



Non-formal education and new partnerships in a (post-)conflict situation

‘Three cooking stones supporting one saucepan’



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ABSTRACT

The conviction is gaining ground that education, not only for children, but also for youth and adults, is vital in conflict-affected areas to (re)build a strong society. This article discusses the constructive role of non-formal education in a post-conflict situation. Concepts of international cooperation and partnerships on the one hand and non-formal education and lifelong learning on the other hand are used to build a framework for analysing a micro development project in a conflict-affected area in North-Western Uganda. The analysis highlights the dynamics that play a role when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities.

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1. Introduction

The conviction is gaining ground that education is vital in conflict-affected areas to (re)build a strong society capable of sustaining itself (UNESCO, 2011; Paulson, 2011; Davies, 2012; Martinez, 2013). Not only children, but also youth and adults are in need of education in these areas, as many of them have missed their chance to go to school. The education offered in these situations should not only meet the needs of the individual learners, but also the urgent needs of the community suffering from reduced or stagnated educational development (Jones and Naylor, 2014). In this way education becomes constitutive of development involving community empowerment and agency in human development as discussed by McCowan and Unterhalter (2015) in their recent volume *‘Education and International Development’*. Human capacity to rebuild societal structures is an indispensable requirement in conflict-affected areas. Aside from the quantitative knowledge on the impact of armed conflict on education (see for example Jones and Naylor, 2014), this article aims to contribute to understanding the relation between education and conflict and fragility (see Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2015) by discussing the constructive role of non-formal education for youth and adults in a post-conflict situation.

Due to the vulnerability of most post-conflict situations the word ‘post’ has been put between brackets in the title of this article. Concepts and developments in international cooperation and partnerships on the one hand and non-formal education and lifelong learning on the other hand are used to build a framework for the analysis of a micro development project in a conflict-affected area as a case study. The micro development project to be analysed is a non-formal education project in Koboko district in West-Nile Province in North-Western Uganda, jointly organised by a women’s group and a youth group from the area and supported by some members of the South Sudanese diaspora living in the Netherlands. This case study highlights the dynamics playing a role when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities. The leading question is directed at the implementation of non-formal education in a (post-)conflict area from two perspectives:

- What kinds of partnerships support the supply of education in this (post-)conflict situation?
- How does the education offered relate to the needs of the learners and the surrounding society?

This article will start with the construction of a theoretical framework, subsequently the context of Koboko district and the research design will be discussed. The data will be presented from the two perspectives and the conclusion will return to the leading question to identify issues that are of interest in rethinking the role of partnerships and non-formal education in (post-)conflict situations.

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2. International cooperation and partnerships in a changing world

As depicted by the UNDP primer on capacity development, the approach of international cooperation has evolved from the transference of aid to the empowerment and strengthening of endogenous capabilities (UNDP, 2009a). In the search for symmetry instead of dependency in cooperation relations, capacity development and knowledge-sharing became vital issues (King, 2009). To stress the equal position of the cooperating partners and take into account that knowledge is developed in interaction, Zeelen and van der Linden (2009) prefer to use the term 'joint knowledge production'. This term does not only refer to North-South cooperation, but also to South-South cooperation at all levels of society. Migration, increased mobility and ever-increasing possibilities of communication of people have blurred national borders. Transnationalism is the term used to describe long-term cross-border relationships (Vertovec, 2009). Although power-relations have shifted, they still exist. In fact, they have become more and more complex as development cooperation is no longer only cooperation between countries, but also includes non-governmental organisations, the private sector, charities, and members of the diaspora sending remittances (de Haan, 2013; Ferrier, 2013). For example, King and Palmer (2013) uncover the dominance of Northern agencies in the discourse on the post-2015 agenda for the Millennium Development goals as a 'northