate topics that are important but are not raised into question by social media. By bringing different perspectives to the blog and a variety of topics to talk about we will encourage formulating our own opinions and being more socially aware. As the founders of P.O.W.E.R we hope that you use our website as a tool of knowledge by furthering your awareness and challenging your own opinions. But also enjoy what we and other users have to offer.

Here are the other blogs

<https://worldgirls1.wixsite.com/mysite>

<https://girlrebellion.wixsite.com/girlrebellion>

<http://womanupower.wixsite.com/power>

[**Copy of Katie Full Speech Version 2.mp4**](#)

Discussion

I am hoping that gender will be an important topic in these discussions particularly for young women and girls and my contribution might be useful in the following areas

1. how the project works
2. The problems faced in doing this kind of work
3. Its specific successes
4. The methodology of the project
5. its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings
6. Its use in other cultures
7. How the project can be tailored for various cultures
8. The use of technology and its limitations

Education, Uncertainty and the Changing Nature of Society

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‘How can we, through education, best shape and sustain a society that is at once plural and cosmopolitan, prosperous and inclusive, fair and responsible, and cohesive?’

The answer is ‘teachers’. Teachers at all levels, who support the development of positive values and attitudes in learners, based on strong social and emotional capacities. These so-called ‘soft’ skills, such as the ability to empathise, collaborate effectively and take responsible decisions, are increasingly recognized as the key to handling the various and evolving challenges and uncertainties faced by our world today: social, environmental, technological. Teachers who enhance these abilities in learners are critical to the creation and maintenance of diverse societies where harmonious coexistence and justice prevail. They are preparing current and future generations for the fast-changing world.

Ensuring enough such teachers, however, is easier said than done. Particularly in places where they are most needed, for example in contexts of conflict, extreme poverty, chronic instability. The necessary resources, and sometimes the political will, to provide the training and support required to sustain an appropriately qualified teaching cadre are lacking. According to 2015 figures, 86% of primary level teachers are ‘trained’, but this percentage drops in poorer parts of the world – to 62% in sub-Saharan Africa, for example (*GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT 2017/18*, 2018, p.

Given the traditional focus on academic subjects, even trained teachers may not have received specific guidance on supporting learners’ social and emotional skills.

1

OXSCIE 2018 Essay Alison Joyner, UCL IOE

Work with teachers in AKF-supported schools in Tajikistan, and assessment of the social emotional skills of their students, indicated that even well-qualified and supported teachers needed further explicit training and mentoring to teach and assess effectively social and emotional skills such as promoting critical thinking, curiosity, the ability to work meaningfully in a group (Gulshaeva & Bub, Forthcoming).

In addition, 264 million children and youth are out of school (*GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT 2017/18*, 2018, p. xvi), without the benefits of any sort of teacher to support their learning. 27 million of those children are affected by conflict, in 24 countries (UNICEF, 2017, p. 7)

How, then, can we move towards enhancing the attitudes and skills of existing and pre-service teachers, to ensure that an ever-increasing proportion of them are equipped to support learning adapted to the future? To help answer that question, this essay points to ongoing doctoral research which aims to give voice to teachers' perspectives on the question. The case study¹ of a primary school in Kwale county, a rural area near Mombasa, Kenya, examines teachers' perceptions and practice in relation to social and emotional learning and skills, in the context of a new competency-based curriculum currently being rolled out by the Kenyan government.

The research is being conducted in affiliation with the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) Kenya. In this context, it will explore the relationship between the notion of 'pluralism' – embracing and celebrating difference, as promoted by AKF globally – and social and emotional skills. The findings will inform a Values Based Education project in support of the new curriculum, currently being launched by AKF in collaboration with government authorities.

The case study posits that the five competencies of social and emotional learning (SEL) – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building and responsible decision-making – underpin the competencies and values that Kenya's new curriculum seeks to nurture, as well as 'pluralistic' attitudes. The competency-based curriculum stipulates that learners should acquire the competencies of communication and collaboration, self-efficacy, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination, citizenship, digital literacy,

¹ 'Do our feelings matter? Exploring teachers' role in the social and emotional learning of their students: A case study from Kenya', Alison Joyner, Doctor in Education (EdD) candidate, University College London Institute of Education. Forthcoming 2019.

learning to learn (‘Basic Education Curriculum Framework’, 2017, p. 21). These should be rooted in the value framework of the Kenyan constitution. This states that the values of responsibility, respect, excellence, care and compassion, understanding and tolerance, honesty and trustworthiness, trust, and being ethical should guide Kenyan citizens (‘Basic Education Curriculum Framework’, 2017, p. 14).

The research explores the idea that helping teachers understand *explicitly* the five SEL competencies – first in their own lives, and then their critical importance for children’s all-round learning – could be a way to simplify and facilitate their efforts to implement the new curriculum. ‘Explicitly’ is highlighted, as it is argued that SEL is inherent in quality teaching. In that sense it is not ‘new’. However paying explicit attention to it has been shown to make SEL more effective (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 6, quoting Durlak et al, op cit (2011)) .

The research draws on literature addressing social and emotional learning, resilience, pluralism and ‘wellbeing’, all of which are relevant to ‘global citizenship education’ as referred to in Sustainable Development Goal 4, target 4.7² (United Nations, 2016). The relationships between these closely related, often overlapping concepts will be examined.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) refers to the process of integrating thinking, feeling, and behaving, in order to become aware of the self and of others, make responsible decisions, and manage one’s own behaviour and that of others (CASEL, 2017).

Effective SEL programs have been shown to be associated with positive social, emotional, behavioural, and academic outcomes for children and adolescents (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Resilience is the ability to ‘recover, perform and transform from situations of adversity’. In the context of a school, this means children and teachers regaining the capacity to learn or teach, and be well, socially and emotionally, even in situations of overwhelming difficulty (Gould, Varela, Reyes, Kelcey, & Sklar, 2013, p. 4). Resilient attributes include optimism, perseverance and self-esteem. These are learnt from the models of others, reinforcing the link with social and emotional skills (Prince-Embury & Saklofske, 2013).

As defined by His Highness the Aga Khan, a pluralistic, cosmopolitan society is one ‘which not only accepts difference, but actively seeks to understand it and to learn from it. In this

² Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development

perspective, diversity is not a burden to be endured, but an opportunity to be welcomed' (Aga Khan Development Network, 2015)

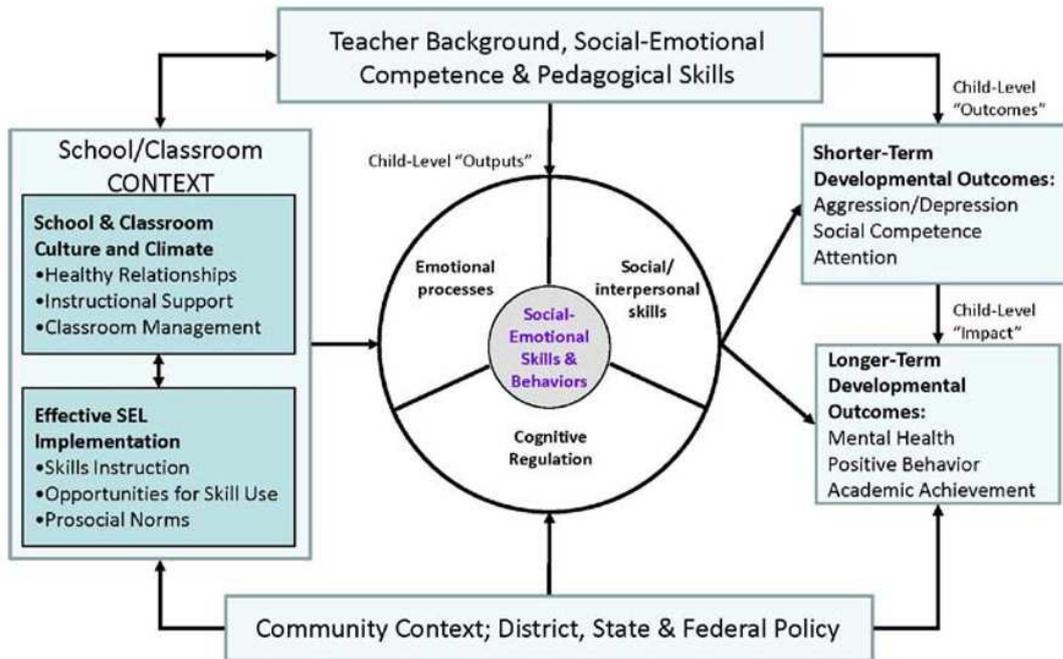
Pluralism thus entails embracing and celebrating difference, going beyond tolerance. It builds upon and enhances values-based education (Rasenberg, Forthcoming, p. 15).

'Wellbeing' is often associated with SEL as 'social and emotional *wellbeing*' (op cit Gould et al., 2013, p. 1). The notion of 'subjective wellbeing' can be defined as a specific emotion of feeling well, as a collection of positive emotions, or a combination of cognitive and emotional factors; common to all definitions is the feeling of enjoyment or happiness (Hascher, 2010, p. 732).

'Wellbeing' concerns both students and their teachers. While it has been controversial in the literature, student wellbeing is shown to be linked with positive school climate and good attitudes to learning and school, that enhance learning achievement. Wellbeing is essential for teachers' physical and mental functioning (Hascher, 2010, p. 174. 176). Arguably, 'wellbeing' is the outcome of healthy social and emotional development.

Jones and Bouffard have developed a framework for organising the range of ways in which social and emotional learning is understood (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 5). This demonstrates its integral relationship with wellbeing, with the context, and relationships with others who may be 'different':

Figure 1. Organizing Framework for SEL



Adapted from collaborative work conducted with Cetene Domitrovich as part of the Preschool to Elementary School SEL Assessment Workgroup, Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

In the same work, they have highlighted the importance of integrating support to the development of social and emotional skills throughout the school day, rather than in specific but brief sessions as part of the lesson timetable. They emphasise that the ‘little things can make a big difference’. For example, the way all adults – not just teachers – talk to students; and using consistent routines for situations like transitions and social problem solving (Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2008). The essential role of teachers’ relationships with students in promoting strong social and emotional wellbeing has been demonstrated, with particular emphasis on the classroom environment (Baker, 2006; Baker, Clark, Maier, & Viger, 2008; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010). Providing teachers with effective training, alongside support to understand and manage their own social and emotional situation is critical, and is one of Jones and Bouffard’s key recommendations (Jones & Bouffard, 2012, p. 16). Almost all research cited above is based on developed contexts. The place for a study that examines the issues in an under-resourced context is clear.

To this end, data collection for the first phase of the Kenyan case study, just completed, involves interviews with teachers and education officials, focus group discussions with selected students and their parents, and videoed classroom observations. These methods seek to answer the research questions:

1. How do teachers interpret, and live, the notions of social and emotional learning and ‘pluralism’ in their context?
2. How do these interpretations influence teachers’ understanding of the positive development of students’ social and emotional skills?
3. How do teachers support the acquisition of those skills in the classroom, and wider school environment?
4. How is teachers’ support to social and emotional learning and pluralism affected by the views and behaviour of other members of the school community, specifically students, parents/caregivers and local education authorities.

An introductory workshop with the seven teachers of the case study primary school, demonstrated how the SEL competencies underlie the competencies, values and National Education goals of the new Kenyan [Basic Education Curriculum Framework](#). Strategies that support the acquisition of SEL competencies could therefore help make a reality of the new curriculum. In other words, an SEL framework may be a useful way for teachers to ‘unpack’ and put into practice the new curriculum.

On this basis, teachers worked together, guided by the researcher to contextualise for their context a classroom observation tool that focuses on relationships in the classroom (teacher-student and student-student). This tool was adapted initially by AKF in Tajikistan from the CLASS (Pianta et al, 2008) observation tool. The pilot version of the contextualised tool will be used to code the videos of classroom practice, to understand to what extent practice in the classroom supports the development of strong social and emotional skills. As part of a participatory action research process, each teacher will receive a confidential, individual report on their videoed class teaching, and the opportunity to discuss further with the researcher and their own Curriculum Support Officer.

For the second and final phase of the research, this initial work with the teachers will be used as the basis for a participatory action research process over the next year to 18 months (from a distance via a Whatsapp group and further visits). Teachers will try out strategies for supporting social and emotional learning in their classrooms, and the school beyond. They will be

encouraged and supported to reflect on the results of these experiments, with a view to learning from and enhancing their practice. Activities should include teacher-led, formative assessment of student outcomes (academic and social and emotional skills), that could be associated with the use of the strategies.

A key question to examine will be the relationship between values and competencies. Which come first? Are strong values and attitudes necessary before the desired competencies can be achieved? Or will the desired values be an inevitable outcome of the development of strong competencies? Or, perhaps most likely, is there a more complicated, interdependent relationship? It will be essential to try to unpick these connections, in seeking to understand the dynamics and, critically, wider application of values- and competency-based education.

The new competency-based curriculum in Kenya clearly provides fertile ground for introducing more explicit attention to social and emotional learning. Using its education system and committed Kenyan teachers as a vehicle, the Kenyan government is ambitiously seeking to make a reality of shaping and sustaining a society ‘at once plural and cosmopolitan, prosperous and inclusive, fair and responsible, and cohesive’. Its efforts should be applauded and supported. Learning from this long-term process should be carefully analysed and widely disseminated.

The case study highlighted is a modest part of that effort. Working closely with teachers on their understanding and practice of social and emotional learning strategies, should enhance their capacity to develop their pupils’ ‘soft’ skills, and so their preparedness for life. The learning garnered will inform the implementation of the new curriculum, and support its evolution. It will also be relevant to other curricula and contexts, including adaptation for various types of ‘emergency’ situation. It can only be hoped that this inevitably gradual, but steady process, will help the world move towards a better place for its future citizens.

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Searching for Florence Nightingale in the Future Design of Global Education: A Discussion of Small, but Vital Changes to Learning in Uncertainty

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Setting the Scene – Uncertainty and Health

In the 1800's, Europe was in the middle of The Crimean War. British soldiers were fighting battles in Istanbul and sustaining horrific wounds. Unfortunately, men were not surviving almost any of their war injuries. But why?

In search of the answer, a group of caregivers, led by statistician Florence Nightingale, left for the Selimiye Barracks (modern day Istanbul) on the 21st of October, 1854. When they arrived, they discovered that the soldiers were being treated in impoverished conditions. No windows were present, medicine to treat infection was unavailable, and all basic hygiene was neglected. Thus, infection was rampant and fatal.

The British caregivers who traveled to the Selimiye Barracks took over the treatment for the wounded soldiers. They implemented small, yet vital changes to the management of care. As a result, the death rate for soldiers dramatically declined. In the units, windows were opened to provide ventilation and hand washing became standard practice. As a result, hundreds of thousands of soldiers' lives were saved. After the war ended, this uncertain time was turned into a time of development, change, and innovation for the future of the healthcare sector. Florence Nightingale established the first school for nursing. Through her work and innovation, health improvement standards, flourished, worldwide.

Nightingale embraced uncertainty within the health profession to develop new ideas for medical diagnosis, treatment, and professional development. She made changes where the opportunity to do so seemed nonexistent. As a nurse myself, I have chosen to apply lessons learned from Florence Nightingale to the topic of education and uncertainty. In short, I believe that like Florence, we can identify small, but vital changes that need to be implemented in failing education systems throughout the world to address critical health challenges faced by children, teachers and communities today.

Making the Connection: Uncertainty, Health, and Education

In preparation for this essay, I conducted a “mini survey” to gain professional perspective from some of the leading nurses and physicians in the world at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, both in Boston, USA.

The following prompt was given to respondents, asking them to reply:

“You are being consulted as an experienced healthcare provider. An elementary and high school is being built in rural Kyrgyzstan. From your perspective, what are the most **important healthcare** aspects to consider when developing the blueprint for this school, students, and teachers?”

The responses were overwhelmingly similar in nature and represent a series of simple, yet vital factors that I argue the new and failing education systems must better prioritize when advancing the goal of education for all. The top seven responses are summarized below:

1. **Clean Water:** According to the respondents, drinking water, also known as potable water, is essential for designing any school, anywhere. The amount of required drinking water, though, will vary per school. It depends on physical activity, age, health issues, and environmental conditions. Although basic, this small, but vital requirement must be re-emphasized in the school improvement and school effectiveness approaches. Too often, we are pushing towards improving learning outcomes; when we, as system change agents, still have not fixed the broken questions of access – access to clean drinking water and safe, clean learning environments.
2. **Vaccines:** According to the respondents, ensuring all student, teachers, and those involved in the day to day activities of the school need to be vaccinated on a regular basis. The regular basis, will be based on the specific recommended timeframe for a vaccine based on the disease it is intended to prevent. Year after year, vaccines have proven to be effective in preventing unwanted and sometimes, untreatable disease. When we look back in history and how vaccines have eradicated deadly diseases such as polio, we have proof in the utility and importance. Based on my experience as a nurse, we need to implement vaccination programs within the school, that are free to students and families, to ensure all are vaccinated. If we take out the hurdles of ‘trying’ to vaccinate students we will see an increase in compliance, safety, and illness free days. Consulting nurses and physicians who are experts in the field of Infectious Disease will be vital in choosing the right vaccines for the right places.
3. **Nutrition:** According to the respondents, proper nutrition can often be overlooked. Providing food is one thing, but providing food with the vitamin and minerals needed for proper growth and development is what we must to focus on.

If we take all children ages six to eighteen, we are talking about the peak time in ones life, at which the most energy is being expended and when the highest rates of growth are taking place. Then when we break this down a bit further to when a pre-teenager begins puberty (approximately age 10 to 13, with puberty continuing through age 18) proper nutrients ensure adequate growth and development based on the need of the body and brain with the introduction of hormones. We need to institute ways to moni-

tor, provide, and ensure students are receiving the nutrition, beyond just ‘calories’, they need for these crucial points in development.

4. **Safety:** According to the respondents, it seems that we need to take an adaptive approach to safety – and one that includes much more than basic safety approaches when considering the health of a child. First, where are we? Rural or Urban? The responses will differ, significantly. Second, safety can be thought of in a global sense and also narrowed down to the feeling of safety when having a conversation with someone. Do we feel safe to express our opinion? Third, does our perception of safety also relate to respect? Or is it solely safety from violence? How do we examine and categorize safe teachers or safe learner environments? What pillars do we need to put in place to ensure safe learning spaces to enhance growth and independence for children in the learning environments? More questions, than answers, were raised by respondents related to their perceptions of the importance of school safety when designing a healthy school in Kyrgyzstan.
5. **Hygiene at school and at home:** According to respondents, the answers were simple, yet crucial with elements needed in designing a school with a focus on health. A number of respondents emphasized that preventing infection and promoting basic hygiene (hand washing, bathing, etc), decreases the amount of missed days, and influences children’s cognitive and social emotional capacity to learn.
6. **Home life considerations:** According to respondents, a healthy school examines the intersections between family, school and social support networks of children. When we do this, we must move past what we believe is a ‘normal family’, and accept there is no ‘right family network’. We must also remember and accept that each learner’s family life is crucial to understanding the factors that may be constraining or enabling his or her ability to learn. The learner’s environment at home, is as important as the environment at school.
7. **Depression monitoring and screening:** According to one respondent, this is something that can be very hidden by students. We may not readily see it, but if we become naive to the concept that it exists, we will never be able to screen or prevent it. Furthermore we will never be able to address it in contexts of learning. As medical professionals interested in the well-being of children in and out of school, children often cannot articulate what they are feeling; and as a result their depression goes wildly undiagnosed. If and when this happens, failure in school is a likely result.

What does this all mean for, ‘**Uncertainty and the Changing Nature of Society, and the implications thereof for Education**’? We need to better connect the expertise of the medical profession to that of the education field. As simple as this might seem, I am reminded how the simple changes made by Florence Nightingale on the battlefield led to millions of saved lives. Perhaps, this simple suggestion in increasingly uncertain times may lead to millions more

learning and thriving throughout the world's education systems. Furthermore, the issue of depression in schools and education systems remains an increasingly unaddressed problem; one that could be better addressed with linking with the medical professions in psychiatry and behavioral psychology.

When reviewing the results of the short survey, it becomes quite clear that the medical professional respondents had their top priorities in designing a new school in Kyrgyzstan: being able to diagnose depression, accounting for home life considerations, ensuring clean water, promoting safety, encouraging hygiene, and prioritizing nutrition for all future students, teachers, and families. The question is, when schools are designed, or when teachers are trained, are we making adequate connections between the medical and educational disciplines? Are we making the natural bridges between the two sciences, or are we simply making uninformed assumptions?

II. Moving Forward: Educating for Uncertainty in Partnership with Health Experts

We need to re-imagine our approach to delivering healthcare in schools by re-examining the role of health professionals in the design, implementation and ongoing improvement of our education systems. Too often, teachers, school principals, and even district education officials are tasked with strategizing about how to keep children healthy and safe; and yet they have little to no medical or basic healthcare background. Why have we created such a chasm between the two professions, when in fact children's well-being is so closely linked to both health and education sectors?

The [Primary School](#), founded by Chan Zuckerberg in San Francisco, is one of the first schools in the USA who has changed, fundamentally, the staffing of its school design. Rather than viewing the stereotypical principal, vice principal, subject teachers, and school nurse on the roster, the staff includes a medical director, integrated health and nutrition specialist, epidemiologists, child nutritionists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Staff are stationed throughout the school district, but are each connected to the portfolio of each of the school's learners. Why is Chan Zuckerberg's *The Primary School* the exception rather than the norm? Is Chan the modern day Florence Nightingale for re-imagining the potential linkage between health and education? Has she and her school team developed a small, but vital change to an entire education system?

III. Conclusion

These times of uncertainty strip our current and modern selves of what we know and consider comfortable, and push us to strive for a change that is greater than we thought was even possible. Why could we not change the structure of the normal school staff? Beyond the 'school nurse', how could more nutritionists, mental health professionals, and public health experts work together to enable children to live and learn in a healthy

and productive manner? How can our lifelong ladder of learning be guided by *both* the teacher and the medical professional?

If we go back to the example of Florence Nightingale, she taught us that something we see is so basic, such as washing hands, is actually a novelty. The soaring death count during battles of 1800 were not largely due to the wounds suffered, but rather the war of infection. Therefore, children who are not learning, may in fact not be suffering from poor education service delivery; rather they may simply need the support systems and a re-imagined health and education staff to help them fight the underlying factors preventing quality learning environments. In short, we need a new partnership between the health and education professions to enable children to better navigate multiple pathways of uncertainty; a partnership rooted in expertise, experience, and innovation.

I am willing to be the new Florence Nightingale; but rather than the battlefield, I look forward to the classroom and identifying the small, but vital changes needed to transform the way we approach better supporting and accelerating children's learning journeys, forever.

The Future of Social Mobility? MOOCs and Hegemonic Design Bias

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¹ Funding for this work provided, in part, by the Gates Cambridge Trust.

Introduction: Skills-biased Technology Change and the Future of Employment

The penetration of technology into every aspect of modern life is radically altering the nature of the economy and the ways in which humans contribute to economic output. As the price per processing unit power of computers continues to fall exponentially, and an artificial intelligence revolution begins to take place, the nature of the labor market and the skills required to succeed within it will continue to shift at an ever-increasing pace (Lewis-Kraus 2016).

In 2013, a seminal study by Michael Osborne at the University of Oxford predicted that 47 percent of jobs in the United States alone were at risk of automation. Furthermore, the paper states:

"Our model predicts a truncation in the current trend towards labor market polarization, with computerization being principally confined to low-skill and low-wage occupations. Our findings thus imply that as technology races ahead, low-skill workers will reallocate to tasks that are non-susceptible to computerization - i.e., tasks requiring creative and social intelligence. For workers to win the race, however, they will have to acquire creative and social skills," (pg. 269).

A new report by the McKinsey Global Institute examining the labor markets of 46 countries concludes similarly, albeit with a slight hedge. "While about half of all work activities globally have the technical potential to be automated by adapting currently demonstrated technologies, the proportion of work actually displaced by 2030 will likely be lower, because of technical, economic, and social factors that affect adoption," (Manyika et al. 2017, pg. 4).

The bottom line is that workers will be required to continuously upgrade skills in order to maintain employability in the labor-market, especially workers on the lower end of the skills spectrum (Autor 2014). Given that the present provision of education throughout developed and developing countries reinforces inequities along socioeconomic and racial lines, skills- biased technological change in the labor market threatens to exacerbate existing economic stratification and social inequality.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) were heralded as a disruptive technological force that could help solve these problems by improving access to education for traditionally underrepresented students around the world (Selingo 2014). Many MOOCs provided classes from Harvard, Stanford, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. While the brick-and-mortar versions of these schools remain accessible to only a select few, it was hypothesized that MOOCs could perhaps enable anyone, anywhere, to receive a world class education, for free

(Friedman 2013).

This hypothesis proved wrong, and demonstrably so. Moreover, MOOCs may be insidiously widening educational inequity gaps and economic disparities, a problem caused by how MOOCs are designed and compounded by how MOOCs are currently researched and developed.

This essay posits that MOOCs are infected by a hegemonic design bias. I begin with a review of the literature about global demand for higher education and who MOOCs are presently serving. From there, I will derive the notion of hegemonic design bias. I will then hypothesize the sources of this hegemonic design bias, borrowing insights from the sociology of technology and organizational theory. Then, I will consider design paradigms that may serve as an antidote to hegemonic design bias, as well as a discrete social psychological intervention that has been tested in large-scale quantitative experiments that might make MOOCs more inclusive and equitable, including one I am currently deploying in conjunction with Prof. Rene Kizilcec and Arizona State University. To conclude, I will reflect on why it is essential to iterate upon and improve MOOCs, in order to ameliorate worsening levels of inequality.

Global Demand for Higher Education, and Who MOOCs Serve

As the international economy becomes increasingly interdependent, demand for higher education has surged. The forces of globalization – the processes of economic integration, advancing technological development, and the emergence of an “international knowledge network,” – compel students and families to prioritize higher educational attainment as a necessity for social mobility and economic security (Altbach, et al. 2009). Governments are charged with nurturing education systems that enable this dream to be realized, both in order to fulfil the expectations of their constituencies and as a way to maintain geostrategic competitive advantages in the globalized economy (Carnoy 2016). As a result of these trends, the enrolment ratio for higher education students globally – the proportion of student-age population attending higher education – doubled between 1992 and 2012 (Economist 2015). A recent UNESCO report estimated that 165 million people were in enrolled in higher education (2013).

Given that roughly 30 percent of the world’s population is under the age of 15, projections suggest that, by 2025, participation in higher education will reach 263 million. The delta between current supply of higher education infrastructure and imminent student demand is a gap of close to 100 million students (UNESCO 2013). India alone will account for some 140 million higher

education-aged students by 2030, and presently can only accommodate about one-third of them with existing physical infrastructure (Kim 2015).

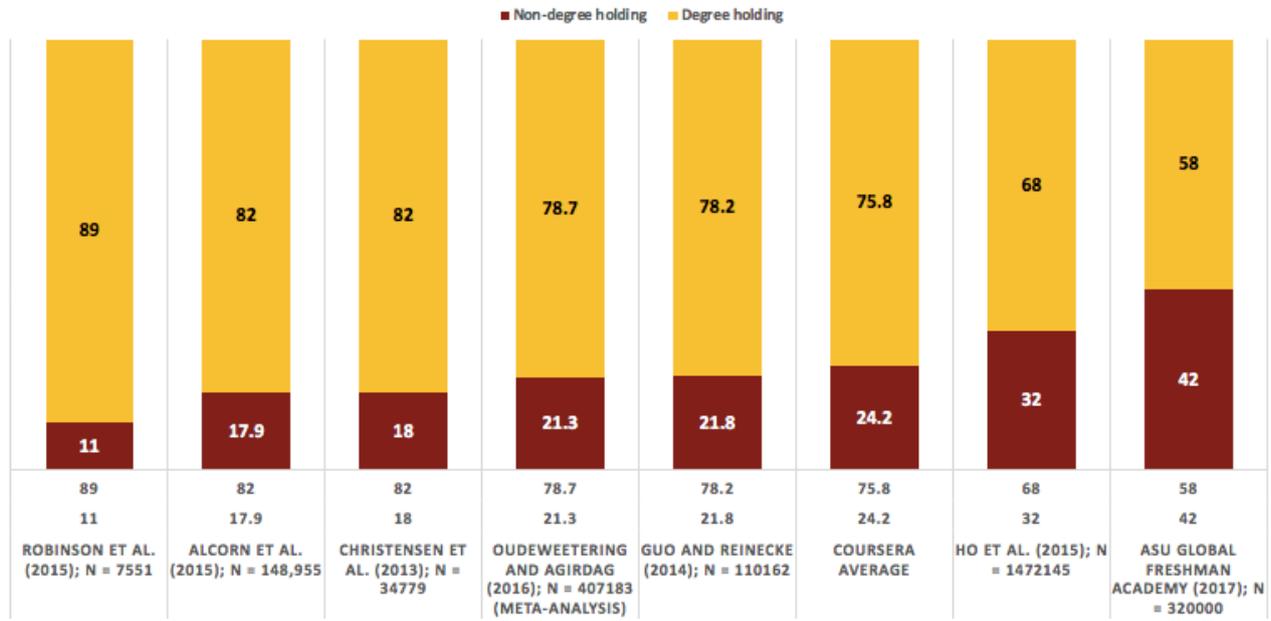
Developed nations are also struggling to satisfactorily educate their populations to keep pace with talent needs of an increasingly complex knowledge-based economy. The U.S. will likely face a shortfall of 12 million higher education graduates in the next two decades (Carnevale and Rose 2015). These numbers belie a more insidious truth. The imbalance in supply and demand disproportionately affects traditionally underrepresented students. Asymmetries of information and inadequate access to resources can make the higher education process difficult to manage successfully. Increasing competitiveness drives admission rates downward in an attempt to drive prestige upward, oftentimes leaving societies' most vulnerable students – those who stand to gain the most from higher education – the most at risk of never receiving one. Compounded educational deficits beginning in early childhood and primary school make it all the more difficult for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to thrive in secondary school and higher education (Reardon 2011).

Given this context, it is no wonder why MOOCs were met with such fanfare. MOOCs are “massive,” in that they can accommodate an unlimited number of students. MOOCs are “open” in that they require no application nor any similar barrier to entry. MOOCs are fully completed “online.” And MOOCs are “courses” in the traditional sense, meaning that they cover a discrete range of content in a particular subject area, the completion of which indicates some form of mastery (Hollands and Tirthali 2014).

It is intuitive to see the appeal of this technology given the scope of the supply and demand problem, and the inequity problem. As the knowledge economy requires more and more learning to secure economic stability, will MOOCs play a role in helping reduce educational and economic inequality? The answer to this question depends on whether MOOCs are able to effectively serve traditionally underrepresented users.

Unfortunately, the empirical data suggests otherwise. A 2018 paper by van de Oudeweetering and Agirdag is a first of its kind systematic review of MOOCs and their implications for social mobility, centering on the question of whether MOOCs have been effectively reaching the traditionally underrepresented. Their findings show that, of the more than 400,000 MOOC users included in the studies they cover, nearly 80 percent already held a college degree.² This finding has been replicated across nearly every MOOC study to date.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG MOOCS USERS



² These numbers themselves are somewhat problematic in that they do not deal with a selection bias resultant from specific users being more likely to take surveys. Dealing with this issue econometrically is beyond the scope of this paper, though it is an area covered in my dissertation.

Hegemonic Design Bias

How might we account for the relative lack of success? I hypothesize that MOOCs are a failure of design, stemming from three different components of their design production process. These components are: 1) the source of MOOCs, the universities actually producing them; 2) the actual design of the MOOCs themselves, the user experience and pedagogical techniques within them; and 3) the research and development community around MOOCs. These failures contribute to an emergent hegemonic design bias inherent in MOOCs.

First, the majority of MOOCs are produced by elite institutions of higher education in the United States. These institutions, while often times preaching the virtues of access, equity, and inclusion, have been documented as some of the greatest contributors to the reproduction of socioeconomic inequity and inequality (Turner 2017). These universities have global reputations to further confirm and extend, and are staffed by faculty and academic administrators who are hyper-responsive to the cult of prestige in the academy, and the institutional isomorphism that results (Crow and Dabars 2015). These organizational structures and incentives prevent these institutions from producing the kind of content that would be most useful to scale to make the provision of higher education more equitable and inclusive, courses on remedial Algebra or Composition 101 for English Language Learners, for example. These kinds of courses could dilute the brands of these prestigious institutions and could attract students who face learning challenges these universities are ill-equipped to deal with.

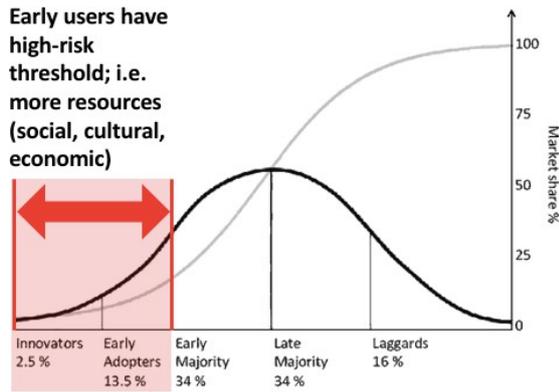
Second, MOOCs suffer from a user experience and pedagogical problem. MOOCs are not particularly innovative in terms of pedagogy. MOOCs involve a sequenced delivery of content in a structured manner, and there is little emphasis on participants co-creating knowledge with one another. Distance learning expert Tony Bates describes MOOCs as stuck in a “very old and outdated behaviorist pedagogy, relying primarily on information transmission, computer marked assignments and peer assessment.” (2012). For students without a college degree, this is the sort of educational experience that might be psychologically overwhelming and threatening. Additionally, underrepresented learners face pre-existing knowledge barriers that may contribute to feelings of panic or inadequacy that may predicate dropout (Oudeweetering and Agirdag 2017). The behaviorist paradigm is not conducive of reducing these challenges for students, and may actually make them more acute.

The third and most vexing component of hegemonic design bias is an area unexplored by the research literature: the early-adopter bias of technology iteration. This insight draws on

concepts from sociology and organizational theory: the politics of technology and the diffusion of innovations. The politics of technology is a concept articulated by Langdon Winner which claims that technologies have an inherent politics that influences who benefits from them (1980). He suggests that the design of technology “becomes a way of settling an issue,” meaning that the design dictates implications for usage (pg. 123).

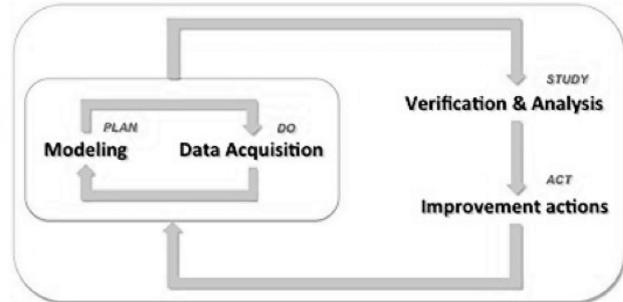
The diffusion of innovation is a concept developed by Everett Rogers. The theory suggests that innovations diffuse across society along different segments of the population, sequentially: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (2010). The politics of technology combines with the diffusion of innovations in a problematic way. Rogers notes that early adopters of new technologies will more likely be well-educated and wealthier. These users have access to more and better information, coupled with a higher tolerance of risk for new products (Rogers 2010). Early adopters are also likely to have disposable income and are a more attractive target market toward which to design new products. Innovations are optimized based on data available from early adopters.

This pattern of optimizing new products based on data from early adopters is the exact pattern that the MOOCs research and development community has followed. Learning analytics of massive data sets from MOOCs have focused on behavior patterns of average, early-adopting MOOC users. These users are much more likely to be already well-educated. This leads optimization and design recommendations to be driven by insights derived from users less likely to need help. If future MOOC iterations continue to be optimized based on present usage patterns of early adopters, and if these usage patterns continue to reflect the needs and behaviors of the already well-educated, this could further exacerbate educational inequity and economic inequality. This process is modeled in the figure below.



A conceptual model for how the diffusion of innovation cycle may perpetuate inequity (Meaney and Fikes, 2018)

Data from these users is analyzed; design recommendations are derived from these users' behavior – optimizing products for users less likely to be disadvantaged



Thousands of papers have been published analyzing user behavior in MOOCs. Many of these papers evaluate MOOC persistence and completion as dependent variables of interest, and consider a number of course design features (length of video, scheduling of tests, language in emails, etc) as well as a number of student engagement activities (log data of video watching, paper downloads, participation in forums, etc), as independent variables of interest.

For example, a 2016 paper by Evans, Baker, and Dee analyzes over 2.1 million observations from 44 MOOCs offered through Coursera. They find that while length of video in MOOCs does not matter, the length of the course does (longer courses are associated with more attrition). Furthermore, they find that the optimal release pattern of videos in courses is in batches of two videos per week. At the student level, they find that students who enroll just before the course begins are more likely to persist than those who enroll long before or well after the course begins. Finally, the strongest predictor of course completion is whether a student completed the pre-course survey or not (Evans et al. 2016).

These are certainly interesting findings, and important. They do not however differentiate between behaviors among types of students based on educational attainment level, socioeconomic status, or any other categorical variable that might serve as a proxy for relative educational disadvantage.

A Way Forward

There are two design paradigms that might be considered when creating MOOCs in the future, if the aim is to have designs be more equitable and inclusive, which could allow MOOCs to potentially develop into a real vehicle for social mobility.

One paradigm comes from Batya Friedman of Colby College, who developed the theory of value centric design. Value centric design is a “theoretically grounded approach to the design of technology that accounts for human values in a principled and comprehensive manner throughout the design process” (pg. 1, 2013). Friedman discusses the idea of “preexisting bias” that exists independently of the technology, but informs how the technology is developed. “Preexisting biases may originate in society at large, in subcultures, or in formal or informal organizations and institutions... This type of bias can enter a technology either through the explicit and conscious efforts of individuals or institutions, or implicitly and unconsciously, even despite the best of intentions.” (Friedman 1996).

Another design paradigm that might be considered is that of reflexive design, proposed by Phoebe Sengers from Cornell, along with other colleagues (2005). These researchers call for the development of technology to take a much more explicit approach in accounting for preexisting bias. Reflexive design would entail “reflection on unconscious values embedded in computing and the practices that it supports.” Furthermore, “reflective design... combines analysis of the ways in which technologies reflect and perpetuate unconscious cultural assumptions, with design, building, and evaluation of new computing devices that reflect alternative possibilities,” (pg. 49, 2005).

These paradigms would yield MOOC designs far more responsive to underrepresented students using MOOCs. It would force universities, technologists, professors, and designers, to consider specific difficulties and burdens that underrepresented learners might face when engaged with online learning.

Short of completely redefining the design paradigm approaches used by universities to produce MOOCs, there are discrete interventions that might also be helpful. Rene Kizilcec of Stanford University developed an intervention to address social identity threat, one potential source of difficulty for underrepresented learners in MOOCs. He tested the intervention on users from lesser developed countries (LDC) in a randomized controlled trial, and it was found to deliver a consistently positive effect on learning outcomes (Kizilcec et al 2017). A similar study was conducted in China, focused on lower-class men in an English- language MOOC as an at-

risk group. The intervention led to improvements in grades, persistence, and completion rates (Kizilcec et al 2017).

Prof. Kizilcec and I are running a similar experiment with an adaptive learning math MOOC offered by Arizona State University. The MOOC begins by having users take an hour-long skills assessment. This is very useful for building an adaptive curriculum; however, it is a very threatening way to start a course. Thousands of users are observed to drop out when prompted to begin, or shortly after starting. Our intervention engages the learner just before the skills assessment. Learners read an affirming message and are asked to reflect on the importance of taking the course and their plan to complete it.

Conclusion: Sound the Alarm!

The original intents and aims of MOOCs were laudable, or at least were framed in such a way. There are millions of learners still in need of flexible education options, and MOOCs and other forms of online learning may be the best vehicle to meet this increasing demand for higher education. Furthermore, as the pace of technological change continues to speed up, more and more workers will find their existing skills out of date and will be required to acquire new skills. Global educational infrastructure is not capable of meeting this demand, so MOOCs could serve to fill this void.

Institutions of higher education have a special responsibility to shape technology to help improve the world and make it a more just and equitable place. Right now, they are doing the opposite by producing MOOCs that serve the already well-educated. Additionally, the vast majority of research and discourse around MOOCs remains stuck in a rose-shaded glasses mode; most universities and MOOC providers are either unaware or blatantly ignoring the data demonstrating MOOCs as an agent of inequality reproduction.

All hope is not lost. If proper design considerations are made in creating future MOOC content, these institutions of higher education could make a momentous contribution to society by truly democratizing learning. As MOOCs remain nascent, they are highly malleable and not entrenched in any specific way that would prevent a direction change. Whether MOOCs are able to shift in the right direction is now up to the universities producing them.

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Engaging with understanding and documenting the transitional experiences of children and young people: Autobiographical approaches in education

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Introduction

This essay provides insights into efforts of a teacher (the author), new to working with migrant and refugee children, to develop an approach which aims to engage children and young people at a crucial point of transition: into a new language and culture, new education system and community. I was looking to develop an inclusive approach suitable for a wide range of age groups at different levels of: English proficiency and literacy skills in their home languages.

As a new teacher in charge of developing support for new arrivals and refugees in a very diverse inner London secondary school, with 20 per cent of the pupils identified as refugees, I was looking for recommendations on good practice. Having consulted relevant literature, one strategy stood out: autobiographical writing. It seemed to capture the essence of good practice: utilising prior experiences in learning; securing relevance to all children and providing opportunities in which every child is an expert.

Developing my own approach

Inspired by my readings I began developing the initial assessment tools for all new arrivals, structuring them around autobiographical writing, using first languages and English. In the case of children, who were new to schooling and had no literacy in any language, a structured speaking activity was used with the help of interpreters.

What became obvious very quickly was that there was a lot sensitivity involved in topics such as home, family and prior experiences. Some of these children were arriving from refugee camps and conflict zones; some were unaccompanied minors, some had a false identity for various reasons to protect their safety. Understandably so, there was often an unmistakable sense of discomfort with anything autobiographical.

Many of these children had gone through extraordinary experiences of transition which could either frame them as victims or resilient young individuals. It was important to prevent them

internalising often well meaning, but ‘pity type’ messages that people arriving from conflict zones encounter on an everyday basis, which can easily pave the way of developing victim identities. Just a simple question: ‘Where do you come from?’ will result in a very different conversation for somebody coming from Brazil and somebody coming from Syria. A new arrival from Brazil will almost certainly be talking about the natural beauty of Brazil, world class football, good food and will walk off with a sense of pride, feeling good about his/her own identity. While for somebody from Syria the same question will almost certainly lead into a conversation which will centre on expressions of sorrow and concern. While the conversation might be appropriate and well meaning, it will almost certainly have a negative impact on that child. For Syrian children, a ‘where do you come from’ conversation will almost certainly never be about anything else but war and its consequences rather than something which a child can feel proud of. A Syrian child will walk away from such conversations with a guaranteed additional burden, which, if internalised, moves them a step closer to developing aspects of victim identity.

The questions which emerged for me while developing suitable strategies for working with new arrivals were:

- i how does one structure the use of autobiographical approaches, which bring relevance to all in the classroom and engagement with prior experience, without intimidation?
- ii how can this work take every child along the path of resilience and affirmation at the time of transition?
- iii how do we provide opportunities for children to tell and document their own narratives which will challenge stereotypes imposed by media and even curriculum?
- iv how do we provide opportunities for teachers and pupils to understand and learn from transitional experiences?

My aim was to create conditions in educational settings where children build on what they have and what they know; where their prior experiences are not dismissed, but ‘allowed in’ as the foundation stone of their current and future learning. And this principle is important for all children – immigrants or not. It is about affirmation of different socio-economic, class, ethnic, regional, local and individual identities. Every child needs to learn through education to know, understand, analyse and critically approach his own individual situation within the history of a community and a social group, to be able to see the bigger picture and gain understanding of the self within it. That understanding is essential in enhancing one’s

potential to achieve, not only in terms of school grades, but on a long term basis, in terms of successfully negotiating different types of transition and hopefully achieving upward social mobility.

I have come across children who have lacked opportunities to gain such understanding of their backgrounds and they were left battling with that vacuum in their own ways. A Kosovan boy who was academically very able, but regularly excluded for fighting in the playground, revealed that his 'where do you come from' conversation led to responses: 'Kosovo is not a country'. Since he lacked arguments and historical perspective, he did not know how to engage with that challenge through discussion, so he opted for a fight. In his own words: 'Miss, I don't know what to tell them, so I punch them'. He welcomed an offer to join a Kosovan complementary school and have the opportunity to learn about Kosovo's history. His understanding of the political complexities surrounding the official status of Kosovo was so directly linked to his survival in the playground, that it was crucial for adults around him to appreciate that even though he was only 14 year old, he urgently needed that understanding of his background.

These types of insights into the experiences of migrant children led me to develop further my thinking about autobiographical approaches. It became clear that teachers should provide structured opportunities for all children to explore their backgrounds and share their narratives. If these explorations happen facilitated by a teacher with clear learning objectives, they can replace and prevent often ad hoc alienating interactions, as the example given above.

Model

My initiative titled "Places we had to leave" was piloted in a secondary school with a Year 7 class (11-12 year old). I selected this focus as a universal human experience of transition linking an ordinary living and refugee/migrant experience. All of the children in this Year 7 class left their primary school a year ago. Even if they had never experienced moving home, changing schools, classes, peers and teachers was a big change that they had all encountered. Conscious of the fact that "Places we had to leave" may be too close to the experiences of some of the refugee children, I also provided an alternative title: "Places we want to go to". The main aim of the project was explained as: writing and presenting about a place that 'made us who we are'. The project was introduced with an overarching theme of "Our special places".

By focusing on a place, I intended to allay any pressure they might feel about talking

about their families or themselves. This presentation could be as personal or impersonal as they wished. The key part of this initiative was to provide a model which children could use to shape their own narratives. The model was based on five multimedia elements. Multimedia was used with the intention to enhance engagement and bridge the literacy gap for children who had gaps in their education and therefore lacked the appropriate level of literacy skills for their age.

My model consisted of the following elements:

An introduction to Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina and my special place, using a photo, followed by a soundtrack to a TV programme that I watched at the time I started school. This soundtrack provides a way into talking about different experiences of schooling and the value systems they are based on.

I then used a photo of the Bosnian National Library, which served the purpose of talking about historical research, using primary sources in public archives, introducing the excitement of finding key, original documents. This part of the narrative was linked to my own experience of doing historical research in the archives of this library. Since the Bosnian Library was destroyed during the war in the 1990s, it also gave me the opportunity to address the strategy of cultural genocide and attempts to erase the history of a people.

I then used further artefacts:

- ï Two short documentaries which challenge stereotypical media images of war torn countries. They make the point that it is important to show how people preserve their dignity in such circumstances and continue with activities which are meaningful to them. The two examples included a cello player and a ballet dancer in Sarajevo who responded to the destruction around them by developing arts initiatives to keep spirits high in a city under siege.
- ï A poem by Mak Dizdar, a Bosnian poet whose collection '*Stone Sleepers*' was translated into English. This allowed us to explore and encourage bilingual writing. I share with children my first bilingual book and explore with them the complexities of translating poetry. They are encouraged to look for examples in their own language or to translate poems and stories which are important to them.
- ï A comedy clip filmed by a group called '*Surrealists of Sarajevo*', who can be compared to Monty Python in the UK. This clip was filmed during the siege with citizens of Sarajevo taking part in it. It was one of the initiatives to maintain hope and community spirit during famine and extreme living conditions. I finish with the point that humour

reaches out across cultures and provides more positive ways of engaging with extraordinary circumstances.

In conclusion I make the point that the narrative I am presenting is dated, but it relates to a crucial transition in my life which brought unexpected upheaval and change. Also my narrative of Sarajevo in a way stands frozen in time. I have not yet been back to visit after I narrowly escaped being caught in the siege, in 1992.

Collaborative Classroom

In the process of developing this initiative, it became obvious that adults in the classroom needed to be included too, not only as facilitators or teachers, but participants. Autobiographical approaches are often used in a one sided way and opportunities are missed to create conditions for meaningful balance of power between children and adults. Every autobiographical initiative asks of children to share their thoughts, feelings, experiences in a more meaningful and insightful way, than any other style of teaching. This also means that children may experience being more vulnerable because they share and expose some aspects of themselves that they may have not done otherwise. Adults should be included in the process of sharing narratives not only because they act as models for children, but also because their inclusion is an important step in creating a collaborative classroom where adults too, provide an insight into their own identity.

When invited to work in different schools, I insisted that the teachers hosting this initiative needed to fully participate too. I sometimes came across resistance and the reasons such as: ‘Who wants to know about a small town in England, where I come from? Who wants to know about Preston?’ Once the understanding was achieved that most children were interested in who their teacher was as a person, there were some impressive presentations done by the teachers, which were warmly received by their classes. The sense of reciprocating in opening up and appreciating the historical circumstances, which had shaped the lives of different communities and families was inspiring.

In their evaluations the children talked about hearing bits of stories about the journeys of their families in different occasions, but only now that they had done this project had they put all the pieces together and had a better understanding of the whole narrative. In one class an eleven year old Russian boy did a presentation on Moscow and broke down in tears while talking about the millions who perished defending Moscow in WWII. Suddenly, numbers in history books and lessons had a more personal meaning, he understood how these big historical events impacted on his family and his own life.

The teachers reflected on the fact that many children presented in front of a class for the first time since their arrival. The principle of every child being an expert on their own background and history, seemed to have resulted in the intended enhanced engagement.

Examples from Classrooms

Two boys, who sit next to each other in this class, presented the following work: The first boy showed a photo of Hamburg after bombing at the end of World War II, which led into an introduction about his German roots and family attachments to that city. He told the class about his grandmother who grew up in Hamburg, his mother who was born there, and he himself had been there frequently for visits. One of his photos was of his parents, sister, and him in front of his grandmother's home. He proudly spoke about being bilingual in English and German, which resulted in his having passed a GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in German at the age of eleven rather than the usual sixteen. His next photo was of a teenage girl in a Hitler's Youth uniform. This was his grandmother at the beginning of the Second World War. The key part of his narrative was the insight into the experience of being forced to join an organisation such as Hitler's Youth and the theme of survival during a war, followed by the experience of bombing, living in an occupied country and time spent in a Russian labour camp.

The second boy showed a photo of a Jewish ghetto: the other side of World War II, presenting the experience of those who suffered the greatest losses. His narrative concerned a family originating from Russia, moving to Germany, with some being imprisoned in the German concentration camps, and others joining the French resistance. He used photos from textbooks, which illustrated the narrative about the lives in ghettos based on conversations with his family members. This boy also mentioned how he heard fractions of these stories during family gatherings or just mentioned in different instances, but only now that he had done the research for this project and written things down, did he feel that he could put the pieces together in a way that made sense and enabled him to have a better understanding of his family. This example shows the importance of making sense of past and current transitions while documenting them.

These two boys provided genuine individual insights, into one of the most studied history topics. They referred to concepts and institutions that every European pupil will come across in their education. Even though they were from two opposing sides in the conflict, their stories had a strong shared aspect: the struggle of an individual for survival and the suffering that conflicts bring to all involved. The recurring mention of the concentration camps was a reminder of how similar these experiences could be.

I need to say that attending the pupils' presentations, only to discover that one of the posters included an extremely sensitive photo, in fact what can be seen as a taboo photo, of a family member in a Hitler's Youth uniform, I felt uncomfortable and anxious about the presentation that was coming. I was relieved that the grandmother was not portrayed as a Nazi supporter, but as a young person being forced to wear Nazi symbols. However, only when the presentations were completed without any incident in the class, was I able to appreciate the fact that this episode demonstrated the existing levels of trust in this school and the classroom; that children and families felt safe to share even sensitive details.

However, these two presentations also show that even conflicts which are historically remote are still very much present in family interactions and narratives. They still influence the identities of children and young people in classrooms today, as when for example children of German background report being bullied in the playground when World War II is taught. This episode also highlights the fact that in a global city, such as London, teachers need to be skilled in negotiating politically and historically sensitive issues when they arise. Autobiographical work in different subject areas, which encourages children to explore, research, and share their backgrounds, creates conditions for understanding and documenting transition. In the process of sharing their own narratives with peers and teachers children experience diversity in a very personal way. Providing structured opportunities for children, and adults to share narratives of themselves facilitates both: intercultural learning and practices affirmative of the self and others.

Conclusions

There are four key principles of autobiographical approaches highlighted in literature that struck a chord with me while developing this approach. Firstly, memories are not only about the past, but are about self-recognition in the present and act as a resource for understanding our contemporary reality. Secondly, having insight into the personal experience of others especially during the time of upheaval, change and transition is the foundation for peaceful coexistence in a diverse society. Thirdly, autobiographical work provides a framework suitable for cross generational work, from young children to senior citizens, every individual can contribute his or her own unique and equally valuable insight. And finally, every individual is an expert on what is their own interpretation of their background and past. This final point is especially important in the context of children who are new arrivals and new to learning the language used in school. Making sure they engage in activities where they feel competent and confident is essential for their self-esteem and future achievement.

We (educators) need a reminder that the most valuable resources we have in our classrooms are children and teachers themselves and their experiences. All too often curriculum and teaching appear disconnected and irrelevant to children's lives. Autobiographical approaches provide the highest level of learner engagement and relevance. With this in mind educators at all levels, primary to higher education and teacher trainers, should be looking for ways which will enable them to exploit autobiographical approaches for the benefits of: engaging with transition in a meaningful way, enhanced participation and achievement; and development of intercultural competencies.

Equipping Children for an Uncertain World: The Importance of Monitoring Education Commitments

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Introduction

Future generations of children will live in a world with significant uncertainty, and so it follows that equipping children with the capacity to survive and thrive in an uncertain world is a priority for the education sector. Accomplishing this requires establishing global standards for monitoring high-level education outcomes, because the resulting information is essential to understanding the current educational status of children, and how an ever-changing world affects their education and well-being.

This essay presents empirical lessons learned in two countries, Myanmar and Japan. Specifically, I draw a comparison between attempts to achieve components of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) agenda related to education in Myanmar, and actions taken by the government of the Japanese city of Iwaki in Fukushima following the 2011 tsunami disaster. At first glance, these two disparate examples might not appear to have much in common. However, I found that in both cases, the lack of a monitoring framework that encompassed critical education outcomes led to poor decision-making that failed to take children's rights properly into account, and ultimately put children at risk.

There are structural reasons why education sectors around the world fail to monitor high-level education outcomes, including (1) a disconnect between national education objectives and education sector plan monitoring frameworks in developing countries, (2) underdeveloped awareness of the importance of SDG4.7, which outlines the aspects of global citizenship and education pertinent to sustainable development, and is therefore the SDG4 target most relevant to high-level education outcomes stipulated by national education laws, and (3) the unsuitability of national and global monitoring frameworks for evaluating and analyzing bottom-up approaches to improving a country's education sector.

This essay argues that if we are to ensure that the world's children are positioned to thrive in the coming decades, we must commit to constant and careful monitoring of high-level education indicators that will guide global education stakeholders in the development of appropriate policies and courses of action.

The Importance of Alignment: What Gets Measured Gets Managed

Over the last few years, UNICEF, other international organizations, and civil society have actively supported governments in their efforts to align their education goals with SDG4 targets. For example, UNICEF Indonesia supported the Ministry of Education in 2017 when it localized SDG4 target indicators and developed a baseline to showcase this process among UNICEF programme countries.

UNESCO implemented the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Programme in 2003. In 2016, the program drew on 14 years of experience to make modifications that better align it with the SDG4 Education 2030 agenda. CapED supports education sectors by reinforcing the Sector-Wide Approach to policy planning and monitoring, and today the program covers some 25 Least Developed Countries,¹ including Myanmar.

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/caped>

Lessons Learned from Myanmar's Experience

I was involved in the CapED Programme in Myanmar in 2016, where I was charged with analyzing the existing education sector monitoring framework of the Myanmar National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), and making recommendations to align it with the SDG4 framework. One of the critical lessons learned was that not only is the relationship between national education sector objectives and the SDG4 agenda tenuous at best, the two are also completely disconnected from the education sector monitoring framework. In other words, the very objectives of the Myanmar National Education Law are only partially covered by SDG4.7 targets,² and the NESP monitoring framework does not cover these high-level indicators at all. Selected objectives from Chapter 2 of the law, “National Education Objectives,” are listed below.

Example 1: Selected Objectives from Chapter 2 of Myanmar's National Education Law

- Higher Order Thinking: *To develop and train learners for the emergence of ideal citizens with intellectual faculties which enables reasoning and critical thinking and endowment with the four strengths (i.e., wisdom, physical strength, morality and sociability).*
- Human rights and civic participation: *To train, develop and nurture learners for the emergence of law-abiding citizens following ethical conducts, democratic practices and human right standards.*
- Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development: *To develop citizens capable of preserving and conveying to future generations, the appreciation and propagation of languages, literatures, cultures, arts, customs, traditions and historical heritages of all the nationalities, and the natural environment with a vigorous union spirit.*

National Education Sector Plans Should Reflect National Education Goals

This finding highlights a critical issue in the design of monitoring frameworks, namely that they should evaluate the extent to which a country's education sector plan helps achieve its national education objectives. If the evaluation does not assess this, the value of the monitoring framework is considerably diminished, as is the ability to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the underlying plan. A robust, well-designed monitoring framework will not only tell policy makers and stakeholders if the plan was instrumental in achieving national education objectives, it will also help them understand why or why not, and it will indicate how the plan can be further improved.

In 2015 governments around the world spent an average of 15.9% of their total budgets on education,³ hiring millions of teachers so as to offer children the best education possible. It is essential that governments hold themselves accountable for these expenditures by measuring the results obtained by sector plans relative to high-level objectives stipulated in their countries' constitution and education laws.

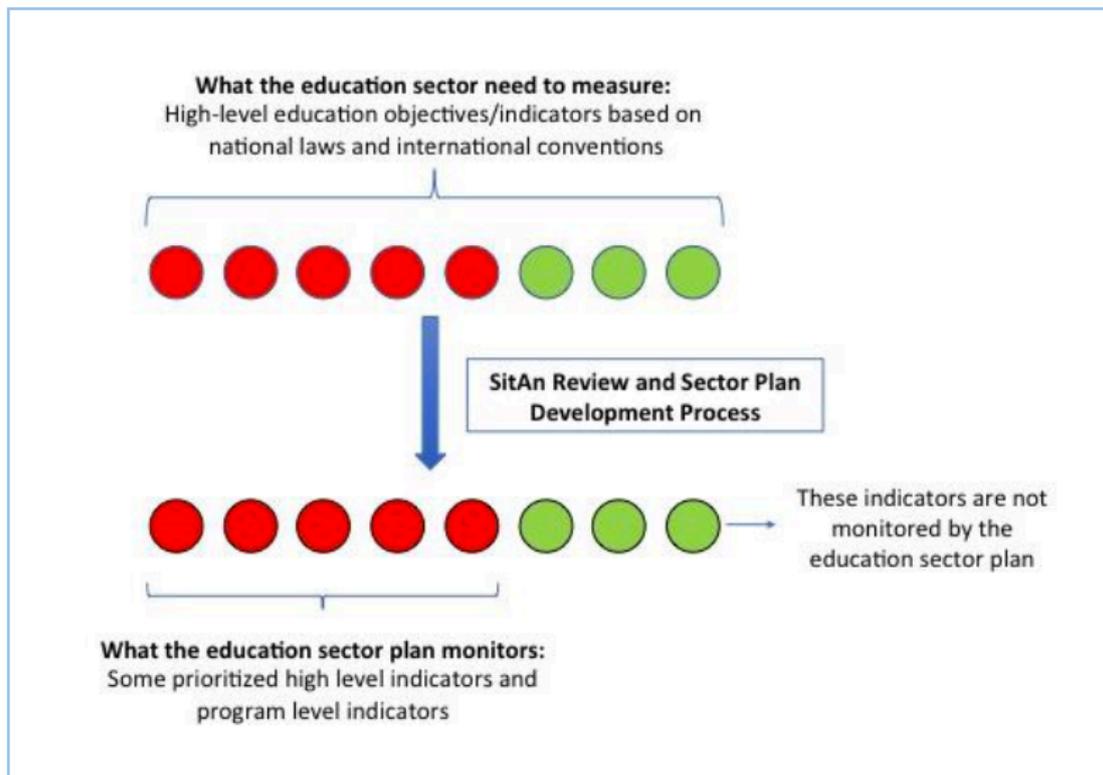
² Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. Source: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/tierIII-indicators/?selectGoal=Goal+4&selectTarget=Target+4.7>

³ Source: UIS database, a simple average of the education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure.

Situation and Sector Analysis: An Important Tool for Knowing What to Measure

Ideally, countries would have unlimited ability to monitor all the critical indicators in their education sector, and provide unlimited resources to address education issues. In the real world, resource constraints make this impossible. In order to identify education rights issues and allocate scarce resources appropriately, a situation analysis (SitAn) or education sector analysis can be conducted to evaluate the current status of children’s rights in the education sector, the efficiency and effectiveness of the country’s education systems, as well as capacity of the government to provide quality education.⁴ Through the use of statistics, case studies and qualitative research, SitAn and sector analysis can identify human rights issues related to education that need to be addressed, so the sector plan can be designed in a way that focuses on weak areas. Under this approach, the education sector plan indicator sets/framework include program level indicators and become a subset of what the education sector plan needs to continually monitor (Fig 1). However, a downside of this human-rights approach to education sector programming is that the full set of high-level education indicators is not monitored.

Figure 1: Use of Situation Analysis in Developing the Monitoring Framework for a Sector Plan



“Development Bias” Can Lead to Skewed Monitoring

The political and economic relationship between donor and recipient often mean that efforts to monitor the education sector overlook high-level sector objectives, and instead place a heavy emphasis on the education components of “traditional” development programs and activities. As a result, while recipient governments are encouraged by their donors and partners to provide accountability against sector plan targets, much less attention is paid to monitoring important high-level indicators related to the

⁴ Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines vol 1:
http://www.mma.gov.br/port/sdi/ea/deds/arqs/sitan_edasia.pdf

education sector. To the extent possible, monitoring frameworks should seek to guard against this bias by establishing a national mechanism to monitor high-level education sector indicators.

Accountability in the Education Sector: Making Measurement Matter

One thing the global education sector does not lack is an abundance of information. But does this information drive accountability and yield the desired results? And given the importance of local efforts in achieving the goals of national education sector plans, are monitoring frameworks designed to capture the appropriate information and hold local stakeholders accountable?

Does Reporting Influence Policy?

In addition to education sector plan monitoring frameworks, there are a number of mechanisms, reports and analyses that shed light on children's rights issues in education, and track progress against the key international conventions that involve the education sector, such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child⁵ (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The U.N. Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner's Committee on the Rights of the Child monitors implementation of CRC by its State parties. All States parties are obligated to submit regular reports to the Committee, i.e., an initial report two years after acceding to the Convention, and periodic reports every five years after that. However, it is debatable whether the periodicity of CRC monitoring is adequate in this fast-changing world, and to what extent the matters raised in CRC reports influence policy discussions in education and other sectors.

UNICEF publishes the annual State of the World's Children report, which includes a detailed statistical appendix covering various sectors indispensable to children's well-being and highlights critical issues that affect children, including education. While the database of statistics related to child well-being is comprehensive, here too, the extent to which published figures influence or affect national policies and stimulate policy discussion it is an open question.

Is SDG4 a Sufficiently Robust Framework for Education Sector Reporting?

The annual Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) also monitors achievement of SDG4 targets by analyzing the status of education development and providing colorful regional and country examples that use both qualitative and quantitative findings. GEMR reports are probably the best resource for understanding the status of SDG4 globally and comparing high-level indicators common across countries. However, the extent to which the GEMR reports can provide analysis and data on high-level indicators depends on the commitments made by governments and the international education community regarding the operationalization of data collection and monitoring.

SDG4.7 (Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development) is one of the SDG targets most closely associated with high-level education indicators. The U.N. Statistical Division classifies it as a Tier III indicator, which means that the data collection methodology has not yet been established, and data is

⁵ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

not periodically collected. This is problematic – SDG4.7 comprises various education outcomes such as human rights, global citizenship, sustainable development, gender equality, cultural diversity, and peace and non-violence. These values and concepts are intrinsic to the education sector, yet they are not being adequately monitored or measured. Some might argue that these high-level outcomes are simply aspirational targets that are complex and difficult to quantify, but they are of elemental importance to successful education outcomes, and monitoring them should be a top priority for the sector.

Monitoring Mechanisms Should Encourage Local Accountability

Most governments have legal responsibilities regarding education (82% of studied countries in GEMR 2017/18).⁶ The GEMR 2017/18 report identifies that citizens, media, and civil society groups need to engage in political processes, awareness raising, and social movements, activities that play a key role in holding their governments accountable for these legal responsibilities. As such, the importance of accountability at the local level is increasing as many countries devolve decision-making to regional and local municipal and school authorities.

Existing global mechanisms for monitoring critical children’s rights in education are typically designed for national-level analysis, and are seldom used for analyzing outcomes at the subnational level. If an education sector accountability framework relies solely on these national-level reporting mechanisms, it will miss opportunities to create and institutionalize a bottom-up approach to improving the education sector.

The lack of mechanisms that report on the achievement of international and national goals at the subnational level poses a limitation for various education stakeholders who could otherwise jointly support their governments in achieving the goals articulated in international commitments. If measurements are to matter, they must be taken and used in ways that maximize accountability.

Monitoring Frameworks: Not Just for Developing Countries

One of the fundamental differences between Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SDGs is that the former were developed for developing countries, whereas the latter are for both developing and developed countries. Under the SDG framework, both developing and developed countries submit SDG reports to the UNSD. This expansion of the concept of development – which had previously concentrated on poverty alleviation and economic development – to a wider landscape of social and economic development issues represents a historic shift in the U.N. community, and calls for a closer look at well-being of people in both developing and developed countries. Developed countries may enjoy higher living standards, but that does not necessarily mean that there is no room for improvement in systems for monitoring children’s rights in education and other areas.

Children at Risk in Post-Tsunami Fukushima

⁶ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002595/259593e.pdf>

SDG4 and Human Rights

Human rights may be categorized as both “negative” and “positive.” The former represents freedom from negative events caused by a third party, and are perhaps more universally understood across cultures. The latter can be more difficult to define, and it can be more challenging to achieve agreement as to what should be measured and monitored in education sectors across countries. The development of SDG4 involved both types of rights, and the global education community has worked to include both negative and positive human rights issues in developing SDG4 targets.

In March 2011, shortly after Japan was hit by the devastating Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, I joined the UNICEF emergency response team and worked in Fukushima Prefecture, home to the coastal city of Iwaki, which was severely impacted. Barely a month after the explosion of the Fukushima nuclear power plants, at a time when the gas and water pipes in Iwaki city were still damaged and public transportation was not yet restored, the Iwaki city government decided to reopen schools. The mayor and senior city officials also announced that the city government intended to support local agriculture and fisheries by promoting the consumption of local food by local people.

The immediate and inescapable result of these two decisions was that all school meals would be prepared using local foods. There was no system in place to monitor the amount of radioactivity in the food supply, and school meals were not subject to even a simple test to determine their level of radioactivity. At the time, it was not known how much radioactivity had been released from the nuclear power plants, and the risk of a complete meltdown had not yet passed. At the end of July 2011, the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan announced that the new acceptable radiation exposure levels would be 20 millisieverts (mSv)/year, 20 times higher than before the nuclear accident. This change allowed the government to avoid closing Fukushima's schools, exposing some 220,000 students to high levels of radiation.⁷

This experience made me wonder if the Iwaki city government had considered the implications for children when they made these decisions. It is understandable that the mayor wanted to protect local industries and calm worried fishermen and farmers, and that he would respond to the voices of these adults. But who was representing the children of Fukushima and giving voice to their concerns? Under the CRC framework, children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life.

The Fukushima disaster was a low-probability event in a highly developed country. At first it might not appear to have much in common with the issues facing the education sector in Myanmar or other developing countries. Yet we can see from what happened in Fukushima that even developed countries may lack monitoring frameworks and proper standards to ensure children's rights, and this can lead to poor decision-making. It should therefore not surprise us that the education sectors in both developing and developed countries stand to benefit from greater use of consistent monitoring frameworks to measure achievement of various national and international educational targets. Failure to establish and maintain monitoring systems will hinder the ability of stakeholders, including children, teachers, parents, civil society, and the media to participate in policy discussions.

Conclusion

If children are to survive and thrive in an uncertain world, they must have access to an education that provides not only solid academics, but also the opportunity to acquire social-emotional skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving. These learning outcomes will empower children to live the life they choose, and are essential to prepare them to weather uncertainty and achieve success in labour markets and their private lives after they enter adulthood. Education sector plans should be designed with the goal of positioning children to adapt and flourish in changing, uncertain environments.

What gets measured gets managed, and so global monitoring of high-level outcomes is essential to ensuring that critical rights in education and child well-being are monitored and the goals of education

⁷ At the time of writing, the official acceptable exposure level has not yet been revised to the pre-accident level.

sector plans are achieved. At a minimum, this monitoring should ensure that a country's education sector plan aligns with the education objectives stipulated in its national laws, and determine if the government is fulfilling its obligations.

Ideally, monitoring should also drive the development of a set of higher-level education indicators that include key components of SDG4 and international human rights conventions. That said, SDG4 may not place sufficient emphasis on high-level education indicators. Education sector monitoring frameworks in developing countries often track only a subset of the goals to which the sectors actually committed.

Monitoring is also important because existing national and international analyses of education sector monitoring do not adequately address local needs, and so it is critical to involve education stakeholders at the subnational and local level. These actors have an important role to play in actualizing bottom-up improvements to the education sector, but they cannot participate unless monitoring mechanisms give them the ability to monitor results, and provide a common platform that enables all education stakeholders to participate in policy discussions.

In summary, robust global monitoring frameworks with a feedback mechanism to local stakeholders are needed to effectively align policies, activities and evaluation in the education sector so that countries can fulfill their national and international commitments, and the children of the world can receive educations that prepare them for a future filled with uncertainties.

Education in a Time of War: School Communities during Gukurahundi (1981-7) in Southern Zimbabwe

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The twentieth century bore witness to the rise of violent conflict of an unprecedented scale, as well as an unprecedented rise in the reach of formal education. All across the globe, people's lives have been and are being profoundly shaped by the legacy of these two trends; however, the relationship between these two significant trends has only recently begun to be explored. Most academic studies of education and conflict have been focused on “best practices” in emergency situations, while works that examine the longer lasting, subtler, and structural relationships between formal education and violent conflict are few and far between.

My research attempts to address this lacuna by examining these more nuanced relationships between violence, politics and education through a case study from Zimbabwe's history. This paper presents the first study of its kind on the darkest chapters in Zimbabwe's short history as an independent nation—the 1983-1987 Gukurahundi conflict. Through interviews with 46 former students, teachers, community leaders and policy makers, this research highlights the tactical use of schools during the conflict, as well as the common experiences of students and teachers in order to unveil both the short and long-term effects of the conflict on student education. More broadly, this paper outlines the necessity of historical analysis and the use of oral histories for both understanding and positively shaping education systems and society as a whole. The research revealed the ways in which the conflict affected not only the learning processes in schools, but also the formation of national, ethnic, and political identities amongst school communities in southern region of Matabeleland—the resulting political tribalism and ethnic nepotism continue to shape the country's political and economic landscape.

To most policy makers, Zimbabwe's current educational crisis may seem uncomplicated.

Before the economic plight in the 2000s, the literacy rate was over 90% (the highest on the African continent), schools had been built across the country after the 1980 war of independence and Zimbabweans were considered among the most educated populations in the world. The collapse of the economy led to a mass exodus of teachers, inability of parents to pay for school fees, and the eventual demise of one of the most acclaimed education

systems in the world. This narrative, while true, is incomplete.

For the population in Matebeleland, in the southern part of the country, the educational crisis began three years after the war of independence. In late January 1983, Robert Mugabe deployed 5,000 troops of the 5th-Brigade to the predominantly Ndebele-speaking regions of Matabeleland and Midlands on the pretext of putting down a rebellion of “dissidents”, or members of the oppositional party, the Zimbabwe African Patriotic Union (ZAPU) which fought alongside Mugabe’s own Zimbabwe African National Union in the war for independence. Before 1965, ZANU and ZAPU operated as single party, however, political/ideological differences, along with the different areas of operation eventually led to a political split that occurred along ethnic lines, with ZANU primarily made up of and supported by Shona people from the north of the country, and ZAPU by Ndebele people concentrated in the south. The 5th Brigade, which was sent into the south to eliminate all remnants of ZAPU, which Mugabe saw as a threat to his own rule, massacred over 10,000 people, and raped and tortured thousands more. The government imposed marshal law and effectively hid these atrocities from the rest of the country. It is de facto still dangerous to discuss Gukurahundi publicly, though the new president Ernest Munangagwa’s role in overseeing the massacres has reenergized efforts to make the massacres more public. While the massacres ended in 1987, when Robert Mugabe signed a ‘unity accord’ agreement with the leader of the opposition party, the educational effects still linger.

The interviews I conducted serve two distinct purposes: first, they help reconstruct the history of formal education during the conflict, as interviewees were able to provide valuable historical information, including dates of particular events and names of schools in which major incidents occurred. In my analysis of the interviews, I was therefore able to identify places where the oral histories align with written records, where they fill in gaps in the written record, and where the oral and written histories diverge. This divergence is important because it led to misinformed educational policies on which I expand further in this paper. The interviews were also indispensable to meeting the second overarching aim of the study, which is to explore the individual educational experiences of students, teachers and community members during the period.

In addition to the loss of learning time, as well as physical and psychosocial effects of violent conflict on students, teachers, and communities, the case of Gukurahundi aligns with current literature which highlights that schools, as institutions of power, are increasingly targeted within conflicts. The O’Malley report on conflict and education (2007) provides numerous accounts of direct, targeted attacks on schools, pupils and teachers across the

world. Schools can be used for their infrastructure to house combatants, or as recruitment centers for child soldiers.

The most pronounced way in which the conflict disrupted education was in that the soldiers targeted males between the age of 16 and 60. Under the guise of looking for “dissident combatants”, the 5th brigade killed thousands of young men and many more fled to neighboring South Africa. School times were severely restricted by a dusk-to-dawn curfew, which shortened the school day for students who lived far from the school. The imposition of marshal law also decimated the economy of the region— store closures, food embargoes and travel bans meant that parents could not afford to pay school fees for their children. Teachers, who were considered community leaders and who often had military or political backgrounds in ZAPU were intimidated, brutalized and murdered throughout the region, which led to school closures. Many of the minority Ndebele teachers in the post-independence period had fought in the war for independence, and were actively teaching Marxist and socialist theories in the schools when they were targeted by the predominantly-Shona Mugabe regime. Since one of the presumed objectives of the 5th Brigade was to eliminate all non-ZANU sources of authority, they naturally targeted teachers. For the schools that did remain open, the presence of soldiers and the food embargo they imposed during the drought season created a difficult and hostile learning environment. The physical presence of the soldiers and the violent atrocities they carried out made it difficult for students and teachers to concentrate.

Moreover, many schools were used by the militias on both sides of the conflict as theatres to demonstrate and consolidate power over local communities, as they became the sites of political indoctrination, information gathering, as well as public beatings, torture, and executions. A number of mass graves have since been discovered within school grounds across the region.

Other schools served as safe havens and sites of community organizing and resistance, depending on the political influence of the head of the school. For example, foreign-run missionary boarding schools were often spared the violence and soldier visits and were able to smuggle food to villagers whom government-backed militia forces were attempting to starve through blockades.

In my analysis of the interviews, I focus on the significance and meaning of formal education to the individuals, and the ways in which the conflict altered their ideals, perceptions, and experiences of education both during and after the conflict. Oral narratives provide invaluable insights into the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings that

these individuals ascribe to past events. Because of the phenomenological nature of oral histories, that is, the fluid nature of the interpretations of events, they cannot be approached merely of as “facts” or standalone “accounts” of events; they are ways in which individuals “interpret their lives and re-design the conditions of possibility that account for what they once were, what they have since become and what they still hope to be” (Abrams, 2010: 81). In the case of education and conflict, understanding the individual and social meanings that are attached to attacks on schools is necessary to grasping both the conflict and its effects on educational communities. For example, in the case of Sri Lanka, villagers often destroyed their local schools, not out of solidarity with one side or the other, but rather to prevent their children from being forcibly recruited into the “Tamil Tigers” militia. If one were to simply look at the statistics of the conflict, one would see that schools were often destroyed in areas where the Tamil Tigers were most active, and erroneously conclude that, as in Nepal, the rebels were targeting schools as symbols of government authority. However, interviews with residents of these areas demonstrated that because of the militia’s practice of using schools as grounds to forcibly recruit students, parents no longer viewed the schools as safe places of learning, but rather as a danger to their children and community (Becker, 2004).

It was through these oral interviews that I discovered that one of the most lasting and influential effects of Gukurahundi has been the ethnic tensions it created between the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups in the region. In the areas most affected by Gukurahundi, this tension has manifested as the hostility towards Shona teachers and a deep mistrust of the education system as a whole. During the economic crisis of 2007, thousands of qualified teachers left the country to look for work in South Africa and in Bostwana. A disproportionate number of the teachers who left were from Matabeleland because Matabeleland borders South Africa and Bostwana. However, a Matabeleland government official, who declined to be named for fear that the government would sanction him, informed me that despite the severe shortage of qualified teachers in Matabeleland, few qualified Shona teachers, or teachers not of Ndebele origin were able to effectively teach in the rural areas. “Last time I got a call from the community in Lupane district who told me to ‘come and take your teachers, they are trying to ‘Shonasize’ our children” (Ministry Official, 2014). The education official also recounted how many qualified Shona- speaking teachers refused to go teach in Ndebele rural areas because of the hostility they face there. Moreover, the state official was not able to fully address the situation because she was unable to raise the issue. “As an official I can’t talk about these effects of these things... [Gukurahundi], all I can say is that in Matabeleland we have a problem of teacher mobility. That is all I can do”

(Ministry Official, 2014). The resulting loss of teachers has created cycle of low- quality education, as teachers from Mashonaland are not able to settle and invest in the communities within which they serve. High teacher attrition rates therefore affect student academic outcomes and limit the number of professionals from the region who can fill in the need for qualified teachers in these communities. Despite deeply valuing education for economic progress, Ndebele parents believe that the government is carrying out cultural genocide by sending Shona teachers to the region. The mistrust of the education system within the region, while subtle, has had a profound and lasting influence on the way its survivors think about and interact with government and educational institutions.

While the initial goal of this historical case study was not policy-oriented, present findings do suggest possible ways in which the government could ameliorate the lasting effects of Gukurahundi within the educational sphere. Through directly addressing the conflict, recruiting more teachers from the Matabeleland region, and allocating more resources to the region, the government might ameliorate some of the negative effects of the conflict. However, policy-oriented approaches often fail to capture the meanings ascribed to events by those who experienced them. Owing to this fact, and perhaps even more to the the government's reluctance to admit the the atrocities, little reconciliation has been carried out with families affected by Gukurahundi. Many families have no way of locating the graves of the thousands of community members killed, and the government has banned any unearthing or marking of mass graves found within school yards.

By acknowledging the atrocities committed by its forces and allowing the voices of victims to be heard, the government could open up a dialogue about ethnicity and politics that could begin to untangle the ethnic divisions in classrooms, communities, and in the country at large. This is particularly important because without being historicized, ethnic divisions can be transferred generationally even when the events that caused the rifts are long forgotten.

This point raises broader questions for educators and policy makers about including histories of conflict, particularly the disenfranchisement of minority groups within current curricula. Incomplete conflict narratives which uphold the status quo of the ruling elite, or the “victors” are common within the curricula of many countries. In the US, a major textbook referred to slaves as “migratory agricultural workers” and Shear et. al. conducted a study of K-12 curricula and found that close to 90% of all references to Native Americans was from the pre- 1900 context (Shear et. al., 2017). That means that the majority of American school children will grow up not questioning the current economic, social and cultural challenges that Native Americans still face today. Addressing these historical representations is more

important than ever given the rising number of white supremacist groups in the US,¹ the fact that black men are three times more likely to victims of police shootings (Buehler, 2017), or that black women are two to six times more likely to die in child birth complications owing to negligence and racial bias (Flanders-Stepans, 2000). It is no surprise that there is an increasing anti-immigrant lobby in most Western nations given that few, the UK included, admit and teach the atrocities that their governments carried out in the name of democracy or nation-building.

Particularly in the Global South, I believe this study underscores how the project of nation-building often involves epistemic violence within schools. The post-colonial state's inability to tolerate or cope with ideological, ethnic, religious or cultural diversity has plunged many new African nations such as (Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the DRC, Angola, Mozambique, The Central African Republic, etc.) into cycles of violence. Much research remains to be done on the effect of these periods of trauma has on systems of education. The example of Gukurahundi, discussed above, sheds light on some features that we could expect to be common throughout these different situations. The data suggest that during times of conflict, schools tend to become sites of contested authority, indoctrination, recruitment, dissemination of information, stages of performances of violence and power—inversions or distortions of their normal functions and activities during peacetime.

Moreover, as this research demonstrates, the proclivity of governments to deal with trauma through an institutionalized process of forgetting or burying evidence, underscores the importance of oral histories as a means of understanding the contemporary situation of the nation or local community, let alone, any sort of attempt at reconciliation. In Zimbabwe, despite the government's best efforts to erase the consequences of traumatic events, as the example of Gukurahundi demonstrates, periods of conflict have lasting legacies and consequences that cannot be addressed by mere silence.

Addressing these legacies globally is the first step to understanding the long-term impacts of disenfranchisement and conflict on education. As is the case in Zimbabwe, history, the taught subject as well as historical analysis within policy making, presents a possibility of ameliorating some the world's most daunting social and economic uncertainties; it can address bigotry, bring to light the plight of disenfranchised populations, as well as trace the economic, social and political advantages of the privileged elite.

¹ See the Southern Poverty Law Center <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map> for a map and listings of the 954 hate groups operating currently operating in the US.

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The implications of global uncertainty and social change on Community Health Worker training in low- or middle-income countries.

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Essay theme: The implications for education as ever changing influences and uncertainties threaten the nature of society and the shared future of its citizens.

Introduction and background

It is estimated that by 2030 there will be a global shortage of over 30 million health workers, which is two times more than the 7 million shortfall estimated in 2013.¹ This vast scarcity of health workers will disproportionately affect countries classed as low- or middle-income (LMIC) and is likely to have a major impact in achieving The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 – ‘Good Health and Wellbeing for All’.²

To address this gap in human resources, the World Health Organization has called for increased investment into the education, training and deployment of all levels of health worker.³ In particular, much attention has been given to improving community-based healthcare, facilitated by a cadre known as Community Health Workers (CHWs).^{4,5} Although the nomenclature used to describe CHWs varies depending on context,⁶ they are broadly defined as lay people who serve within the formal health system, work in their communities in a health provider capacity and who have received some basic training.⁷



Figure One. A group of female CHWs gather in Mukono, Uganda, to receive training on the recognition, treatment and prevention of pneumonia. Pneumonia is one of the leading killers of children under the age of five in LMICs. Photographer: Dr. James O'Donovan.

In 2018, a comprehensive report was published by six leading non-governmental organisations (NGOs) responsible for developing high-impact CHW programmes with governments and communities across the globe.⁸ In the report eight key features were outlined describing the “minimum viable elements needed for CHWs to succeed”.⁹ These included the need for CHWs to be accredited, accessible, proactive, continuously trained, supported by a dedicated supervisor, financially remunerated, a member of the formal health system and part of continuous data feedback loops.⁹

Despite the importance placed by this landmark report on continued training and supervision, these areas have been described as some “of the most neglected phases” of CHW programmes to date.^{10,11} The reasons for this are multifactorial, but include a lack of trained supervisors and educators, poor and disjointed training strategies between NGOs and governments, and a lack of financial resources.

Aim

For the purpose of this essay I will outline the potential challenges that the current international political environment poses for CHW training in LMICs, and how these threats might shape its delivery and structure as we approach the deadline to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Current threats and uncertainty

The threats and changes to CHW training are complex, and are balanced delicately at the interface of international politics, shifting disease burdens, and changing population structures. Although shifting demographics can be modelled with some degree of certainty, the world's

political superpowers are far less predictable, and seemingly more volatile. Indeed perhaps the biggest current threat to CHW training comes in the shape of the 45th President of the United States of America (US); Donald J. Trump.

Although Trump's dangerous and misinformed policy decisions on the Iran nuclear deal and immigration have received significant media attention,^{12,13} his plans to slash foreign aid spending by up to 33% have gone relatively unnoticed.¹⁴ If these proposals are enacted, they would represent a major blow to how CHW training and education is funded in LMICs because the US is the single largest donor of international foreign aid, which is how a significant number of CHW programmes are financed.¹⁵

In 2016 the US spent approximately \$25.6 billion on economic and development programmes, of which \$8.6 billion went towards 'Global Health Programmes'.¹⁶ US development organisations such as USAID spent a significant proportion of this budget on establishing and maintaining CHW programmes across some of the world's poorest countries. If this aid were to be reduced, there is a real danger that training programmes for CHWs could be one of the first areas to suffer, since their effects are not immediately recognised.¹⁷

Although the US is the largest international donor of foreign aid, the total amount it gives as proportion of its Gross National Income (0.17%) is less than 25% of what the UN recommends for international aid, which currently stands at 0.7%; a figure that has not been revised since 1970, and one which renowned development economist Jeffrey Sachs describes as "the lowest possible amount that should be considered viable".¹⁸ With proposed cuts in international aid by one of the world's biggest donors, there are concerns that others nations may follow suit. This would not be entirely surprising given the creep of nationalism and isolationist sentiments in international politics over the past decade.¹⁹



Figure Two. The global rise of isolationism. Credit: Cagle.com

Cuts in foreign aid would lead to the unnecessary suffering and untimely deaths for some of the world's poorest people, and could also represent a major threat to health on a global scale. It is naïve and foolish to believe diseases respect international boundaries. They do not. The 2014 Ebola epidemic is a case in point.

The Ebola virus was thought to originate in Guinea, but soon spread to neighbouring countries, including Sierra Leone and Liberia. At the end of the epidemic, it claimed the lives of 11,310 people.²⁰ Yet, despite the high numbers of lives lost, many credit the tens of thousands of CHWs, as the “unsung heroes of the Ebola crisis” for helping to contain the virus and preventing further loss of life.²¹ It was these CHWs who were on the front line delivering key disease prevention messages in some of most remote villages in the worst affected areas.²² The very same CHWs remain, long after the last international aid workers have left, trying to rebuild the health systems which had already been crippled by decades of civil war and chronic underfunding.²¹



Figure Three. A health worker explains Ebola to residents of Freetown, Sierra Leone. Credit: AP Images (<https://share.america.gov/ebola-health-workers-face-psychological-effects/>)

As this one example demonstrates, a well trained, educated cadre of health workers is vital both for strengthening health systems and also for global security. Yet with potential cuts in international budgets for CHW training, epidemics such as Ebola are likely to be recognised less quickly and thus have the potential to escalate in a more deadly fashion. It is therefore imperative in these uncertain and volatile times that alternative strategies to fund CHW training are considered.

Potential solutions to address the funding gap

1. Increased government spending in LMICs

One proposed strategy to address the financial shortfall brought about by cuts in international aid could be for LMIC governments to increase their budget allocation for CHW training.

A 2017 study published by Taylor et al. estimated the costs and potential affordability of a comprehensive CHW program across 37 LMICs based on government funding alone. Using existing programme costs and World Bank data, they found that several countries in sub-Saharan African, including South Africa and Botswana, might be able to afford such an approach. However, this strategy would not offer a realistic solution for countries with a lower level of economic development (GDP per capita below US\$1200). For example, in Chad, Eritrea and Niger, a fully comprehensive CHW programme would exceed the current healthcare budget by 100%. The cuts in the aid budget are therefore likely to be felt hardest by the poorest

countries, meaning these proposed cuts are particularly cruel and unjust.

2. A greater role for philanthropy

The second alternative to international aid is philanthropic grant funding, such as ‘Grand Challenges’ awards run by The Gates Foundation, however it is important to note that this potential solution is not without its challenges.

First, the gap in funding produced by international aid reduction is unlikely to be covered by philanthropic donations alone. The second issue with this approach is that although grantees are often encouraged to form partnerships with in-country policy makers and governments, they are under no compulsory obligation to do so. Finally, many of the grants awarded are often led by teams in the Global North. This means that capacity building in the Global South does not take place and such awards are often used as platforms for career advancement, rather than a genuine committed effort to social change. The harshest critics of this approach accuse such funders of advancing what they term ‘global health imperialism’.²³

It is therefore important that if philanthropic funding is to play a greater roll in filling the potential void left by a reduction in international aid, the above issues must be considered and addressed. This might mean introducing compulsory requirements for CHW training projects to be run in partnership with Ministries of Health in order to avoid a piecemeal approach and to help ensure any such initiatives contribute to overall strengthening of health systems.

3. Private-Philanthropic partnerships

The final proposed solution are hybrid private-philanthropic partnerships. In 2018, the TED Audacious Prize for \$100 million USD was awarded to Last Mile Health and Living Goods to train 50,000 CHWs in LMICs. Although this initiative brings welcome attention to the plight of CHW training in LMICs, it still raises a number of key issues.²⁴

First it is important that genuine education occurs. Often such large initiatives are keen to show their ‘impact’ to investors, which often means demonstrating effectiveness through metrics reflecting growth and scale. Yet, genuine education that encourages critical thought takes time and is not always best represented by ‘hard metrics’. Although it may be tempting to ‘plug the gap’ in health services by rapidly training health workers to collect data and follow computer generated algorithms loaded onto low cost mobile devices, this is both short-sighted and irresponsible. It fails to plan for the future and maximise the capabilities of individual health workers who will form the bedrock of future health systems in LMICs. It is therefore imperative that simplistic approaches that rely on exposure to information as a proxy for education should be avoided, particularly for CHWs dealing with the complex realities of caring for the most

marginalised groups.

Finally, it is important to note that none of these solutions have to work in isolation. The challenges highlighted for each approach are simply aimed at encouraging policy makers and program managers to think critically about alternative approaches to financing. With coordination and collaboration between private, philanthropic and government sectors, all three solutions could work in parallel and have a major role in helping to address the potential shortfall in international aid in these times of uncertainty.

Conclusion

The current volatility of global politics represents a significant threat for CHW education in LMICs. This is particularly concerning since CHWs represent the bedrock of a well---functioning community health system. The proposed cuts to international aid are particularly unjust, since as with all major societal concerns, including climate change, war and pandemics, the world's poorest will be affected first and most. It is therefore vital that while other alternative methods to fund CHW training programmes are explored, pressure is applied to governments to continue their commitment towards international aid. This is not only a sensible financial and political decision, but also a moral imperative.

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Of Cannons and Canons: The Promise and Perils of Post-Colonial Education

Oludamini Ogunnaike

Cheikh Hamidou Kane's celebrated novel, *Ambiguous Adventure*, is perhaps best known for its description of colonial education as the ultimate instrument of conquest:

On the black continent it began to be understood that their true power lay not in the cannons of the first morning, but rather in what followed the cannons. . . . The new school shares at the same time the characteristics of the cannon and the magnet. From the cannon it draws its efficacy as an arm of combat. Better than the cannon, it makes conquest permanent. The cannon compels the body, the school bewitches the soul. Where the cannon has made a pit of ashes and of death, in the sticky mold of which men would not have rebounded from the ruins, the new school establishes. The morning of rebirth will be a morning of benediction through the appeasing virtue of the new school.¹

Just as it was during the colonial period, the school remains a contested site of power in the post-colonial period around the world. The unique conditions of this post-colonial era have challenged students, educators and policy-makers alike to re-form educational institutions, practices, and paradigms in order to address the colonial legacy, respond to the demands of the rapidly-shifting present, and shape the future of our societies.

Drawing an analogy from work in African Linguistics, this paper will argue that that promise of this post-colonial moment is that we could create institutions that train students to be intellectually “multi-lingual,” i.e. fluent in several different intellectual traditions and disciplines from around the world. However, I will argue that the present reality is much more perilous: most institutions are producing students that are, at best, intellectually “mono-lingual” (fluent in one intellectual tradition, and typically unaware of the existence, or hostile to the validity, of other intellectual traditions), and at worst, are “linguistically stranded”—not functionally fluent in any particular intellectual tradition. John Mugane describes this linguistic phenomenon as “necrolinguistics,” citing examples from Kenya, Nigeria, and other African countries where many students lack fluency and even proficiency in *any language*, whether European or African. I argue that this is true not only of languages, but of the intellectual traditions (European, Islamic, indigenous African) that have established themselves on the continent, and that this is not only true of African students, but contemporary students throughout the world.²

¹ Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, trans. Katherine Woods (New York: Heinemann, 1972), 49.

² For these students, the hegemony of STEM has severely marginalized their qualitative, literary and philosophical education, which, nevertheless, remain foundational to their more quantitative and technical pursuits (e.g. the usefulness of a new app or technology implicitly relies on particular conceptions of the “good life” and “usefulness” itself).

Focusing on the humanities, and drawing examples from higher education in the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, and Nigeria, I will highlight this dynamic and seek to demonstrate how both calls for “decolonization” of education and the defenses of it tend to exacerbate this trend before offering a few tentative suggestions on how to construct post-colonial canons (in terms of both curricula and pedagogy) that do not replicate the violence, epistemic and otherwise, of the colonial canons and canons.

Canons (or their equivalents) are a necessity of virtually every educational system because as Harold Bloom writes in his *Western Canon*, “who reads must choose, since there is literally not enough time to read everything, even if one does nothing but read.”³ Thanks to social media, current estimates indicate that 90% of all data has been produced in the past 2 years⁴, so the question of choice has become even more urgent. How and what do we choose to read and attend to in the course of our and our students’ education? And to what end? The different intellectual traditions and civilizations of the world have answered these questions in different ways: the Qing dynasty taught a study of Confucian classics and ritual, making government placements on the basis of a standardized civil service exam; the Islamic world had a relatively standardized curricula with significant regional variations with students memorizing the Qur’an and moving on to study Arabic language, logic, mathematics, law, natural and social sciences, literature, theology, philosophy, and mysticism; the students at Plato’s Academy studied mathematics, geometry, philosophy, and some natural sciences. The goal of these traditions, like those of the early humanist project of the European Renaissance, was to form a “complete human being,” to actualize the human potential through moral and intellectual training—which were not viewed as separate. Many of the most important forms of knowledge in these traditions were considered existential, and as such, were incompatible with certain (unethical) modes of being.

Following the split that created both the “secular” and the “religious” in Western Europe, modern education in the West has gone a different route in which the aesthetic and intellectual are separate from the ethical. Bloom writes, “whatever the Western Canon is, it is not a program for social salvation.... If we read the Western Canon in order to form our social, political, or personal moral values, I firmly believe we will become monsters of selfishness and exploitation.”⁵ While I find this quote very telling (it may be a kind of “origin story” for many of our politicians), it reflects a much later understanding of the

³ Bloom, H. *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages*. (New York: Harcourt, 1994), 15.

⁴ Moreover, this has been true for the past several years: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/05/130522085217.htm>

⁵ *The Western Canon*, 29.

“Western Canon,” which, along with the idea of “western civilization” itself (from Plato to NATO), as Anthony Appiah demonstrated in his Reith lectures⁶, is a relatively late 18th -20th century construction of imperial European powers to replace another reactionary, negative self-definition: Christendom as defined against Islamic civilization. Why do the Ancient Greeks belong to the West and not also the Byzantine or Islamic Worlds? After all, Greece itself spent a millenium under Byzantine rule and half that under Ottoman rule, and the scholars in 10th century Baghdad had translated into Arabic virtually all of the Aristotle we have today in English.⁷ And why don’t the great and greatly influential Muslim thinkers of Andalusia (Ibn Rushd, Ibn ‘Arabi, etc.) belong to the Western tradition? We’ve drawn some strange constellations in the night sky filled with brilliant works of literature, philosophy, and science.

And these lines have been drawn and myths created on the peculiar basis of the elevation of a particular to a universal: “Western civilization” was conceived of as *the* civilization against which all others appeared as failed attempts and therefore must fall under its rule. “Western culture” was simply culture, and those who had other cultures became “uncultured barbarians,” and the Western Academy and educational systems were and still are simply “the academy” and “education,” and all of the world’s other intellectual traditions are mere “religious training” or “informal education.” In short, difference was and is perceived as lack, privation. It is not coincidental that this view of “western civilization” coincided with the imperial project in which thousands of young schoolboys and a few schoolgirls were trained to believe in the civilizing mission of the recently-constituted “West” and their duty to liberate the darker people of the world from their barbarism and ignorance, bringing them into the light of Western civilization, whether they wanted it or not, justifying the most forceful and distasteful of means through this glorious end result. This brutal imperialism is but the other side of the coin of the modern West’s liberalism: if you and your societies are not rational, liberal, and free in the same way that ours are—so the logic goes—then you are backwards and we will take away your freedom through illiberal means in order to “develop” you and make you in our own liberal image. As Lord Lugard, the founder of the colony of Nigeria, put it: As Roman imperialism laid the foundation of modern civilization, and led the wild barbarians of these islands (Britain) along the path of progress, so in Africa today we are repaying the debt, and bringing to the dark places of the earth—the abode of barbarism and cruelty—the torch of culture and progress, while

⁶ Appiah, K. “There is no such thing as Western Civilization.” *The Guardian*. Nov. 9, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/09/western-civilisation-appiah-reith-lecture>. Relatedly, the “despotic East” conjured by the likes of Huntington, Fukuyama, and Bernard Lewis is rarely rooted in historical reality but rather set up as an imaginary foil to illustrate everything that the myth of the West is not. The few true historical examples these authors actually cite virtually all come from 19th and 20th-century adoptions of European ideologies (Marxism, nationalism, etc.).

⁷ Moreover, the Islamic philosophers seem to have been more faithful to the Ancient Greco-Roman understanding of philosophy than the post-Enlightenment and even Renaissance European thinkers. See Hadot, P. and Michael Chase. *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

ministering to the material needs of our own civilization... we hold these countries because it is the genius of our race to colonise, to trade, and to govern.⁸

Now this may sound offensive to modern sensibilities, but change “race” to “civilization,” “liberal democracy,” or “rational, scientific society,” and it could come straight from the mouth of a Niall Ferguson or Steven Pinker.⁹ As one author wrote critiquing this all-too-common perspective, “there are some things in the human soul which cannot be replaced by means of roads and hospitals...If Europeans believe that they offer those they ‘protect’ liberties they never knew, they do not take into account that these liberties exclude other modes of liberty of which they themselves hardly conceive any longer; they give good things, but at the same time, *they impose their own conception of what is good*, and this comes back to the ancient saying that might is always right.”¹⁰

Now the debt has been repaid and the task has been completed: everyone now lives in a nation-state and virtually everyone goes through some form of Western education (and the development agencies are working hard to include the few hold-outs), but we former colonial subjects and children of colonial subjects have begun to speak out in favor of reforming the educational systems that disciplined and trained us. These conversations are usually cast as a part of the “culture wars” or as “multicultural vs. traditional” values, but it is worth noting that these debates have a deeper history, going back to the colonial period itself. In his (in)famous “Minute on Indian Education,” T.B. Macaulay rose to support shutting down the Arabic and Sanskrit colleges that Britain had been running in colonial India for two reasons: a) the literature and intellectual traditions (Islamic and Hindu) being taught therein were virtually worthless, absurd, outdated superstitions that delayed the progress of truth, and 2) their graduates were unemployable in the colonial economy. He said,

I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern

⁸ Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1965), 618.

⁹ For example, a 2016 article about the debates over Stanford’s Western Civilization requirements discussed below, begins, “a grassroots movement at Stanford University is forcing the public to ask, ‘Besides democracy, education, philosophy, logic, mathematics, engineering, literature, and theater, what has Western civilization ever done for us?’” Bledsoe, E. “Restore Western Civilization at Stanford.” *The National Review*. April 8, 2016. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/04/stanford-universitys-western-civilization-curriculum-restore-it/>

¹⁰ For example, analytic philosopher Jay Garfield records that during a cross-cultural philosophical exchange in Tibet, the response to his offer to teach classes in Western philosophy was, “I can understand why you have come to India to study Buddhist philosophy. For our tradition is indeed deep and vast. But I frankly don't see what we have to learn from you. For Western philosophy is very superficial and addresses no important questions.” (Jay L Garfield, *Empty Words Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-cultural Interpretation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 229). Similarly, in my own research among Senegalese Sufis, I found that many of them had studied Western philosophy extensively in France or in French-language schools and characterized it as “just talking and arguing around and around without getting anywhere, but Sufism makes you see the truth, realize the truth, be the Truth.” If the militaries of Tibet or West Africa had happened to be stronger than those of Europe, then these opinions would be mainstream, and Hegel and Kant would only be studied by the odd specialist of exotic German literature.

tongues...I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education....

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern,—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.¹¹

Similarly, the French colonial education in Africa, in accordance with the *mission civilatrice*, stated their goal of creating “little dark Frenchmen.” While this may sound ugly today, if you were to examine the curricula and teaching methods employed virtually everywhere from Lucknow to Lagos to London to Los Angeles, you will see that they implicitly support and reinforce Macaulay’s assertion of “the intrinsic superiority of Western literature” and its usefulness in creating “English” or “Western” people of every hue.

Sensitive students and teachers here at Oxford and Cambridge, in the United States, South Africa, and around the world, alarmed by this discrepancy between supposedly plural, multicultural, liberal societies and seemingly Eurocentric and Western-supremacist curricula have called for the “decolonization” of curricula, departments, and even entire universities. This post-colonial challenge has the very promising potential of sweeping aside old ignorances and prejudices and ushering in a new cosmopolitan Renaissance¹² where Rumi is read and appreciated alongside Dante, Dogen and DuBois, Mirabai and Maya Angelou, Shakespeare and Chuang Tzu and Shankara, the Bible and the Bhagavad Gita, the Ambedkar-Gandhi debates on caste alongside Marx and Dickens on class and the Locke-Hobbes debates, and the remarkable orature and mythology of the Yoruba Ifa and the Mahabharata being taught alongside Norse mythology and Homer. The principles of selection of the physical embodiment of the Western canon, *Encyclopedia Britannica’s Great Books of the Western World*—that “the book must be relevant to contemporary matters, and not only important in its historical context; it must be rewarding to re-read; and it must be a part of ‘the great conversation about the great ideas’,”—certainly applies to vast swathes of the literature and orature produced outside of what we have come to call “the West.”

¹¹ “Minute by the Hon'ble T. B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835.”
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html

¹² Indeed, the recent cornucopia of translated texts and orature from around the world bears striking resemblance to the widespread dissemination and translation of ancient texts that fueled the European Renaissance.

Unfortunately, this promise of a new, plural Academy that trains students in the many different ideals of humanity has yet to be realized. Instead, thanks to a number of different factors, what we generally have are educational systems that neither teach students the “Western tradition” nor any other tradition, nor even critical thinking. Our schools have become very good at training students in particular practical and technical skills and techniques, producing a bumper crop of “wizards without wisdom”—men and women with remarkable technical skills populating places like Silicon Valley and Wall Street, whose abilities to critically evaluate, understand, or even question why they do the things they do and to understand other perspectives is far more narrow and less-developed.

For example, I remember the first time I read Aristotle in a class, I didn’t understand nor was I made to understand why I was studying this “outdated nonsense”—I read and was taught to read Aristotle as a sad pre-modern attempt at modern science, impressive for its time, historically important maybe, but ultimately useless like those old-timey flying machines. When I read Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* in high school, my classmates complained that they found the book “whiny,” “anti-white,” and that the author (and presumably all colonized peoples) should just “get over it”—it being the conquest and destruction of their civilization—because they “lost” and the West “won” because it is “better.”¹³

And how could my classmates think otherwise? Our education had trained them to see things in this way. We were taught various Native American myths as a series of silly, “primitive,” but charming just-so stories at which we shouldn’t laugh because of the horrible things the people after whom our schools are named did to the people from which these stories came—but we were never taught how to engage with this mythology on its own terms, to understand why these stories are so powerful for those to whom they belong, we were never taught to understand them as something other than failed attempts to be contemporary Western philosophy, biology, physics, or literature. We were not taught to see our literary and educational traditions as but one of many, with its own flaws and weaknesses, and we were not taught how to step outside of our own tradition to understand and inhabit others.

Part of this is because most students are not even taught the so-called “Western tradition” itself—most of my students are no longer familiar with the Bible, with Shakespeare, with Plato, with Descartes, Kant, with Mill—in short, they are not familiar with the ideas and idioms that have shaped and continue to profoundly, if subtly, shape their post-colonial realities. As a result of the arrogant and racist defenses of

¹³ It is one of the greatest ironies of our current age that many those who claim that their “way of life” and civilization are being threatened and overrun by foreigners and foreign ideas are those who have the least empathy for those people whose ways of life and civilizations have actually been overrun by foreigners (usually the former group of people or their ancestors). The perpetrators identify themselves with the victimhood of their own victims without identifying with, and actually strongly disassociating themselves, humanity, and victimhood from, these victims.

the Western canon¹⁴, and “decolonizing” reactions to this arrogance, I have even had students turn their noses up at Shakespeare as yet another “dead white male” without ever having read the bard—replicating the same kind of “don’t confuse me with the facts” narrow ignorance of the defenders of the Western canon, albeit in a very different landscape of power. These dynamics are perhaps most clearly seen in the debates to remove and then restore the “Western Culture/Civilization” requirements at Stanford University that took place in the 1980’s and re-emerged in the past few years.¹⁵

Moreover, in former colonies on the African continent and elsewhere, the situation is even worse; not only do these students have even less mastery of the Western tradition, but they also do not know those intellectual traditions that colonial education replaced or nearly eradicated. The study of the humanities and even the “softer” social sciences in the post-colonial period has become so fragmented that I believe it deserves comparison with the phenomenon of “necrolinguistics.” Harvard linguist John Mugane coined the term to describe the disturbing prevalence of Sub-Saharan Africans who, due to the demonization and lack of formal education in their mother tongues, and deficiencies in European-language instruction, are not fluent any language, whether African or European. He writes, To make language matters worse, Africans would have a virtually intractable problem of trying to learn English as adults in the absence of native speakers of English. This strandedness led to inferiority in perpetuity where one strove to reach the unreachable. While working so hard to learn Portuguese, French, and English, sub-Saharan Africans abandoned their own languages and ways of thinking. Without much practice in indigenous languages, many of the educated occupy a linguistic no-man’s-land...¹⁶

Mugane also cites a precedent in the case of some Native Americans of the past century: White Thunder, a man around forty, speaks less English than Menomini, and that is a strong indictment, for his Menomini is atrocious. His vocabulary is small; his inflections are often barbarous; he constructs sentences of a few threadbare models. He may be said to speak no language tolerably. His case is not uncommon among younger men, even when they speak but little English.

Clearly, White Thunder was living in a time of a language shift and happened to have hit linguistic cul-de-sacs wherever he turned. He did not learn his own people’s language or the dominant language of

¹⁴ For example, Levinas’ declaration that “I always say—but under my breath—that the Bible and the Greeks present the only serious issues in human life; everything else is just dancing. There is no racism intended.” Or Saul Bellow’s query, “Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus? The Proust of the Papuans? I’d be glad to read him.”

¹⁵ “The Case for a Western Civilization Requirement at Stanford.” *The Stanford Review*. <https://stanfordreview.org/the-case-for-a-western-civilization-requirement-at-stanford/>; Bledsoe, E. “Restore Western Civilization at Stanford.” *The National Review*. April 8, 2016. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/04/stanford-universitys-western-civilization-curriculum-restore-it/>; Bernstein, R. “In Dispute on Bias, Stanford is Likely to Alter Western Culture Program” *The New York Times*. Jan. 18, 1989. <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/19/us/in-dispute-on-bias-stanford-is-likely-to-alter-western-culture-program.html?pagewanted=all>

¹⁶ Mugane, J. “Necrolinguistics: Linguistic-Death-In-Life” *DuBois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 2(2), 159-186.

his day. White Thunder's case is descriptive of a growing population of children and young adults in many sub-Saharan African countries with restricted vocabularies and highly limited grammar abilities.¹⁷

I would argue that this is true intellectually, not just linguistically, of a growing number of students in post-colonial institutions, not just in former colonies like Nigeria, but also in countries such as the UK and the US as well. Not only has the colonial experience marginalized and destroyed non-Western intellectual traditions, but it hasn't even succeeded at replacing them with a Western tradition. And even where it has succeeded, we darker sons and daughters have found ourselves integrated into a tradition that seems to be falling apart. Martin Luther King Jr.'s late lament seems applicable here as well, "I've come to believe we're integrating into a burning house."¹⁸

Most students today are barely intellectually literate in the Western tradition, let alone the Islamic, Dharmic, Chinese, etc., and the Western tradition itself seems to be collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions and its concomitant worship of STEM. Like White Thunder, we are living in a time of a great intellectual shift, and this shift could go the way it did for White Thunder and his people, increasing the marginalization of their languages, ways of life, and ways of thinking, or perhaps it could go a different way.

The vast majority of calls for "decolonization," such as at Cambridge or the University of Cape Town¹⁹, have come in the form of calls to "diversify" the curricula with more authors of Black, Asian, and Middle-Eastern descent, and/or female authors. Some have gone further and demanded better representation of women and so-called "minorities" amongst the faculty and student body. And while these are all very important, I argue that they miss the larger point and run the risk, in the words of a character from the great Sicilian novel, *The Leopard*, "of changing everything a little so as to keep everything exactly the same."

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Belafonte, H. *My Song: A Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 329.

¹⁹ Kennedy, M. "Cambridge Academics Seek to Decolonise English Syllabus" *The Guardian* October 25, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/25/cambridge-academics-seek-to-decolonise-english-syllabus>
—. "Welcome and Important: academics on decolonizing education." *The Guardian* October 26, 2017. <
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/26/grand-acts-of-national-self-harm-academics-on-decolonising-education>>; Gopal, P. "Yes, we must decolonize: our teaching has to go beyond elite white men" October 27th, 2017. *The Guardian*. <
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/27/decolonise-elite-white-men-decolonising-cambridge-university-english-curriculum-literature>>. The students' open letter calling to decolonize the English syllabus can be read here: <https://flygirlsofcambridge.com/2017/06/14/decolonising-the-english-faculty-an-open-letter/>; Pillay, S. "Decolonizing the University" <
<https://africasacountry.com/2015/06/decolonizing-the-university>>. For a notable exception to this trend see Mahmood Mamdani's 2017 T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture at the University of Cape Town: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKFAYXf05N0> and Davis, R. "Mahmood Mamdani: Sixteen years on, UCT's old nemesis returns to talk decolonization" *The Daily Maverick*, August, 23, 2017 <
<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-08-23-mahmood-mamdani-sixteen-years-on-ucts-old-nemesis-returns-to-talk-decolonisation/#.WwDyVtNAmDU>>

A few examples should help highlight my concern: it is as if you take a world music class but instead of learning about traditional Yoruba bata drumming, traditional Chinese music, Hindustani or Carnatic classical music, or classical Arab and Persian music, all you study is Western classical music, and for the sake of “diversity,” they throw in a few contemporary Black and Hispanic composers of Western classical music. Or imagine that in response to students’ complaints about the homogeneity of the food in the cafeteria, the manager has a few cooks of Jamaican and Pakistani background make the fish and chips—they may be able to sneak some more spice in there, but jerk chicken and biryani it is not. There’s a big difference between a traditional West African dance class and a ballroom dance class taught by a Nigerian.

It is even more serious in the case of intellectual traditions. It is one thing to read novels by Chimamanda Adichie, Chinua Achebe, or Wole Soyinka, it is quite another thing to study the orature of Ifa; you also can’t fully understand Soyinka without knowing a bit of Ifa and Yoruba mythology. It is one thing to read Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, or Orhan Pamuk, it is quite another thing to study the Bhagavad Gita, Nagarjuna, Amir Khusro, Hafez, or Rumi. It is important to read Edward Saïd’s *Orientalism*, but his oeuvre pales in comparison to the profundity of Ibn ‘Arabi’s work and influence. We should teach Mahmoud Darwish and the sublime love poetry of Nizar Qabbani, but you can’t really understand what they’re doing without knowing Mutannabi, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and the the classical Arabic qasidah tradition, one of humanity’s greatest and most enduring literary achievements. Likewise, Amy Tan’s *Joy Luck Club* is no substitute for the Four Great Masterworks of Chinese fiction, or the Confucian and Taoist classics. But neither are these classics a replacement for these 20th-century contemporary novels and essays, they do very different things in very different ways. So while it is important to be exposed to different kinds of novels (a modern, Western genre) by authors of different backgrounds, I would argue that it is even more important to be exposed to different kinds of literature and philosophies from different civilizations that make the boundaries and limitations of one’s previous thinking and training more apparent. As Goethe said, “he who is ignorant of foreign languages knows nothing of his own.” This is true of the so-called Western tradition itself—its own arrogant denial of the validity or even the existence of other traditions has led to a profound lack of self-awareness and knowledge.

I have always found it odd that, for example, “Introduction to Social Studies,” the closest thing we have at my alma mater, Harvard, to a great books course, does not have Ibn Khaldun on the syllabus, when he is acknowledged by other authors of the syllabus as the father of the social sciences.²⁰

²⁰ “In his chosen field of intellectual activity [Ibn Khaldun] appears to have been inspired by no predecessors ... and yet, in the Prolegomena ... to his *Universal History* he has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has yet been created by any mind in any time or place.” Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935) Vol. 3, 322.

Characteristically, the call to diversify the Social Studies curriculum has led to the inclusion of Frantz Fanon and Simone de Beauvoir, and while I agree that they should be included, where is Confucius? What author, apart from Aristotle, could even begin to compare with the millennia of Confucian analysis of and influence on ethics, social structure, and politics? It is one thing to study the history of different peoples around the world, it is quite another, and just as, if not even more important, to study the different histories of these peoples, the different ways in which they understand time, space, causality, etc., their narratives about the world and their own place in it. If done well, I can think of no better antidote to the naïve and bigoted Eurocentrism and supremacy that has afflicted and affected all of us, white and non-white, colonizer and colonized.

This suggestion is perhaps even more radical than it may first appear, for these different intellectual traditions of the world not only have different ways of expressing their ideas and wisdom that require different modes of study—orature is not the same as literature and cannot be studied in the same way—but as alluded to above, they also have different conceptions of knowledge, different epistemologies, which necessarily imply different pedagogies. So I am not only suggesting teaching different things, but that these different things must be taught in a different way. Only in this way can universities said to truly be decolonizing: when students can study Rumi’s *Masnavi* as the masters of his order teach it, or the *Tao Te Ching* or Dogen’s *Shobogenzo* as the Taoist or Zen masters teach it. This will doubtless require some adaptation on the part of these traditions, but they have always adapted themselves to different situations and times, and this postcolonial moment should be no different. Moreover, this will also require some adaptation on the part of the universities, but we already have theatre, music, dance, and art classes with radically different pedagogies from our STEM and English classes, why could we not accommodate other kinds of difference in pedagogical practices?

In some ways this has already begun to happen: Mahmood Mamdani’s pioneering Institute of Social Research at Makerere University has very similar goals and ideals, philosophy departments (especially outside of Europe and North America) are slowly starting to recognize the existence and validity of non-Western philosophical traditions (although they still tend to try to analyse and teach them as if they were analytic or continental philosophy), in Religious Studies, I have several colleagues who co-teach classes with Islamic scholars or Tibetan monks, or have training in both Western and non-Western traditions and integrate their double-training into their courses. Similar work is occurring in some Sociology, Anthropology, and Area Studies departments. However, such work remains largely ghettoized in Area Studies., and has yet to be “mainstreamed”; it is easy for a student to go through college and never read or even hear about Ibn ‘Arabi, it is hard for the same student to avoid encountering the ideas of Descartes or Kant (even if only implicitly). But even in Departments of Area Studies, far too often these

thinkers are studied in the old orientalist fashion as “data” not “theory”—as information about how some people somewhere at some time thought about things, not as viable ways of seeing and being in the world or as claims about the nature of reality to be understood and evaluated—as the thinkers of the Western canon are (or were). I argue that our institutions of higher learning will not be decolonized until this is no longer true, until non-Western thinkers and traditions are taken seriously on their own terms. In doing so, we and our students will gain a better understanding not only of these multiple non-Western traditions, but in doing so, actually ameliorate our poor understanding of the Western tradition itself. We can transition from the strandedness of necrolingualism to the fluency of multi-lingualism.

Such an approach has numerous practical challenges, but it also has several prominent advantages: most obviously, it promotes a deep understanding and valuing of difference that goes beyond mere tolerance, which as we have seen in recent years, is not much of a bulwark against the resurgent fascist nationalism. Secondly, such an approach develops elastic and flexible thinking,²¹ which is particularly important in our rapidly-changing times. Thirdly, these traditions like that of the “West” have important internal debates about gender, race, class, caste, and sexuality (or analogous categories) that can complement and complicate contemporary theorizations of these categories. Finally, this intellectual multilingualism promotes a deeper, critical understanding of the big questions and fundamental assumptions of all traditions, providing a better understanding of both “the Western” and other traditions, in the same way that multi-lingual education tends to produce students who know their own mother tongue better than those in monolingual education. The current lack of any substantial grounding in any tradition in the humanities is troubling since nature abhors a vacuum, and as we’ve seen, when our educational systems create an ethical, aesthetic, and philosophical vacuum, the most abhorrent ideologies rush in to fill it. Witness the resurgence of racist fascism in its many forms: Hindu or Buddhist nationalism, militant Zionism, Trumpian white nationalism, the European far-right, and ISIS and other radical Islamists. Not to mention the more mainstream totalitarianism—whether that of states like China or that of corporations and cartels, whose cutthroat capitalism has created income inequalities more extreme than those of the medieval period.²² French counter-terrorism expert Olivier Roy writes that “an estimated 60 percent of those who espouse violent jihadism in Europe are second-generation Muslims

²¹ Logicians, philosophers, mathematicians, not to mention composers, poets, and other artists (many of whom, such as Goethe are staples of the Western canon) have long drawn on non-Western intellectual and artistic traditions for inspiration, insight and new perspectives on their work. To give but one example of many, a series of articles have appeared over the past few decades exploring new possibilities in formal logic on the basis of the *catuskoti* or *tetralema* in Buddhist logic.

²² When taking into account that royal wealth was also state wealth. See Flaherty, E. “Was there ever a time when so few people controlled so much wealth?” January, 29th, 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/29/wealth-inequality-unequal>>; Santos, Coelho, Hegyi, et al. “Wealth Distribution in modern and medieval societies.” *The European Physical Journal* 143 (2007), 81-85; and Turchin, P. and Nefedov, S. *Secular Cycles*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

who have lost their connection with their country of origin and have failed to integrate into Western societies.... They are subject to a ‘process of deculturation’ that leaves them ignorant of and detached from both the European society and the one of their origins.’²³ Thus we can see how this kind of “intellectual necrolingusitics” is literally a matter of life and death.

In conclusion, I argue that the contemporary academy has two related challenges: decolonizing itself and reviving the dying humanities, and that the single stone for these two birds is the kind of “multi-lingual,” multi-canon approach outlined above. The current calls for decolonization are laudable, but they do not go far enough, and do not address the intellectual zombification of our students, most of whom are never given the opportunity to deeply understand and critically reflect upon the Western canon, not to mention the other canons that were eclipsed by the cannons and schools of colonial conquest. The military and economic superiority of the modern West does not in any way imply its literary/aesthetic, moral, or even intellectual superiority.²⁴ This kind of naïve “might makes right” thinking—to paraphrase Soyinka, “you are defeated or dead, so I am right”²⁵—is still surprisingly widespread, but the lie is wearing thin. Thus, this particular post-colonial moment offers us a precious opportunity, that of casting aside old prejudices and false certainties, of reviving the humanities and even our own humanity so that we and our students can truthfully proclaim, in the words of Terrence, the Roman playwright and former North African slave, “I am human, and I think nothing human is alien to me.” However, if we squander this opportunity, given the totalizing reductionism of the alternatives, I doubt we will ever get another chance.

²³ Lerner, D. “It’s Not Islam That Drives Young Europeans to Jihad, France’s Top Terrorism Expert Explains” August 20th, 2017. <<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/it-s-not-islam-that-drives-young-europeans-to-jihad-terrorism-expert-says-1.5477000>>

²⁴ Nor do the wonders and advancements of science and technology imply their superiority to the humanities, which should help us discern if, how, and why we use or develop certain technologies and what our scientific discoveries actually mean. STEM may “bring good things to life,” but the humanities bring “the good” to life, helping us determine, define, and lead meaningful and good lives.

²⁵ Soyinka, W. “I am Right; you are Dead” *The Reith Lectures 2004: Climate of Fear*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00gm3z5>

Rumi and Uncertainty in Education: Looking through the Deleuzian Prism

Soudeh Oladi

Introduction

Unpacking the notion of uncertainty in educational landscapes can open up new prisms and help critical educators move beyond the instrumentalist trend in education. In this space, alternative figurations like the nomad learner who desires transitional subjectivities and embraces uncertainty can function as different possibilities. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) introduce us to the figure of the nomad who has given up the desire for fixity and despite experiencing the dissonance of dislocation, embraces the multiplicity of a non-linear existence. I want to briefly place the Deleuzian nomad in conversation with the Persian poet-scholar Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi to create possibilities for rethinking the notion uncertainty. Rumi's focus on being *ibn al-waqt* or the 'child of the present moment' echo the Deleuzian nomad who engages with practices that involve innovation, multiplicity, and connection. The current philosophical analysis is not an arrival but a movement toward exploring the creative potential that thinking together with these intellectuals creates.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) revive the nomadic subject who is in a constant state of decentring without a destination in sight. A distinguishing feature of the nomadic way of being is resistance to assimilation, which according to Braidotti (1994), is part of the 'nomadic consciousness' (p. 25). The nomadic consciousness encompasses a flowing quality that resists sedentary ways of *being* and permanent identities. The nomad learner is resistant to settled patterns of thought and exclusionary visions of subjectivity. The flux of multiple becomings as exhibited by the nomad embraces a cosmopolitan openness and allows for uncertainty to be shaped, revised, and even dismantled. I have adopted Deleuze's language on nomadism and reread it in the space afforded by Rumi in order to reach '(im)plausible readings and interpretations' (Semetsky, 2008, p. xv) that are dynamic, engaging, and constructed in interaction between both intellectuals.

Thinking together with Deleuze and Rumi

Looking at Rumi through the lens of Deleuze requires pushing the Deleuzian language in a productive direction. As such, the nomadic elements in Rumi's works is revisited in his writings particularly in the six-volume masterpiece, the *Mathnawi*. Rumi's Sufi-based

dispositions provide a potential point of contact between Sufi practices and the Deleuzian poststructuralist position on nomadism. To address this tension, I position my understanding of Sufism as a philosophy that is in a constant state of flux as it works to release certain nomadic qualities in pursuit of *Insan-e-Kamil* or the ‘perfect human being’: A ‘perfect human being’ who will never reach the stage of perfection and must constantly be in a state of movement, uncertainty, and *becoming*. The Sufi’s journey toward becoming an *Insan-e-Kamil* is one that is accompanied with a desire to experience a complete awakening of the consciousness (Ahmed, 2008). Rumi describes the evolution of consciousness as its development through cycles of deaths and rebirths. In each death, one is reborn into a more conscious being, marking a higher degree of realization. The Sufi understanding is such that at each level there is a death or transformation that allows for a rebirth into greater consciousness (Boni, 2010).

While Rumi’s penchant for humanism is in clear contrast with the Deleuzian anti-humanism, it should be pointed out that the version of humanism Rumi embraces is not one born of Western liberalism. Humanism in Islamic mysticism and Sufi traditions is an unattainable goal and an individual in search of it is in a perpetual state of wandering and movement. Individuals can never reach this state, considering that it is relative, plural, diverse, and inaccessible. While for the poststructuralist this might indicate the lack of space that breeds creativity, Marks (2010) maintains that it in fact “allows a great deal of play to the individual—distracted, contemplative, imaginative, mystical—and thus it does create space for pure difference” (Marks, 2010, p. 11). According to Marks, in the context of Islamic mysticism,

...awareness of the nonexistent side of every existent thing stimulates *fana*’, the mystical obliteration of the difference between things and God, I and thou. This idea finds a parallel in Deleuze’s argument, following Bergson, that the more that perception becomes dissociated from our immediate needs, the further it opens onto the universe of images and opens us to the flow of time. The two processes, one mystical, one epistemological, are strikingly similar. (Marks, 2010, p. 17)

In Rumi’s field of existence, the individual is on a quest to reach the supreme stage of nothingness or *fana*. Marks (2010) argues that even though Deleuze’s philosophical goal is creativity, there is a *fana*-like element in his philosophy as well:

I must be clear that Deleuze’s philosophical goal is not *fana*’: it is creativity—the capacity for new perceptions, affects, and thoughts. Nevertheless, something rather like *fana*’ takes

place in the hoped-for dispersion, which Deleuze and Guattari emphasized again and again, of the usual limitations of the individual. (Marks, 2010, p. 17)

Rumi bares the nomadic traits of his thoughts by stating that “the ends are nothing but to return to the beginnings” (Mathnawi I, 767). It is in such a context that nothingness as a nomadic quality allows individuals to restlessly travel through spaces without a medium. Additionally, as an existential foundation of Sufi practices, the self is viewed as a multidimensional and flowing entity. The directionless in nomadic wandering resonates with the Sufi notion of flowing like a river (Chapline, 2011).

Rumi’s poetry avoids orthodoxy and indoctrination as he promotes a pluralistic culture of endless movement and unrest. Rumi’s work is unique in that he breaks down boundaries and creates spaces where metamorphosis can include completeness, unity, fracture, and multiplicity all at the same time. Rumi aspires to disrupt any sense of certainty through his stories and poems toward a culture of difference and otherness. A central theme running through Rumi’s poems and stories is a disdain toward opaque realities and a desire to ‘lay bare’ what is unknown:

*The world is a dream, a prison, a trap, foam thrown up from the ocean,
dust kicked up by a passing horse. But it is not what it appears to be.
Form is shadow, meaning the Sun.* (Mathnawi VI, 4747)

Rumi takes us on a journey to explore the various dimensions of our inner selves and depicts the human spirit as “a conscious intentionality, dynamic, open-ended, and self-transcending” (Helminiak, 1998, p. 13). Subsequently, love becomes the “missing link that brings together moral reasoning and critical discernment with moral values, character, responsibility and compassion into a qualitatively different consciousness, empowered, resilient and authentically moral” (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004, p. 260). The kind of love and tolerance Rumi embraces embodies a transformative potential where the individual experiences infinite transformations and is considered as *ibn al-waqt* (Schimmel, 1975, p. 130). In such a space, the Sufi is a nomad, as s/he has no attachment to the past or any longing for the future. To become fully present in the moment necessitates unfolding and creating new dynamics. Thus, the unpredictable is desired and being vulnerable and entering into unknown spaces is not problematic in and of itself.

Rumi encourages us to be involved in a process of ongoing self-reflection and evaluation

of multidimensional discourses. The intense self-examination advocated by Rumi empowers us

to be honest about our intentions. Through the purification of the heart, a moral identity that identifies with justice and liberty is formed. This process also awakens a feeling of intense love or *ishq* and “provides the basic motivations in humans. The generative impulse is the desire to generate something enduring. *Ishq* is procreation, it is creation; it is birth (Zaimaran, 1985, p. 256). For Rumi, love never loses its nomadic quality because, "Like Adam and Eve, Love gives birth to a thousand forms; the world is full of its paintings but it has no form" (Rumi, Divan, 5057, as cited in Chittick, 1983). For Rumi, crossing the threshold of love leads to transformation and transcendence. With its potential to energize everything, love as a life force that animates is “The Sea of Non-Being: there the foot of the intellect is shattered” (Rumi, 1995). Like a nomadic existence, a being enveloped in love is indeed a “Non-being”, that which is not (absent), that which is yet to be (come into being)’ (D’Souza, 2014, p. 13). Rumi’s depiction of love as a trunkless tree that is open to new experiences and receptive to the unknown is similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1979) depiction of the rhizome as a de-centered network that grows in all directions:

*Love is not condescension,
Never that, nor books,
nor any marking on paper,
nor what people say of each other.*

*Love is a tree with branches reaching into eternity
and roots set deep in eternity, and no trunk!*

Have you seen it? The mind cannot. Your desiring cannot.

The longing you feel for this love comes from inside you. (Rumi in Barks, 2003, p. 121)

The transformative nature of love does not go unheeded by Rumi as exquisite portraits flow out of his poems and stories. The love Rumi depicts possesses the power to motivate and move individuals and lead to new expressions of uncertainties. In Rumi’s field of existence, life without love and passion is a spiritless existence where hope has lost its utopian dynamic. Transformative love is central to Rumi’s writings as he continuously creates a dialogic through a unique exploration of love.

*Whosoever lost her/his essence,
For reuniting seeks lessons.*

*What blows in reed's not wind, but fire;
Whoever lost it, is lost entire.* (Mathnawi I, 4-5)

Exploring the different ways Rumi has embraced uncertainty in his stories reveals a continuous struggle between various forces that swing the pendulum of absolutes in the direction of the 'field of possibilities'. Embracing Rumi's vision of the *Insan-e-Kamil* requires that we, too, move beyond fixed notions of educational certainty and allow for new spaces to present themselves.

Rumi and the Notion of Uncertainty in Education

Rumi's search for completeness (Elias, 1976) or to be *Insan-e-Kamil* encourages individuals to develop certain characteristics that are closely aligned with nomadic qualities such as "compassion, integrity, commitment to the process, nonattachment to outcome, [and] interconnectedness" (Alario, 2012). This individual is a storyteller and a seeker of new narratives who believes outer change requires inner transformation. Compassion and love are transformative forces for this individual, as s/he moves beyond fixed notions into creative and imaginal zones that allow for alternative educational experiences to emerge. Inspired by Rumi's moral and spiritual teachings, I have attributed five features as possibilities for an individual growing in a space filled with uncertainty:

The Seeker in Space of Uncertainty

This individual is a human-in-progress who possesses an 'anxious heart'. S/he is bound to find her/himself connected to the *Tree of Immortality* in the quest for different levels of spirituality and activism. Like a nomad, the uncertain seeker is a wanderer enveloped by the spirit of love; an individual engaged in a pedagogy of potential striving to expand her/his understanding of the world both without and within. Although, this search may prove to be challenging, this individual has but one mission:

*If you are not one of those who have an illumined heart,
be awake (keep vigil), be a seeker of the illumined heart,
and always struggle with your fleshly soul.* (Mathnawi III, 1224)

The uncertain seeker engages in different forms of activism outside the learning environment. For this individual, the 'I' only exists in spaces where 'we' is possible. S/he works to unlock the inner teacher through spiritual and moral development in order to live authentically in the

here and now. S/he also emerges as an educator and spiritual guide, teaching with renewed vigour in a space of no-judgment while also being a lifelong learner.

The Storyteller in Space of Uncertainty

Rumi inspires the storyteller to tell stories of pain, resistance, and change. The storyteller reignites hope by introducing learners to individuals or movements that have transformed their lives and their society. Through storytelling, this individual fosters a culture that allows for the envisioning of different identities. Inspired by Rumi's teachings, this individual imparts spiritual wisdom that surpasses the intellect and engenders a counter-hegemonic space that raises one's awareness of social injustices. Through the very act of sharing stories, s/he engages in the awakening individuals at the spiritual, cultural, and societal level and creates a medium for learners to experience critical awareness in order to emerge with new insight and understanding. The storyteller strives for spaces where a sense of collective consciousness is nurtured through educational practices. This individual is a tireless advocate for social justice as s/he tells stories of how to construct alternative identities based on principles of love and critical consciousness.

The Resister in Space of Uncertainty

The resister challenges stereotypes and creates alternatives as s/he promotes collective resistance amongst various social actors. Through a pedagogy of resistance, this individual problematizes the instrumentalist notion of education. S/he is like a nomad, in search of free spaces for a mode of creative thinking that is equally a form of resistance. By engaging in critical resistance against fixities, this individual partakes in multi-dimensional forms of struggle in an effort to envision the yet unimagined life. By establishing local contexts of resistance, s/he works to activate the collective memories of influential social and spiritual formations toward effective forms of resistance. S/he engages in activities that create a sense of compassion and love in what Garavan (2012) calls 'integral social care and compassionate activism'. S/he is "the true intellectual, who always finds the courage to seek the truth beyond ego or fixed notions of the nature of things, [...] always walking a compassionate path" (hooks, 2009). In the space of resistance, s/he is also vulnerable and feels the suffering of those s/he is trying to help. The spirit of resistance is alive in her/him as s/he works to foster a mutually humanizing discourse where the suffering of all people particularly the marginalized and disadvantaged can be alleviated. The coupling of resistance and love can lead to a transformative praxis for this individual as s/he challenges stereotypes and embraces

alternatives ways of *being*.

The Transformer in Space of Uncertainty

The transformer seeks to create alternative futures by transforming the present. This individual systematically challenges the power hierarchies and promotes transformation at the personal and societal level. For the transformer, embracing social action is accompanied by a commitment to transformation and agency at the personal level. In this context, deliberate transformation is accompanied by a vision of change where *becoming* has precedence over *being*. Like a nomad, this individual evades spaces that are stripped of their transformative power and embarks on a process of transformation alongside the learners. For the transformer, it is essential to engage in action that transforms structural inequalities and power relations through challenging practices. Although transforming the inherent inequalities in society is a priority for this individual, so is a soul searching that leads to greater awareness of the self and character development. The transformer is engaged in an ongoing struggle to enact a philosophy of intense self-reflection that gives her/him the power to be a not-knower. S/he promotes a collaborative process where gaining self-knowledge and transforming consciousness is in line with transforming the world. Through this developmental process, the transformer envisions alternative futures by transforming the present.

The Improviser in Space of Uncertainty

The improviser celebrates the nomadic learner, as s/he experiments with pedagogies that could lead toward uncertain outcome or perhaps to transformation, wisdom, hope, and limitless possibilities. This individual engages in a fluid and flexible wandering as s/he transcends from *being* to *becoming*. In this state, wandering in a constant state of *inbetweenness* embodies a restlessness that leads to creativity and continuous change. The unexpectedness intrinsic to nomadic spaces and the ability to function without a commanding centre sets in motion the production of innovative flows for the improviser. Such nomadic spaces are characterized by a penchant for decentralism and imagining alternative ways of *being*. The improviser is a catalyst for transformation and exterior to the traditional structures upon which fixed identities are derived from. Like a nomad, this individual is *resistance on the move* and functions in a field of possibilities where s/he strives to be *Insan-e-Kamil*. The actions of this individual are multi-dimensional and uncoded and her/his greatest accomplishment is to encourage *invention*: invention of new spaces, invention of imaginal discourses, and invention of possibilities for resistance.

The discourse advocated by an individual with the aforementioned characteristics is a highly charged, transformational space where contradictions and tensions are as welcomed as love and creativity. The involved actors do not seek a nirvana as they engage in an ongoing improvisation in search of new identities. The nomad's desire for placelessness and ability to function on alternate playing fields is in opposition to the notion of fixity and certainty. These individuals, whom Rumi encourages to enter into a space of non-existence (*fana*), are similar to the individuals Braidotti (2006) depicts as "suspended between the longer and the not yet". The nomadic narrative of uncertainty is a rejection of the dystopia that renounces the possibility of dreams, need for self-reflection, and a desire for social justice. This is the narrative that advances Rumi's thoughts and questions the need for certainty, particularly in these uncertain times in the field of education.

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Rutland High School, Vermont USA

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As practitioners in public secondary schools, we face the constant tension of both responding to a shifting culture and its expectations for young people while striving to prepare students to lead in the kind of society of which we dream. Any educator would agree that we want our students to strengthen the best of human qualities in order to facilitate a peaceful, stable civilization. Yet forces within and external to a community can shift or divert that vision, causing schools to be reactive to the short-term stresses that occur constantly. The challenge never goes away. It is perhaps more natural for a group of people to fall to immediate pressures rather than to exercise resilience to build the long-term practices, institutions and the vision that can sustain a more cohesive community.

So how does a school face by itself the never-ending barrage of divisive influences that can at worst tear apart its social fabric, and at minimum, set groups of students, parents, and staff in corrosive competition? A school is really never a utopian community. It is made up of humans with their frailties. The organization reflects the practices and beliefs of its members, influenced by forces outside its walls. But a school at its best strives for the culture of a community of learners. A school at its best aims to instill the belief that all of its members are responsible to the whole, each playing a critical role for the success of the body. And school at its best positions its members, through skill development and expectation, to commit to the concept that all within will apply learning outside the walls of the school, with the critical understanding that with the gift of education comes the obligation to serve actively in the betterment of the world, either locally or on a larger scale.

What are some of threats that a school faces in this age, both from outside and from within? Racism in the United States seems have gained strength in the last two years. Socioeconomic stratification continues to increase. Technology brings gifts, but it can distract students from a traditional academic focus. It also increases with lightning-speed the effect and the range of negative social interactions like bullying. Teenage students by nature are acutely aware of who is out and who is in; this stage of mental development aligns negatively with the current exploitation by some societal leaders of demonizing “the other.” And in some communities, a cycle of blame combined with the inability to affect social and economic forces thus provide the option for some to avoid taking ownership for developing solutions. Schools can be microcosms for social ills that beset a town, a region or a nation.

The challenge is a daunting. How can a school reverse the tide of an entire society? And worse, the expectation increasingly has become that schools solve the effects of these ills. As institutions like the family, religion, or government services fail or withdraw in influence, what is left to support students is only the school.

So practically speaking, what can a school do? First, because these challenges are so great, it is critical that the school commits to the development of leadership skills, leadership opportunities, and most importantly, expectations for leadership by all members, adult and student. The school must also commit to a culture of academic success – not just for some students, but for all. And in order to make true meaning to the learning that takes place in the building, schools must emphasize what some educators around the world refer to as global competencies. That includes an emphasis on investigating issues and recognizing perspective, leading to taking action to improve the world.

That sounds simple, yet there are ever-present challenges. The negative aspects of human nature will never disappear; thus schools must establish a culture of “we,” and even more critical, a culture of “we can do this.” Economic and social forces will continue to shift, ebb, and flow; thus schools have to become a location of belonging, a community that cares, and a population that engages. And there will always be the unexpected event that nobody predicted, whether it be locally or far outside the community. Here, schools must do their utmost to be transparent while fostering the belief that their membership can solve these problems. All of this is truly impossible to accomplish without the involvement of all participants. No one leader, nor one group has the capacity to address these challenges. It demands the contributions of all.

So to be more tangible, and to provide evidence that this success can happen, I speak from experience. While I am not aware of one place that can do it all, in the nine years that I have served as Principal of Rutland High School in Vermont, USA, I observed the growth of a learning community that continues to mature successfully. We are not perfect. But we subscribed to certain ideals that help us align to this template. As time goes on, we are seeing a cultural shift that encourages community members to add value to our whole, based on the skills and interests that each possesses.

What does this really look like? What systems and culture have been fostered? What are the practical tools and the concrete outcomes?

At a very simple level, in order to foster a climate of academic success and commitment to addressing problems, Rutland High School worked over the last ten years toward increasing transparency and cognizance of where we stand in regard to student results. We now work in teacher teams, meeting

twice weekly to address school and course goals. Our course and school goals are now common and agreed upon. We analyze student and school results, celebrating success and addressing areas of improvement. Our curriculum is stated in terms of clear, attainable goals and their prerequisite skills and knowledge. Teachers collaboratively adjust instruction, based on analysis of student results toward those course goals. The schedule was restructured to facilitate these meeting times, and just as importantly, to build into the school day time for teachers to intervene with students who are not meeting targets, or to push students further when they demonstrate proficiency early. Our grading and reporting system was restructured to specifically address student progress toward goals.

Students are now more knowledgeable about where they stand, and thus empowered to take action about where they need to go. We developed performance opportunities for students to report to the public on the results of their learning. Our district reporting system was restructured as well, requiring schools to not simply state progress on the limited perspective of success in math, reading, and writing. Now we speak to the community in terms of how our students meet the district's vision: Rutland City Public Schools cultivate a passionate, diverse, and resilient community of critical thinkers who learn with purpose, create innovative and responsible solutions, and lead lives of integrity. In so many illuminating ways beyond standardized test scores, we commit to measuring and pushing out students toward that ideal.

Another aspect is the evolving expectation of community members as leaders. Initially, we focused on those adults who volunteered or who were inclined to lead. We used federal funds to support teacher leaders as they researched and developed plans to bring innovation to our systems. We wrote and won grants, most notably from Vermont's Rowland Foundation, that financed time, travel, and research for teachers with pioneering plans for school initiatives. But as time progressed, we fostered more opportunities that allowed greater adult participation and thus leadership in defining what this school does for its students. These opportunities were less whole-school systematic, more directed at numerous niche ventures that ultimately were tied to the newly established vision. For instance, the school supported the work of one teacher and now another in developing school partnerships with sister schools in Spain and Germany. The school supported the strong interest of two staff members in developing a successful speech and debate club, and one year later, a mock trial club. These additions may sound simple, but they match the personal skill-set of each staff member, and each made a substantive addition to the transformation of the school culture. The variety of multiple entry points for teachers to lead led to deeper change and wider access by students to the vision than could have occurred in a top-down, central authority approach.

What became apparent in the last four years was that as access to leadership became more democratic among the staff, we unconsciously created the structures and a climate to encourage student leadership. The result was an increased potential for growth, rising by a factor of as many students as we could get involved. The potential for this began in part by chance, when in December, 2014, an explosive anonymous cyberbullying app threatened to destroy the balance of positive relations within the student body. Called the After School App, it allowed students to make comments about each other without identifying the author, creating a formula for systematic bullying with impunity. By the functioning of the software, we were helpless to fight it. However, students and staff collaborated together to first implore students to not take part in the destructive behavior, then by fostering support for each other through a “Positive Post-It” campaign, and finally by taking an activist approach against the app by using social media, traditional media, and connections to legislators to encourage Apple’s App Store to take the software off the market. It was a huge success, generating world-wide attention and even a mention in the United States Congressional Record. And it became the inspiration for students and staff to tap the enormous reservoirs of energy and idealism that young people possess.

The school took advantage of this momentum, continuing to build systems to encourage this culture. We created a course, Global Citizenship. Its academic goals include strengthening student research and communication skills, pointing them toward learning of current world and local issues. But it also requires their activism, their role as citizens, obligating them with the responsibility of leading in another school innovation. That is the annual event we call the Vermont Global Issues Network (GIN) Conference. Inspired by the original GIN conference held at the International School of Luxembourg in 2006, our students in the Global Citizenship class prepare all year to host a day-and-a-half long event that features students and adults from the region and the world addressing global issues. We believe that we are the only public school in the world that holds such an event, and to the credit our student organizers, it is held for all students in the school, not just a select group.

Tied to GIN and then the concepts of student leadership and academic excellence, teachers developed a research/ presentation-focused capstone course. Students present a summative report in one of two performance venues, one of them being the GIN conference. There is a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary skills, communication abilities, and again, a taking action component that requires students to show positive applications of their learning in the community. This is a continuation of the four-year high school focus on more opportunities for interdisciplinary, project-based learning in the curriculum. It allows students a larger degree of personalization in their learning. In fact, Rutland High School just recently developed an internship opportunity, ideally as an extension of the capstone learning.

While not nearly as well-developed as a European vocational placement, it is an option that releases students from the constraints of the traditional American classroom setting, enabling the student as the decision-maker and the primary actor in the learning process.

Certainly over recent years in the United States, events and significant cultural forces pose the potential for school community disruption or worse. For longer than that, this country and Rutland's rural region face the pressures of poverty, economic evolution, population migration, and the social/ cultural dissonance that radiates from Washington. People in our small community are affected by all of this. We strive to be cosmopolitan, inclusive, and cohesive, but those are serious challenges to our school climate.

The answer, the response, is to switch the narrative, making every challenge an opportunity. The biggest lesson this school learned occurred nearly nine years ago, when due to the requirements of the U.S. federal education law No Child Left Behind, Rutland High School was designated a failing school in Vermont. The staff progressed through the stages of grief, but we kept the positive perspective that the requirements could bring some financial support and more importantly, the regulatory leverage to push for the growth in our systems that in previous years we had dreamed about, but never dared to undertake. Nine years later, through staff study, reflection, planning, experimentation, and committed implementation, we have a very different school with a very different culture.

It is a school in which staff and students lead the way, practicing authentic learning. When in 2016, Rutland found itself in the national and international media spotlight due to our mayor's desire to address the Syrian refugee crisis with a plan to take in 100 refugees, the divisive dialogue in the city became a microcosm for this issue around the world. While some veiled racial and religious bigotry infected the speech of members of our city's community, our teachers and our students partnered to be the leading voices in support of the mayor's plan. Our teachers made up much of the leadership of the pro-refugee grassroots organization, Rutland Welcomes. A parallel effort came from two of our students who founded a student group, New Neighbors. Their initiative gave the school a student organization committed to diversity and fairness, while making practical efforts to welcome students from the Middle East and to educate peers on the Syrian crisis and the culture of those expected to join our school.

Patterns of this kind of school climate continued in winter and spring, 2018. The shock of the violence of the Parkland, Florida school shooting affected every member of our school community, especially when a similar threat was discovered preemptively in a neighboring school just 20 minutes' drive away. Our students now felt empowered to take the lead once again. This time, the national call for

a school walk-out necessitated that only students could lead, as teachers in a supervisory role could not directly participate. So within multiple events, students researched, planned, demonstrated responsible civil disobedience, and activated with legislators to help pass stricter common-sense gun legislation. The highlight of their efforts may have been a downtown park demonstration, when Rutland High School students spoke eloquently and respectfully to the adults in the community, inspiring older community members to support the cause; inspiring adults to believe in the power of these students to lead.

This happens in our school in so many ways, it is almost easy to just believe it was always this way. Even just this month, a student group dedicated to fighting the effects of the opioid crisis conducted events to help prevent substance abuse at end-of-schoolyear celebrations. New Neighbors is teaming up with another Vermont high school this week to make plans to fight racial discrimination. A capstone student is working toward addressing our school's concussion protocols for athletic teams. The list goes on. There are innumerable problems in this world, and certainly within our community. They all need to be addressed. Given the power and expectation that each school member can play a part, school staff and students can harness the vitality of youth to make substantive change.

“Portraits of Uncertainty”

Caitlin Schuler

Uncertainty is a portrait in itself. Depending on one’s angle of perception, the light and shadows can change the picture. Much like the first decade of life, in an ever-changing world the immediate and future possibilities can transform. My experience has been acquired not through the preaching of diversity but through immersion in a pluralistic world. As a student teacher in a kindergarten classroom in a county outside of Nashville, Tennessee, I saw students on Friday afternoon who were unsure if they would eat a meal over the weekend and students who were “drug runners” for older kids in their neighborhood. As a student teacher in a 6th grade class in Belize, my students faced uncertainty in their educational future because there was a possibility they may need to help out on their family farm instead of continuing to attend school. As a kindergarten teacher in Florida, my students faced challenges in acquiring English as a second language and being expected to make great academic gains with very little time to play and be a five and six-year-old kid. As a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer serving in the Philippines, I worked as an English teacher in a fishing village. There my students faced challenges in choosing to pay for transportation to school or buying food, being instructed in the national language of Filipino but only having fluency in their local dialect, environmental factors such as typhoons and flooding, and the uncertainty if they would be able to finish their schooling or need to start working to contribute to their families.

The majority of my teaching experience was in a Virginia, USA suburb outside of Washington, D.C. While my students in this metropolitan and diverse suburb faced fewer socioeconomic uncertainties, many students coming from around the world faced language

acquisition challenges yet were expected to academically perform well above their developmental capabilities.

It's 9:05 a.m. I can hear the 200 footsteps of 5 and 6 year olds coming down the hall. The children try not to run but are so eager to start their day they are asked to stop running the entire length of the hallway. Their smiles and complete joy is infectious. Twenty-five (mostly) happy children enter my room. "Jack" excitedly tells me he won his baseball game last night, "Rachel" exclaims that she had waffles for breakfast, and "Elliott" enthusiastically informs me his grandma is coming to visit tonight. The energy that kindergartners have is remarkable. Despite the uncertainties that each child carries with them, I try to channel and focus the children's incredible energy, teaching fundamentals to help them tackle life's uncertainties that lie ahead. It is my job to maintain a safe, happy, and enthusiastic environment that fosters a love of learning.

The United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goal #4 is "To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (www.un.org 2018) and one of the targets is "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education." (www.un.org 2018) Despite the economic advantages provided to the majority of my students, I had many students who struggled with acquiring language thereby limiting their access to education.

A portrait of "Marcy":

It is Monday morning; Marcy enters the classroom with a big smile on her face. She is bundled up from head to toe with a heavy pink sparkly coat, a purple fuzzy hat with matching mittens, and a purple and pink scarf to tie the ensemble together. She comes to find me

through the crowd of kindergarteners in my room and stands in front of me until I notice her and say good morning. She gives me a big hug and then starts to unpack. She comes up to me again to ask what she is supposed to draw about in her journal. We are 6 months into the school year and she is able to speak in short phrases now and can ask basic questions. She is an ESOL level 2 student. Her native language is Vietnamese. I go over to her seat and explain and then go about helping other students. When it is time to get started with morning meeting she comes over quietly to the carpet and sits as close as she can to my spot on the carpet. She greets other friends on the rug during our greeting time but makes sure to come over and greet me first. When asked to share her 100th day project she asks me to help. I ask her questions and then she is able to talk some about her project. After morning meeting, we move into writing. She sits at a station practicing with sentence frames and needs a lot of support through the entire writing block. She raises her hand and comes up to me once every two to three minutes to come over and check her work. Even though she knows her sounds, she has trouble putting anything down on paper without my direct support and supervision. After writing, we go out to recess. Marcy wants to hold my hand the entire 30 minutes and stand with me. When I encourage her to go play she says, “Noooo” with a big smile on her face and a big hug for me. We walk around, and I push her along to go play with some peers, but after a few minutes she is back by my side, my little side kick. During reading, she is in the smallest group and only attends one station out of the 6 to work on something independently. She requires constant support and prompting. Her self-defined isolation from classmates continues through Science and Social Studies. During Math, while other students are engaging in conversations not always related to math, she will play the games but only interacts with other students to play the game. She has no interest in interacting with other

students. During the play time at the end of the day, Marcy sits at the art table and draws pictures for me the entire 30 minutes. The students pack up and listen to a story on the rug. Before Marcy leaves for her bus room she makes sure to give me a big hug before running down the hall. She makes sure to wave at me again on her way to the bus.

After getting to know “Marcy” and her family, I discovered that her family was trying to not speak Vietnamese with Marcy at home in an effort to help her learn English. The result of English only instruction and parents expecting their child to only speak English at home instead of speaking in their native language could lead to subtractive bilingualism. Cummins (1994) describes subtractive bilingualism as learning a new language at the expense of losing your first language. It is imperative that ESOL students have a strong foundation in their native language, and also maintain their native language, in order for them to successfully acquire English. Over the course of the year, I collaborated with Marcy’s parents, the school reading specialist, the ESOL teacher, and our guidance counselor to help Marcy reach end of the year kindergarten benchmarks.

Despite Marcy’s challenges in developing social connections with her classmates, during the first quarter of school she was able to form a friendship with another girl in our class. “Natalie”, also an ESOL student, came in as an ESOL level 2 student. She walked into my classroom on the first day of school and screamed at me. Honestly, I couldn’t blame her. She did not speak a word of English, she was the youngest in the class of 25 students and had just moved to Virginia. She only spoke Hebrew at home. Marcy and Natalie became friends after a few weeks. Watching these two little girls who spoke completely different languages become friends was beautiful. I am not sure how they communicated, but somehow the two girls found a common parlance through physical expression and unidentifiable squeals. They were

inseparable during the first quarter of school. Unfortunately, Natalie moved away after the first quarter and Marcy struggled to make social relationships with the students in our classroom.

A portrait of “Natalie”

“Natalie bounces into the classroom with a smile dressed from head to toe in pink. It is pink day in our color week, so all the students dress in the color of the day. Natalie has only spoken Hebrew up until starting school 10 days ago. She says hello to me and then starts to unpack. As she sits down to start her morning activity, a coloring page, she comes over to me with a pink crayon and asks “pink?” I reply, “Yes, that is a pink crayon.” She proudly skips back to her seat identifying all the pink things she sees along the way. She joins the class on the carpet for morning meeting, and while she doesn’t say much she is engaged and attempting to interact with her classmates. During reading, she thumbs through books deeply engrossed in the illustrations. She excitedly brings over a book on butterflies to me, and points to the caterpillars we have living in our classroom. We have just started doing some preassessments on the students to get an idea of where the students strengths and goals will be academically. I have informally talked with Natalie, and while she doesn’t seem to be able to identify the letters and sounds of the English alphabet, it is clear she has a strong background knowledge of the letters and sounds in her home language. At indoor play time she draws at a table with other students. Even though she is unable to speak English at this point she is finding a way to communicate with her peers despite this obstacle.”

Towards the end of the first quarter, Natalie’s English acquisition greatly improved. She was able to speak in simple sentences, and she engaged and interacted with her peers regularly. At a parent-teacher conference with Natalie’s mother, her mother informed me that Natalie is no longer speaking to her in Hebrew at home. Her mother said she spoke with Natalie in Hebrew,

but Natalie would respond in English. Her mother was worried about her losing her mother tongue. I told her mom that this was a manifestation of her excitement to be able to speak English and was trying to use it as often as she could. It was clear that Natalie's parents actively communicated with her. She had a very strong mother language and was read to frequently.

In order to help Marcy, Natalie, and my other non-native English speakers assimilate into our classroom it was important for me to embrace the diversity and to develop a plural classroom. We shared family traditions as a classroom, learned about special celebrations from our students, and instead of pointing out differences among each other, we approached new topics with open-minds and when students didn't understand something we asked thoughtful and respectful questions to better understand each other. I have found five and six-year olds to be very accepting of each other's differences. The important thing with children in the first decade of life is to not ignore differences, but to talk about them and answer questions.

Even in an advantaged environment, we still see the impacts of uncertainty on the academic and social progress of children. Culture in itself can cause uncertainty, especially when translocated, in that a balance of integration and safeguarding one's home culture is required in a changing society. Cultural roots, even in a pluralistic environment, can carry gender related impacts and educational assumptions. The child's personality is another aspect of uncertainty, one which can only be guided through thoughtful differentiation and careful planning. In terms of language acquisition, Schools should make sure teachers are trained and equipped to work with Speakers of Other Languages (SOL). Teachers need to be equipped with strategies to effectively meet the needs of this population and trainings are necessary. Schools need to establish connections with families who speak non-local languages. They can have literacy nights where families can come in and learn about ways to help their children at home,

and encourage families to join the parent-teacher organizations and after school activities. Schools should also try to make information available in different languages so all parents can stay informed, and have interpreters available for meetings.

Teachers should attend SOL professional development and read current research to stay abreast of current strategies in order to implement best practices in their classrooms. Teachers should build relationships with families in their classrooms and encourage families to maintain their native language and culture at home. Teachers should be reflective in their teaching to ensure they are using SOL strategies to meet the needs of their individual students.

Being a parent myself to two young children and having relocated our American family to Geneva, Switzerland, I can now empathize with parents in this situation. Your child is the most important thing in your life. It is vital to be able to communicate with your child's teacher about questions or concerns you may have. The advice I have for parents is to try, if possible, to learn some of the local language. With my little bit of French, and some charades, I have been able to ask questions to my son's teachers. It is important for me to know how to best assimilate my children to our new culture so I need to know the cultural norms. It is uncertain how long we will be living in this new place, but as a parent and a teacher it is important to equip myself and my children the best I can to ensure their academic and life success, no matter how society changes around them.

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Preventing thoughts in the name of security? Counter-terrorism legislation and university life in uncertain times

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This paper discusses the implications of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) for UK universities. The UK counter-terrorism strategy is informed by the premise that the non-violent opposition to 'fundamental British values' can be a root cause for terrorism. The government's conceptualisation of 'dangerous' thoughts and 'vulnerable' individuals eventually provided the rationale for incorporating universities in the UK's Prevent strategy. The legal obligation to prevent students from being drawn into terrorism has sparked severe concerns regarding the core functions of universities and fosters uncertainties regarding its consequences for students, academics and higher education management. The paper emphasises the importance of further engagement with the question of how to contribute to national security on the one hand and to secure academic freedom, freedom of speech and equal treatment on the other.

1. Understanding terrorism and counter terrorism

Uncertainties and social changes sparked by both, terrorism *and* counter-terrorism, affect the nature and provision of education in a variety of ways. The threat of terrorism constitutes one of the most pressing fears and uncertainties of late modern societies (Beck, 2002; Altheide, 2006). Understanding the ways in which such fears affect education inevitably requires an exploration of what actually constitutes 'terrorism'. However, definitions of such phenomenon vary across countries and jurisdictions. Common understandings relate to politically, ideologically and religiously motivated acts of violence, often against random civilians, carried out by individuals, groups or even governments (Prabha, 2000). However, so far there is no academic, evidence based consensus on questions concerned with the root causes of terrorism and on how extremism, radicalisation and terrorism are causally related (Ganor, 2002; Ramsay, 2015). For example, in his famous review of the definition of terrorism and UK terrorism legislation, Lord Carlile emphasises that "hard as I have striven, and as many definitions I have read, I have failed to conclude that there is one that I could regard as the paradigm... perhaps because it is not possible to do so" (Lord Carlile, 2007, p. 4). A vastly growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship concerned with understanding, defining and preventing terrorism reveals that how we understand 'terrorism' is strongly determined by what constitutes counter-terrorism (Schmid, 2013). A contemporary approach to engage with the uncertainties caused by terrorist incidents betrays an emphasis on preventive counter-terrorism measurements which are set out to repress the process of radicalisation as opposed to the very act of terrorism. For example, the UK

Governments' counter-terrorism legislation does not only target the prevention of terrorism itself but specifically aims to combat the development of extremist thoughts. Here, it is argued that terrorist groups often draw on extremist ideology and that some of those who joined terrorist groups were previously affiliated with extremist organisations that radicalised them. The significance attributed to extremism as a precondition for terrorist related activities led the UK government to introduce strategies to prevent extremism as part their broader ambition to prevent terrorism. The so called 'Prevent strategy' understands extremism as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs" (HM Government, 2015b, p. 3). As emphasised by Choudhury and Fenwick (2011), "the need to understand the impact of counter-terrorism laws, policies and practices on community cohesion, equality and human rights is critical" (p. 151). The present paper engages with the impact of UK counter-terrorism on university communities.

2. Counter-terrorism and the role of education

The UK governments' consideration of the prevention of certain thoughts as part of their counter-terrorism efforts significantly affects education policy. It is widely acknowledged that universities are powerful spaces in which young people come to form and negotiate their beliefs and identities (Gupta, 2008). Universities' welcoming attitude towards controversial ideas and debates means that they are unlikely to stifle the development of thoughts and ideologies that are now seen as the root causes for terrorist activities. The acknowledgement that some terrorists have attended higher education institutions eventually led to the claim that UK universities are 'breeding grounds for terrorism' (Glees and Pope, 2005). The perceived 'severe' threat level of terrorism in the UK, exacerbated by the pressing fear that the nation's relatively autonomous higher education institutions are spaces in which students 'turn to terror' (Glees and Pope, 2005) led the government to draw universities into the security apparatus of the state (Saeed and Johnson, 2016). It is specifically argued that "universities have a clear and unambiguous role to play in helping to safeguard vulnerable the development and articulation of thoughts that are understood to be conducive to fostering extremism and radicalisation. This means that governments are now able to exercise authority on what can be said, taught and even researched in universities: With strict monitoring practices in place, universities are asked to develop robust policies in accordance with the 'Prevent Duty Guidance', a document issued by the government that provides an overview of the target areas in which policy development is expected (HM Government, 2015a). For example, the guidance requires universities to make sure that external speakers are not able to

communicate controversial ideas that are not in line with ‘fundamental British values’. Additionally, academics are required to pay specific attention to students who express thoughts that render them ‘vulnerable’ to adopting ideological attitudes that could then encourage engagement in terrorist related activities. In the name of welfare and protection, university staff is furthermore asked to monitor the behaviour, appearance, and internet- and research activities of those who are perceived as particularly ‘vulnerable’ towards developing thoughts that are perceived to facilitate radicalisation (HM Government, 2015a). young people from radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist organisations” (HM Government, 2011, p. 72). Subsequent reports issued by the Henry Jackson Society alerted the government to the claim that universities are failing to comply with this responsibility (Sutton, 2015), which eventually resulted in the enforcement of the CTSA 2015. Section 26 legally obliges universities to “have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism” (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, 2015). This ‘Prevent Duty’ is essentially characterised by the obligation to contribute to the prevention of

3. Universities as uncertain spaces: learning and teaching in the shadows of Prevent

While terrorism refers to a variety of settings varying from the far-right to the far- left, including animal rights and anti-abortion, it is widely acknowledged that the main focus of the Prevent Duty concerns Islamic student societies. The emphasis on constructing Muslim students as particularly vulnerable towards radicalisation is informed by the 2011 London Bombings, the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq and the occurrence of acts of terrorism in the European Union. The *2011 Prevent Strategy* emphasises that “Muslim communities as a whole are more ‘vulnerable’ to radicalisation than other faith or ethnic groups” (HM Government, 2011, p. 7) which eventually renders Muslim students particularly susceptible to the impact of the implementation of the CTSA in the field of higher education. In fact, research supports the concern that the uncertainties pervading the implementation process of Prevent related policies primarily affect Muslim students, leading to experiences of exclusion, stigmatisation and alienation (Brown and Saeed, 2015; Saeed and Johnson, 2016). In fact, Prevent has long been criticised for fostering racism and islamophobia, most notably through the construction of Muslim ‘suspect communities’ (Awan, 2012; Heath-Kelly, 2012; Bonino, 2013; Qureshi, 2015; Qurashi, 2018).

In this context, the use of ‘opposition to fundamental British values’ as a diagnostic heuristic for identifying radicalisation has been received as particularly controversial. Uncertainties are mainly related to the diversity of opinions regarding the nature of British values (Lowe, 2017) and

to a lack of clarity regarding “what one is permitted to say without being constituted as at ‘risk of radicalisation’ or as having ‘extremist’ ideas” (O’Donnell, 2016, p. 61). This means that students are likely to experience high levels of uncertainty regarding the expression of their thoughts and interests. Moreover, the vague definition of radicalisation causes significant concerns amongst academics who are obliged to observe the opinions, personalities and appearances of their students and judge “as to what behaviour amounts to extremism and when they should get involved, if at all” (Lowe, 2017, p. 917). Those uncertainties are likely to stifle dialogue about difficult and complex ideas, impacts the relationship between academics and students and risks silencing those students who otherwise wished to engage with such discussions (O’Donnell, 2016).

4. Uncertainty regarding the legal validity of the Prevent Duty as a challenge for higher education governance

The tension between the legal requirement to ensure freedom of speech and the obligation to prevent non-violent extremism in absence of illegal activity, intensified by unclear definitions of extremism spark high levels of uncertainty, not only for students and staff but also for higher education governance. Universities are asked to implement a law whose legitimacy is not only far from certain, but also poses significant questions regarding the institutions’ core roles and responsibilities. Based on the emphasis that free debate remains universities’ key function, over 500 university faculty members openly criticised the CTSA 2015, urging the government to withdraw the Duty from the field of higher education, in order to enable institutions to carry out their function in fostering critical thought and debate (The Guardian, 2015).

Here, it is specifically argued that the Governments’ definition of extremism poses as direct contradiction to the Education Reform Act 1988 that emphasises the need to “(a) ensure that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institution” (HM Government, 1988). Although the CTSA 2015 was amended by including the clause that universities “(a) must have particular regard to the duty to ensure freedom of speech ... (b) must have particular regard to the importance of academic freedom” (HM Government, 2015a), Saeed et al. (2015) argue that this “is far from a balancing act, where the primary ‘statutory’ responsibility of the university trumps the possibility of academic freedom” (p. 40).

In July 2017, those concerns eventually sparked a legal challenge against the Prevent Duty

and its delivery at higher education institutions. The Prevent Duty Guidance was questioned on the basis that it fails to comply with universities' duty to have 'particular' regard to the duty to ensure free speech and protect academic freedom (external speaker policies). Interestingly, it was eventually decided that,

“the active opposition to fundamental British values must in some respect risk drawing others into terrorism before the guidance applies to it. If there is some non-violent extremism, however intrinsically undesirable, which does not create a risk that others will be drawn into terrorism the guidance does not apply to it.” (Brick Court Chambers, 2017)

This essentially means that,

“despite the mandatory language of the Guidance...RHEBs are not obliged to follow it but are required to give it regard as part of balancing exercise that would include having “due regard” to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism and “particular regard” to freedom of speech and academic freedom” (Brick Court Chambers, 2017).

Consequently, institutions are entitled to decide “that the freedom of speech duties and the academic freedom duties to which they have to pay particular regard are more important” (Brick Court Chambers, 2017). This emphasises that the Prevent Duty Guidance does not breach common law and ECHR rights in relation to free speech. At the same time it becomes apparent that decision making aimed at achieving universal legal compliance remains a highly complex and situation dependent endeavour, which is particularly complicated in light of the uncertain terminology employed in the CTSA 2015.

Fostering uncertainties: Overzealous compliance with the Prevent Duty Despite the ambiguity that characterises the legal nature of the CTSA, universities almost universally deliver the Prevent Duty in accordance with the objectives set out in the Prevent Duty Guidance. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), until its replacement by the Office of Students in March 2018 responsible for the monitoring of universities' engagement with the CTSA 2015, finds that none of the higher education institutions to which the law applies did not demonstrate compliance in line with the Prevent Duty (HEFCE, 2017). In fact, despite a predominantly critical stance towards the CTSA 2015 amongst universities, they have come more and more under criticism for overzealous implementation practices. For example, the University of Cambridge's administration has sparked controversy regarding their intervention in a panel discussion hosted by the Palestine Society in 2017. Despite the universities' statement

that its “light touch” approach to the implementation of the Prevent policy will lead to a “negligible” impact on the university community (University of Cambridge, 2016), the administration decided to replace a planned chairperson, a renowned SOAS academic, with the director of communications, who was considered a more “neutral” alternative. Pressured by an open letter that condemned the universities’ interference, signed by dozens of academics (including Noam Chomsky), the administration eventually issued an open apology, admitting that the concerns related to academic freedom were understandable, recognising that “there was no evidence to support the view that she (the replaced academic) would not ensure a democratic debate, allowing all views to be expressed” (University of Cambridge, 2017).

Furthermore, concerns related to the surveillance and discrimination against Muslim students particularly appear to be relevant in light of the temporary arrest of a Muslim post graduate student who was reported to the police by his university because he downloaded a copy of the al-Qaida training manual from an US government website for his research in 2008, long before the legal enforcement of the Prevent Duty on university campuses (Curtis and Hodgson, 2008). Despite the infrequency of similar occurrences, this case provides insight into a very real sentiment that Muslim students can face in light of universities’ efforts to prevent terrorism.

Such incidents, fostered by “a lack of an evidence base and the challenges associated with addressing extremist views” (Fischbacher-Smith, 2016, p. 404) reflect the profound challenges to the management of counter-terrorism in the higher education sector and thereby continue to spark uncertainties regarding the core roles and responsibilities of universities, its institutional autonomy and the provision of spaces that are conducive to learning and open debate. Further critical enquiry into the engagement of universities with the governments’ counter-terrorism agenda, as well as the impact of such engagement is essential.

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The Arts Tackle Uncertainty: How Creative Education Promotes Literacy, Innovation, Citizenship.

Doris Sommer

Along with the undeniable difficulties that attend to negotiating an uncertain world, an unbidden freedom is gained to reinterpret structures that had seemed stable. Education can benefit from this liberty. Necessity can become an opportunity to refresh conventional practices that had not delivered optimal results in any case.

Pre-Texts takes this opportunity. It is a teacher-training program that use challenging texts as raw material for making art and then for reflecting on the activity. The combination of using texts as prompts to paint, dance, draw, act, sing, etc. and closing with the question, “What did we do?” amounts to a protocol for developing high order reading, innovation, and citizenship. It works for all ages and tastes, generating endless opportunities for scholarly analyses and theory. (Reader response, intertextuality, identity construction, filters, multilingual layers, etc.) The steps that practically anyone can master are: listen to a text, ask questions, create artistic responses, and think about the process. Measurably, personal expression advances along with shared reflection; emotional intelligence drives and is driven by cognitive development. (It’s a mistake isolate them.) An important dividend of this double bottom line for pedagogy is a generalized feeling of admiration for everyone in the group, because each artist contributes original work and unscripted reflection. Admiration, I learned from Mayor Antanas Mockus of Bogota, is the fundamental sentiment of citizenship; it responds to other people’s particularity and anticipates their valued contributions, unlike feelings of tolerance or even respect, which keep speakers at the center of their sentences.

When students approach difficulty and uncertainty as artists who dare to use challenging texts as the raw material for new creations, they simultaneously master those texts, gain confidence, and admire the creations of fellow students. Traditional arts are often revived in the process, so that personal freedom can paradoxically support community-based practices that survive disruptions of normal life.

Conventional classrooms train students to confirm authoritarian relationships that continue

to undermine democracy and to drive up alarming rates of dropouts. With two simple adjustments in classroom management, we can transform the obligatory hours spent in school into a dynamic investment in civility and in academic achievement. The entire community benefits, as students take on roles as co-facilitators of enjoyable but challenging art-making activities. After-school workshops can convene families, neighbors, and visitors.

One adjustment that Pre-Texts offers is quite concrete, one might say architectural. The conventional rows of desks and chairs – which accustom students to looking at the mute backs of fellow students rather than at their expressive faces – are reorganized to form circles in which we are all visible to everyone else. Recognizing each individual as part of the circle generates an anticipation of universal participation.

Those who prefer not to speak elicit an initial explanation about democratic process implying an obligation to participate along with the right. And others learn to encourage neighbors to engage, so that the full reflection can mark the end of one activity and the opening for another. Pre-Texts prefers not to sermonize, or to bore students with theories about the rights and obligations associated with democracy. Instead, we model the practice in a simple staging that – significantly -- recovers many indigenous traditions of forming inclusive circles for community deliberation.

The other adjustment that Pre-Texts proposes is conceptual. It is that pleasure drives learning rather than derailing it. The pleasure of turning any text into the raw material of an art project generates passion for one's work. It matters little whether or not the difficult text itself is interesting to students. The activity enchants them as they replace fear for fun. Instead of feeling a victim of difficulty, students become artists who turn difficulty into a challenge. They become users and creative agents, making decisions about how to turn one thing into another. Let's get to work! Even a classical Greek tragedy, or a legal document, or a formula from physics or mathematics becomes mere stuff to manipulate. Meanwhile, the artists investigate the material, the better to use it; they read, dig in, interpret, and gain expertise.

Neuroscience confirms what we had already learned from brilliant educational reformers, including Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and Paolo Freire (with background hints from Friedrich Schiller and Sigmund Freud). Pleasure in work activates cognitive as well as socio-emotional development. The neural connections between academic and emotional growth marks an educational opportunity to acknowledge and to seize. But they also mark a fault-line in standard pedagogical approaches that distinguish unproductively between intellectual and

emotional capacity-building. Pre-Texts, on the other hand, engages the energies of personal pleasure to advance both academic and civic growth. With Pre-Texts, a difficult text ignites a challenge to personal and collective creativity. As a result, it generates a variety of interpretations that inspire the curiosity and admiration of participants for one another. Turning a classroom into an art studio, where the basic raw material is a text that may have no immediate intrinsic interest for student/artists, replaces their competition for right answers with appreciation for their unanticipated interpretations, their differences. Pre-Texts trains a taste for difference and develops admiration for the range of creators. It doesn't impose a (frequently resented) moral obligation to tolerate diversity. Students who understand themselves and one another as artists, learn to expect more than one answer for some questions, and more than two. Unlike conventional education in which teachers pose questions and already know the right answer, Pre-Texts invites each participant to formulate a question to a text, to enjoy the variety that would not have occurred to any one student, and then play with possible convergent and divergent interpretations.

Contemporary societies, challenged with achieving non-authoritarian stability despite cultural, class, racial, and gender differences, will do well to educate new citizens in the arts of enjoying difference and of appreciating convergences along with divergence. Pre-Texts offers a pedagogy for these collective purposes, as well as for personal wellbeing.

The arts that serve as vehicles for learning practically anything – from the humanities to natural sciences – are the ones that participants enjoy. It matters little if a scene from Aeschylus turns into a rap, or a fashion show, or a cooking recipe, as long as the artist can justify a creative decision with reference to the text. With Pre-Texts, teachers learn to limit their authority and to become facilitators, beginning with a training process of basic activities collected in a Manual for Facilitators. After the first of five sessions, trainees take turns to invent or to adapt activities that they choose to lead, respecting the basic protocol of: listening, questioning, making, and reflecting.

Taking turns to invent activities, that risk making mistakes and getting advice, means that all 25 participants become new facilitators during the training week. Once they begin to implement Pre-Texts in classrooms, teachers can invite students to propose their own activities rather than worry about running out of ideas. The slogan for teacher training is “Work less and achieve more.” To share leadership with students who take turns is not only a relief for teachers; it also has the charm of modeling democratic collaborations.

Basic activities for Pre-Texts are collected in the Manual and represent popular practices from Latin America. See, for example: “la cartonera” [making individually decorated books from recycled cardboard, which started in Buenos Aires and spread throughout Latin America]; the Reader in tobacco factories [someone reads aloud while we make something at tables, as in the Spanish Caribbean]; “literature on the clothesline” [publishing with rope and clothespins, as in the Northeast of Brazil]. These poor people’s arts have now been adopted at Harvard University, through the Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, the Harvard Art Museums, and many language courses. Counting on the arts of the Manual, and adding those with local flavor, combines collective pride with high order engagement of even extraneous materials. It ignites creativity and drives up academic rigor while we learn to enjoy and to admire a range of interpretations.

A pedagogy for sustainable peace in an uncertain world requires this combination of cognitive, emotional and civic development. It appreciates the value of form over the endless variety of changing contents. Any content can serve as the pretext for forging better ways to communicate and to collaborate. Democracy is itself more form than content, more a time consuming process than polished product. This is a lesson in civics that is worth refreshing during our impatient times, when parents and principals can become irritated by the demands of dedication to the arts. The good news to share with them is that the time spent is precisely the path to deep learning and to human development in general.

Learning depends on literacy. Literacy should be on everyone’s agenda because it continues to be a reliable indicator for levels of poverty, violence, and disease, and because proficiency is alarmingly low in underserved areas worldwide. Skeptics will question the cause for alarm, alleging that communication increasingly depends on audiovisual stimuli, especially for poor and disenfranchised populations. They’ll even say that teaching classic literature reinforces social asymmetries because disadvantaged people lack the background that privileged classes can muster for reading difficult texts. Audiovisual stimuli on the other hand don’t discriminate between rich and poor and seem more democratic. But public education in the United States is now returning to “complex texts” and to the (literary critical) practice of “close reading” through newly adopted Common Core Standards that value difficulty as grist for cognitive development. Formalist aesthetics would help to make the transition by adding that difficulty is fun; it offers the pleasure of challenges that ignite the imagination.

Paulo Freire cautioned against the pedagogical populism that prefers easier engagements,

because full citizenship requires high-order literacy. His advice in *Teachers as Cultural Workers* was to stress reading and writing in order to kindle the critical thinking that promotes social inclusion. Freire traces a spiral from reading to thinking about what one reads, and then to writing a response to one's thought, which requires more thinking, in order to read one's response and achieve yet a deeper level of thought. Teachers democratize society by raising the baseline of literacy, not by shunning literary sophistication along with elite works of art. The classics are valuable cultural capital and the language skills they require remain foundations for analytical thinking, resourcefulness, and psychosocial development. Without mastery of at least one spoken and written language, youth have little hope for self-realization.

Paradoxically, skeptics reinforce the inequality they decry by dismissing a responsibility to foster high-level literacy for all.

By now Pre-Texts has partnered with boards of education, schools, and cultural centers in Boston, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Peru, El Salvador, Hong Kong, Zimbabwe, and Harvard's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning (see pre-texts.org). Though developed for underserved schools, the approach is a natural for higher education too.

Conventional teaching has favored convergent and predictable answers as the first and sometimes only goal of education. This cautious approach privileges data retrieval or "lower-order thinking." But a first-things-first philosophy gets stuck in facts and stifles students. Bored early on, they don't get past vocabulary and grammar lessons to reach understanding and interpretation. Teaching for testing has produced unhappy pressures for everyone. Administrators, teachers, students, and parents have generally surrendered to a perceived requirement to focus on facts. They rarely arrive at interpretive levels that develop mental agility. Divergent and critical "higher-order" thinking has seemed like a luxury for struggling students. However, when they begin from the heights of an artistic challenge, students access several levels of learning as functions of a creative process. Entering at the lower order seldom leads very far, but turning the order upside down works wonderfully. Attention to detail follows from higher-order manipulations because creative thinking needs to master the elements at hand.ⁱ A challenge to make something new of a text drives even reluctant students to develop an interpretation, which requires understanding, and therefore leads to learning the vocabulary and grammar that had seemed bothersome or out of reach.

See

Pre-Texts in the Bahamas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jr3I9Nz5Jgs>

Pre-Textos in Quibdó, Colombia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4bKkYMQxdo>

Responding to Uncertainty in Afghan Education: STAGES

Emma Symonds

The themes of uncertainty and changing nature of society could not be more apt for Afghanistan, especially for its child and youth population. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, huge bounds have been made in education access, especially for girls, as donor funding pours into reconstruction of infrastructure and basic services. Prior to 2001, a minority of children attended school. Today, the majority of children attend school up to sixth grade, although an unacceptable number of children, especially girls still do not attend – of the 3.5 million children out of school (at least), 75% are girls¹.

While Afghanistan experienced a period of relative stability during the last few years of the presence of NATO forces, security has steadily deteriorated since 2014 and donor funds are drying up as a result of fatigue and corruption leading to billions of dollars of aid being misused or disappearing. According to BBC analysis², half of the country's population live in areas either controlled by AOGs or where AOGs regularly mount attacks. The country is in crisis – every day, 10 civilians are killed by war or terror attacks and 1,200 civilians are forced to flee their homes³. Yet countries hosting Afghan refugees are deporting Afghans back to the country at an astonishing rate with more than 2 million returned since 2015⁴. Returnees often have few remaining connections to their homeland, with their houses destroyed or sold and families, friends and neighbours fled, and alienated from their communities, and they struggle to navigate the country they find themselves in. Seven out of ten returnees find themselves internally displaced after their arrival due to violence and conflict. Their return increases the pressure on services like health and education, and many do not have documentation allowing them to access basic services.

In the midst of the worsening security and aid politics are the children who make up half of the country's population – 50% of Afghans are under 15 years old. The education system – a broad term to describe the government of Afghanistan's Ministry of Education, the donor and NGO community, and mosque based madrasas who provide religious education – has a heavy

¹ UNICEF study on out of school children, 2017

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42863116>

³ <https://www.nrc.no/news/2018/february/7-things-you-should-know-about-the-crisis-in-afghanistan/>

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/returning-fragility-exploring-link-between-conflict-and-returneesafghanistan>

burden to protect these children from harm and prepare them for a future which is uncertain at best. There are a huge number of ethical questions which we are faced with on a daily basis as we deliver our programmes and work to strengthen education provision and linkages to livelihoods.

In this complex environment, the UK government funded STAGES consortium led by Aga Khan Foundation in partnership with CARE, Save the Children, CRS, Aga Khan Education Services and Afghan Education Production Organisation works in 16 provinces of Afghanistan to increase access to quality education close to home for girls and other marginalized children through establishing community based education (CBE) classes, building the capacity of government schools, providing resources such as libraries, linking older girls to vocational training and piloting system-level changes to pave the way towards sustainability of CBE. The role of NGOs like the STAGES consortium is to bridge the gaps in the formal education system and provide education opportunities to communities which the government cannot yet reach, while supporting the government to put sustainable systems in place to continue providing education to children in the future after our funding ends. This includes support to development of robust policies at the central level, and training on education policy, classroom monitoring and academic supervision at the local levels. As non-government actors, our partners have the benefit of being able to access places which the government cannot, negotiating with local power actors to run classes and provide education materials like books in the communities or provide ways for children in remote communities to travel to the closest government schools. Ultimately, once the government's capacity to fill these gaps themselves is built, our function as implementers would be obsolete. However, in locations where government control is non-existent or contested, the feasibility and ethics of transition of NGO-run classes into the government system are questionable. Government schools, and girls' schools in particular, are frequently attacked or threatened by AOGs. In 2016, 1000 schools were closed as a result of attacks, threats and local fighting. Government schools are a target for such attacks because they are representative of the government which AOGs consider illegitimate, they are large entities with plenty of potential casualties and they are relatively unguarded and exposed as compared to army or police headquarters. In comparison, NGO-run classes like CBE classes are rarely attacked since they are smaller and are built on the basis of a strong relationship of trust between NGOs, communities and local power actors.

When establishing a CBE class, a large amount of mobilization is done to prepare the community to support the class, especially classes for girls. While communities are less and less

opposed to the concept of girls' education at the primary level, encouraging them to understand the value of girls' education in poor communities is still challenging, especially as girls enter adolescence – preference is still automatically given to boys' education because of boys' easier ability to enter the workforce and earn money to support their families, and cultural norms tighten as girls get older and approach marriageable age. CBE classes must by policy requirement be strongly supported by the community who need to provide the classroom space to the classes, volunteer as school council members (shuras) to address any issues the students are having, and communities must contribute their labour time to improving the classroom conditions. Once classes begin, communities see the positive effects of education with their own eyes, witnessing their children able to read to them, or being able to help with income generation by counting money or taking accounts. Communities request for more classes to be established so that younger children have the opportunity to get an education too, and for existing classes to be continued so that girls can keep going to school in their communities, such that demand for education exceeds supply. Without government ability to take over the education of these students and without further funding for NGOs to continue running classes, girls and boys in remote communities have to abruptly finish the education which they now understand is their right to receive.

To prepare children to be active and responsible citizens in their society, STAGES provides a number of activities in our CBE classes including teacher training to integrate inclusive pluralistic values into children's learning. Based on His Highness the Aga Khan's teaching on pluralism, this package explores the reasons for educational marginalization such as poverty, ethnic divides and disability and teaches children to understand differences in their classroom and in society, seek to learn more about the experiences of others and recognize the value of these differences in forming a pluralistic society.

Additionally, STAGES provides leadership training in the form of girls' peer groups, where girls learn how to be more confident in school and at home, and learn valuable life skills such as self-organisation, social networking and goal setting. Time will tell how these activities help prepare children for a life of uncertainty and help create citizens who are more accepting of differences and resilient to conflict and change. One challenge in the implementation in activities like this is the difficulty in translating unfamiliar concepts to the context of remote Afghan communities and making them relevant and feasible for teachers to conduct and support. CBE teachers themselves usually have a low level of education (63% of STAGES teachers have an

education of grade 12 or below, many of them have not finished high school and very few have teaching qualifications). Teachers themselves are also not neutral actors, in many cases they have experienced conflict and are traumatized by its effects, and may come from majority ethnic groups who have persecuted minorities. Getting teachers to teach pluralistic values to children first entails getting them to understand and accept them, in spite of the opposing values which they may have seen and experienced or even perpetrated themselves.

Despite these challenges, education remains a priority for helping Afghanistan to build a society which is capable not only of emerging from its conflict saturated history and present, but also capable of flourishing economically, weaning itself off international aid and providing for its citizens. Challenges around sustainability remain, as well as the changing and complex roles of the government and NGOs. Building government accountability for education is important in areas where the government is recognized as legitimate and flexible responses need to be engaged in areas where it is not, to ensure that children do not go without education and are not made a target of anti-government sentiment.

Interventions to bridge the gap must be as inclusive as possible, targeting girls in particular and the most marginalized children – poor children and children with disabilities – who are often hidden and excluded from education activities. Continuing to exclude these children will lead to deepening divisions within society. At the same time, donors and government must acknowledge that reaching the most marginalized costs more money and requires time and labour intensive mobilization.

Life Skills Education in India

Vishal Talreja

The Future is being shaped by multiple factors. These factors include: technological changes (including Artificial Intelligence, 3D printing, bio-technology), globalisation and growing diversity, increasing global inequalities, population rise, demographic changes, climate change, resource depletion, ecological destabilisation, loss of biodiversity, new forms of communication and interaction, large-scale value changes, instability of norms, conflicts and new forms of violence, poverty and population movements, imbalance between economic, social and environmental development. In the Indian context:

- i “57% of students in the country are educated but are not adequately prepared for employment.” - **Pearson Voice of teacher Survey 2015.**
- ii “Over 90% of India’s labour force still works in the informal sector, due to a lack of focus on skills required in the current job market.” - **Dasra Research Report on Increasing Employability in India.**
- iii “Of the 90% students enrolled in primary education in India, only 21.1% of those students enrol in higher education programmes.” - **Ministry of Human Resource Development (2014).**

India is currently facing a huge socio-demographic challenge given that a majority of its population is in the working age with limited or no skills. As per the Labour Bureau Report 2014, the size of the skilled workforce in India is only 2%, which is extremely low when compared to countries such as China (47%), Japan (80%) and South Korea (96%). It is estimated that by around 2025, 25% of the world’s total workforce will be in India. It has also been forecasted that the average age of India’s population would be 29 in 2021 as compared to China’s average age of 37, thus giving India a unique advantage of having one of the world’s youngest populations. However, a large young population alone does not guarantee India an advantage. The country needs to ensure that its young workforce is equipped with the skills and knowledge required in a workplace so it can reap the “demographic dividend”.

To bring about a focus on skilling and consolidate efforts, the central government has brought all the skilling programmes under the ambit of a ministry created in 2014—the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The government has further stepped up its efforts through the announcement of two skill development packages worth INR 220 billion in July 2016 to improve the skills of 15 million people by 2020. While these initiatives are a step in the right direction, a few studies found that they have not yielded the expected results. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) constituted under the Director General of Training (DGT) have acknowledged their own shortcomings in terms of poor quality training, serious infrastructure gaps, outdated curricula, high dropout rates and minimal contact with industry. However, a factor that is grossly ignored is fast pace of change in the world and an increasingly uncertain future requiring a very different set of skills for young people to succeed and thrive.

The world is changing at an exponential rate. Traditionally, an individual had one job all their life. In the 21st century, it is predicted that job seekers will have at least 8-10 jobs in their working life and we are quickly moving towards a gig economy. 65% of the jobs that young people will join have not yet been created (Future of Jobs 2016, World Economic Forum). Indian working population has become a mobile population only in the last 20-odd years. Earlier, one was born in one place, grew up there, got a job in the same place and lived a majority of their life in one place. This helped the large family unit stay intact. Urban development, onset of Information Technology, a liberalised economy and higher levels of exposure have changed that. There are increasing mobile populations in India that work in different cities resulting in the need for new skills to manage the complexities of being on your own and supporting your families and aging parents who live somewhere else.

With increased pressure on cities with demands of city dwellers such as infrastructure, housing, transport, electricity, water amongst others, we are living in highly complex social environments. Increasingly, it is becoming difficult to predict what the future holds for young people. The future will bring new social, economic and environmental challenges and the next generation needs to be equipped with the Life Skills, confidence and adaptability skills to effectively tackle them. In a fast changing, complex world – it is not the known but the ability to handle the unknown that is going to define success. For example, Bangalore has a severe shortage of fresh drinking water and could possibly run out sources of drinking water by 2025 (Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-42982959>). In such a scenario, how are we and our next generation going to respond to this challenge? Are we going to fight for water as an individual

resource owned by each or are we going to find a creative solution that works for everyone without prejudice or bias? Similarly, if the IT Industry in India declines, will the vast number of software engineers have the Life Skills to unlearn, relearn and adapt to the changing environment or will they struggle to cope with the change?

According to a recent study by Brookings Institution ((Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-wait-100-years-bridging-the-gap-in-global-education/>), ‘In the last 200 years, the number of children attending primary school globally has grown from 2.3 million to 700 million today, covering nearly 90 percent of the world’s school-age children. But the gulf in average levels of education between rich and poor countries remains huge. This means that it is going to take another 100 years for children in developing countries to reach the education levels achieved in developed countries. The only way to bridge this gap is through a fundamental rethinking of the purpose of education and the delivery of learning contextualized to the 21st century. We need a leap-frogging strategy.’

In the context of the 100-year gap study, the work of Dream a Dream is more relevant today than ever before. While the report is disturbingly startling, it is also heartening because it validates what Dream a Dream has believed and done for the last 18 years – ‘When young people develop Life Skills it helps them develop capacities to overcome adversity and at the same time thrive in the 21st century.’

Hence, as we explore the changing nature of society, OECD calls for redefining the ‘growth narrative’ – moving from economic growth towards inclusive growth defined by well-being for themselves and of others. Establishing Life Skills is core to achieving this inclusive growth where we focus on transformative competencies such as empathy, resilience, grit, flexibility and adaptability which are critical to thrive in an unpredictable future.

The challenges are pronounced for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds largely growing up in poor countries like India. Children not only need to overcome Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), they also need to learn to leap frog into the future that is complex, uncertain and unpredictable. The lack of Life Skills is one of the most critical gap areas stopping young people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, to overcome adversity and develop the skills and capacities needed to achieve well-being for themselves and for society and thrive in the 21st century.

Life Skills - Its Role in helping young people Overcome Adversity

Life Skills, according to WHO, are ‘positive and adaptive behaviours that enable an individual to deal with the demands and challenges of daily living.’ Young people with life skills do not respond passively to their circumstances; they tend to take responsibility, seek meaning and act with purpose to achieve the conditions they desire in their own and others’ lives.

It is known that for young people to overcome disadvantage and succeed in an VUCA world (of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) developing Life Skills in a caring, safe and fun environment is one of the most critical ways to overcome ACE, achieve well-being for themselves and for society and thrive in the 21st century.

Kavitha develops the Life Skills needed to respond to an uncertain future

Kavitha (name changed) is a young person growing up in a poor community in India. At the age of 16 she had to drop out of education and seek employment because her father had suddenly abandoned the family to escape the debtors that he had defaulted. Here she was, finding that she was now the head of the family and her mother, who had only earned a meagre daily wage till then, was looking up to her to tide the family of four through this crisis. As she received mentorship and guidance, she developed the life skills to deal with the crisis. Kavitha took responsibility by finding a part-time job while going to college in the evenings. She learnt to negotiate with the debtors and buy time. She learnt how to make a small income go a long way. A year after the crisis, the family had come out of debt almost entirely, her father came back to the family and on the mother’s, insistence was taken in, and she had strengthened her Life Skills, grown in her role at work and got a promotion. Life seemed good. And we wish this was the end of her challenges. Unfortunately, it is not.

Six months later, the family tried to forcefully marry her sister to an older man because he was the son of an influential politician. When she protested, all hell broke loose. The mother threatened to commit suicide. The father brought the entire extended family home to coerce the sisters. The sister finally just ran away from home, without informing Kavitha, and got married to a man she was dating. The family then decided to marry Kavitha off to the same person to save face.

Kavitha practiced her Life Skills through this crisis by reconciling the prevalent tension and dilemma. She did not get married to the politician’s son. She did not leave home but stood

strong against her entire family. She also remarkably found the empathy to reach out to her sister and make sure she was doing well.

For Kavitha, gaining Life Skills was not just meant to help her find a job. Or get a loan. Or teach her to manage family expenses. Developing Life Skills helped her realize that she can handle any situation that life throws at her; that she has the courage within her to face any challenge; and that she has the resilience to bounce back from any calamity and move forward.

Vivek, Rajesh and Vijaya develop Life Skills

He ran away from home as a child and ended up in a shelter for runaway boys. Lost, confused, lonely, low on self-esteem, Vivek got an opportunity to participate in a variety of life skills programmes. He watched facilitators as they helped develop his Life Skills and he wanted to emulate them when he grew up. When he turned 19, he chose to become a life skills facilitator. Vivek is 27 now and manages an entire After School Life Skills Program for over 5000 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and leads a team of 39 facilitators, many of whom were young people learning under him and he inspires them to overcome their life circumstances and lead a life of purpose. He is a trainer and also works with teachers helping them unlock creativity and empathy in their engagement with students. He lives on his own, has learnt to build a support system for himself, has a dream to impact every child in India and is deeply passionate about Football and Rugby. He mentors other young people today and inspires them to be a changemaker.

Rajesh was one of Vivek's student and came from a poor slum in Bangalore. He fell in love with Rugby when the programme was introduced in his school. He was academically doing well, enjoyed Rugby and had dreams of playing in the Indian Rugby Team. The various interventions developed his Life Skills to tackle challenges in the future. When he joined college, both his parents were diagnosed with chronic diabetes and in a span of six months, they lost their job. Rajesh, overnight became the sole bread winner for the family, took on the family debt from his sister's marriage and the medical needs of his parents and aging grand-parents. Rajesh had developed the Life Skills he needed to overcome this challenge. He took responsibility by choosing to drop out of college, took on multiple jobs, negotiated the debt payments, sought support from his mentors and now over four years, he has cleared the majority of his debt, has a stable job where he is following a life of purpose and feels confident to thrive in this new world.

He has gotten back to Rugby practice. He is creating new value in his community by running free rugby coaching for other children in his slum and runs outdoor experiential camps for disadvantaged youth. Rajesh says, Rugby helped me find an identity for myself, build my confidence, kept me in school, kept me away from drugs and gangs and gave me the positive self-orientation to look forward to life. I want to create the same for other children in my slum. His inspiration is his mentor, Vivek.

Vijaya comes from a life of extreme poverty and deprivation. She was part of a life skills program through school that helped her catch up to her development milestones. Unfortunately, she was married at the early age of 16. A child followed quickly and her marriage ended up being abusive.

Two years later, having left her husband and with an infant child; she landed up at a career centre seeking support to rebuild her life. Her confidence and sense of self was shattered. She could not even talk and express her needs. Through a process of deep mentorship, over many months, the facilitators helped rebuild her sense of identity, her confidence and her skills to deal with dilemmas and challenges of life. It was not just about helping her find a job. More than that, it was about helping Vijaya believe that she can trust her choices and decisions again, that she has the resilience to rebuild her life and have positive self-orientation. Vijaya found her voice again, interned at the centre for a few months to learn skills for the job-market and explore her interests. She finally joined a vocational training program, topped it and found a job that gave her dignity, respect and a sense that she can take on life for herself and her child. Vijaya today dreams of a very different future for her child and has the Life Skills to make it happen.

Is this the end of a long journey of overcoming adversity for these young people? Of course not. Because life is not like that. There is never an end to the challenges we face and in a changing environment, it just brings more complexity. And when you come from spaces of adversity, the challenges only get harder and your ability to deal with them, more compromised.

For example, today, Kavitha is continuing to strengthen her Life Skills. She is challenging gender norms at the workplace, is a changemaker transforming over 5000 young lives every year through a Career Program that she runs for disadvantaged youth and she is helping young people imbibe values of empathy, equity, equality and integrity while also achieving their aspirations. For Kavitha, Life Skills was not only about overcoming ACE and becoming successful financially, it also meant the choices she made as a responsible human being to achieve well-being for herself and for society – investing in a sustainable life style, supporting other young

people like her, being a role-model, changing gender norms in her family and workplace, unlocking empathy through her own life choices amongst others.

It is important to understand that developing Life Skills works like a virtuous cycle of positive development. Life Skills helped Kavitha, Vivek, Rajesh and Vijaya build the transformative competencies needed to overcome ACE and at the same time be prepared for the new future in a new world. Today, each of them has clarity on their vision, their role in this world and the future they want. We would like to present Dream a Dream's experiences of developing Life Skills in young people coming from vulnerable backgrounds as an abstract at the Oxford Symposium for Comparative and International Education and demonstrate how this approach has helped us prepare over 100,000 young people in a changing and complex world.

The White-Collar Hustle: Responses to the uncertainty of educated-youth unemployment in Kenya

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Academic writing, or ‘contract cheating’ as it is labelled within higher education, is popularly regarded as a viable form of employment among young people in Kenya. There are several Kenyan blogs and Facebook groups offering tips on navigating the industry and numerous advertisements for academic writers in local newspapers and classified sections. However, the exact number of writers in the country is unknown, although recent studies place the estimate at 20,000¹. Attempts to situate the popularity of academic writing in Kenya may best be understood within the paradox of increased access to higher education, without a requisite increase in knowledge-based jobs, contributing to high rates of youth unemployment.

In Kenya, enrolment in higher education has increased steadily since the opening of the first university, Royal College, Nairobi, in 1961, such that “Kenya’s higher education has remained the fastest-growing segment of the education system over the past 20 years with enrolments increasing on average by 6.2 % per year” (Mutula 2002 p. 110). However, labour market trends for recent university graduates have not responded to the increased demand as an estimated 80% of the total unemployed population is under 35.² Youth unemployment stands at 35%³ with an almost equal split of men and women. It is especially pronounced for people between 18 and 25⁴, which tends to be the main age group of university students and recent graduates. Moreover, Mungu & Onsomu (n.d.) warn that these unemployment figures only reflect a small part of the bigger problem, since underemployment is an equally pressing concern. Furthermore, based on a recent study of graduate students’ post-university destinations, McCowan et.al (2017) suggest that absolute unemployment among Kenya educated youth is ‘lower than expected’ (1), and that many youths are engaged in part-time, provisional and internship-based employment while transitioning to formal employment.

¹ <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Contract-Cheating-s-African/237586>

² *ibid*

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/mar/02/tackling-youth-unemployment-in-kenyathrough-public-private-collaboration>

⁴ [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Poverty%20Reduction/Inclusive%20development/Kenya_YE_C_web\(jan13\).pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Poverty%20Reduction/Inclusive%20development/Kenya_YE_C_web(jan13).pdf)

Employment in the Digital Economy

Academic writing triggers interesting questions about digital labour, particularly for writers in Kenya and the Global South. The issue has sparked heavy debates on whether, and to what extent it is advantageous to those at ‘the bottom’ (Graham 2015). Horton (2010) argues that one of the major economic features of online labour markets is its ‘welfare effects’, that is, the “ability of these markets to give workers in developing countries access to buyers in rich countries” (p.516). He argues that online labour markets represent a significant shift in macro-economics as hitherto labour markets were geographically situated. He estimates that by 2009, there were over 2 million worker accounts, totalling about 700m in gross wages. Most importantly, Horton cites several ‘advantages’ which online labour markets have on the welfare of its employees, including: reduced congestion due to telecommuting, increased flexibility, greater specialization, lower barriers to migration, and fewer of the formalities of regular jobs. Similarly, Mill (2011) gives a somewhat optimistic view of the digital labour market. She remarks that it “...allows individuals to take advantage of the large wage gaps across countries, generating a single labour market defined by occupation and free of location considerations...online platforms allow developing countries to export labour services, but the ability to penetrate foreign markets depends on the perception of the quality of these services in the important economies” (p.5).

Despite these advantages, however, Horton highlights some of the disadvantages of digital labour, particularly those relating to workers’ rights, rules and contracts. On that score, there have been criticisms of the digital labour market as ‘digital sweatshop’ (The Economist), with very little regulation, and frequent exploitation of workers. Graham (2014) similarly describes this as the ‘dark side of microwork’.⁵ In a study conducted on digital workers in several countries across Africa and Asia, Graham notes that many of the workers felt ‘extremely replaceable’ and were therefore reluctant to demand greater security or seek

⁵ <http://www.scidev.net/global/icts/opinion/digital-work-signals-global-race-bottom.html>

union representation,⁶ highlighting the need for unions and co-ops in the digital workplace (Graham & Wood 2017). Graham et al. (2015) also highlight the structural changes which the internet has brought to outsourcing jobs, such that workers are now required to ‘bid’⁷ for work. As a result, they found that the marketplace was extremely competitive, and workers tended to underbid each other to decrease costs to the employers, thereby causing a ‘downward pressure’ on wages. They paint a picture of a ‘race to the bottom’ for digital workers in a largely unregulated digital system of labour. Vanham (2012) also argues that digital labour has often been used for ‘dubious tasks’ such as liking on Facebook.

As digital workers, academic writers are exposed to very precarious and uncertain conditions of employment. For some, academic writing acts as a last resort (Thieme 2013); a temporary placeholder until formal employment is secured. For others, it is a deliberate component of a long-term employment strategy (Thieme 2013). For others still, it represents something in-between; a supplementary source of income, a part-time job alongside full-time studies, or something to build their CV and gain experience. However, in all cases, academic writing is a highly precarious, uncertain and time-sensitive form of work. In the absence of formality and security, and existing outside of the country’s economy, academic writing may be classified as underemployment. Furthermore, for the estimated thousands of Kenyan youth who write regularly, and over the course of several months and years, this period of (under)employment brings with it distinct experiences and challenges.

Representations of Youth (Un)employment

Prominent literature on youth underemployment in Africa and the Global South, and particularly among university-educated youth, tends to imagine their experiences with reference to notions of *time*, particularly in terms of transitions, waithood and protracted liminality (Thieme 2017). Specifically, periods between adolescence and ‘adulthood’, or

⁶ <http://geonet.oii.ox.ac.uk/blog/digital-work-marketplaces-impose-a-new-balance-of-power/>

⁷ <http://geonet.oii.ox.ac.uk/blog/organising-in-the-digital-wild-west-can-strategic-bottlenecks-help-prevent-a-race-to-the-bottom-for-online-workers/>

between schooling and full 'employment' is often conceptualized as a time of 'passing' (Jeffrey 2010), 'hoping' (Mains 2011), 'killing' (Ralph 2008), or 'becoming' (Mac-Ikemenjima 2015). Generally, periods of transition are presented as those of waiting and of contemplating distant more prosperous futures, which stand in direct contrast to their present, comparatively bleak realities.

Jeffrey's (2010) work on young students' 'just waiting' in India, links their lives to politics, class and social change, through the lens of 'cultures of limbo' among unemployed young men. He links the study with literature on time, middle class unemployed youth, and everyday politics in India. Jeffrey proffers the idea of 'waiting as a key dimension of modernity' (pg. 3), referencing Bayart in analysing experiences of waiting among the subaltern, and Ferguson on the notion of large populations in 'wait' for a better future. In these narratives, waiting is associated with boredom, lost time, loitering and aimlessness (Mbembe 2000 p.4). Nonetheless, Jeffrey suggests that periods of waiting may not be totally purposeless but may be an opportunity for youth to acquire new skills (pg. 4).

Similarly, Mains (2011) examines unemployment among young men in Jimma, Ethiopia, under the lens of 'cut hopes' (p. 2). Like Jeffrey, he makes the link between unemployed youth and politics. Mains interrogates the struggles of young men in finding work and starting families, particularly underscoring their unfulfilled expectations of white-collar employment, "when these jobs are unavailable, young people often choose to remain unemployed rather take on low-status and low-paying positions" (p.4). Critically, Mains references Jeffrey's (2008) 3 categories of youth in the global south; youth with high levels of education and who are well-positioned to find desirable jobs; youth who do not have secondary education and work low-paying jobs; and those with at least a secondary education but with no job or security, which tends to be the category of many university-educated youth in Africa. Mains argues, "the heightened aspirations associated with increased access to formal education and global media coupled with severe economic decline causes many young people to be unsatisfied with their day-to-day lives and unable to construct progressive

narratives for the future” (p.10).

In ‘Killing Time’, Ralph (2008) analyses Senegalese young men, locally accused of being unwilling to secure work. Ralph situates their tea drinking experiences during periods of unemployment within the country’s severe economic crisis. Like Mains and Jeffrey, he delineates two distinct classes of young people, as classified by the Senegalese government;

‘encombremments humains’, who are thought to have an affinity for loitering; and, the student population with no guarantee of employment. However, the student population is increasingly less able to secure employment post-graduation, “ a marker of class status, degrees have nevertheless become redundant in the quest for public sector employment as those who have never worked are now more educated than those who do...” (p.9) Ralph links this redundancy to the political landscape, arguing that both groups are heavily involved with political violence, thereby solidifying the link between youth, social disorder, and social progress.

Despite these narratives of youthhood as necessarily a state of waithood and inactivity, the writers in this study were neither ‘killing’ nor ‘passing’ time. In fact, somewhat contrary to overall trends, the majority of those who had finished their studies, managed to find ‘formal’ jobs within 6 months of leaving university. These young people are undeniably faced with difficult socio-economic realities within a country with high unemployment, however, their relationship to *time* and *space* seems to be markedly different from that of dominant youth-in-transition narratives (Mains, Jeffrey, Craig, Thieme). Not only are they transcending the local, physical boundaries of Kenya in accessing digital money-making ventures, but also, and perhaps more poignantly, their period of transition and uncertainty is characterized by ‘hustling’ through time. Hustling is an alternative mode to waithood; hustlers may be in transition, but they are not waiters. As a job, academic writing is characterized by insecurity, uncertainty, precarity and informality, but through academic writing these young men and women are not waiting for an imagined future; they are hustling into it.

The Kenyan ‘hustle’: Academic Writing as a response to employment uncertainty

Thieme’s (2017) hustle framework takes a ‘thinking from the South’ and ‘theorizing from the ghetto’ approach to the income-generating practices of waste-haulers in one of Nairobi’s poor urban settlements. Situating her study within literature of youth uncertainty, precarity,

urban informality, waithood and protracted liminality, Thieme argues that, “hustling challenges dominant understanding of precarity and working uncertainties...through the reclaiming of a familiar- seeming prosaic, certainly loaded vocabulary (p.2). Thus, Thieme proposes the ‘hustle’ as an analytical frame which challenges dominant representations of youth uncertainty as either ‘pathologies of despair to be fixed’ (p.3), or as ‘enhanced flexibility and innovation’ (p.3), but argues for the hustle as a frame which ‘normalizes and affirms’ (p.3) their experiences by linking them to global labour market trends, including those in the Global North.

Using Thieme’s (2017) ‘hustle’ framework, this essay argues that academic writing acts a ‘white-collar hustle’ within the lives young, university-educated writers in Kenya. Writing is an informal and precarious form of employment, facilitated through the digital economy, which affords Kenyan youth an avenue through which they can use and develop academic knowledge and professional skills, while earning an income. Academic writing is primarily used as an employment strategy during periods of would-be unemployment and as a temporary substitute or supplement for formal employment. It is therefore a response to high (educated) youth unemployment, and a remedy for the widespread dearth of knowledge-based jobs available locally. Most notably, a core component of academic writing among the estimated 20,000 Kenyans, is the use of personal networks and social networks like Facebook, as a community and marketplace where advice, tips, guidance, writing aides and accounts are exchanged.

For the writers, the period between university and formal employment is largely experienced as a ‘hustle’; a making do in the absence of adequate formal employment opportunities. Like other forms of hustle, it is largely temporary, uncertain and catalysed by circumstances of force. However, its distinction is in the hustlers’ high educational levels, and in their transcendence of the ‘physical, both in terms of the types of tasks, and the types of ‘space’. Thus, the ‘white collar hustle’ represents a distinct experience of (un)employment in which academic writing acts a key

employment strategy where Kenyan writers can leverage their intellectual skills, and the opportunities of the digital economy, to make a living through uncertain, precarious work in response to high unemployment by *hustling* through *time*.

Conclusion

As such, the essay challenges dominant narratives of youth (un)employment and uncertainty by suggesting that periods of transition are characterized-not only by waithood, time passing, killing time, and protracted liminality, but also by active ‘making do’ and ‘hustling’. Young, educated, Kenyan academic writers are finding and creating opportunities whereby they can use their professional and academic competencies, while generating income for themselves and their families. For these young people, the period between adolescence and ‘adulthood’; university and ‘real life’ *is* transitory, but more importantly, it is rife with productive socio-economic activity. Through academic writing, youth have leveraged their personal networks, the ubiquity of ICT, and the convenience of the digital economy; asserting their agency, hacking global higher education systems and ‘hustling’ through their transitions.

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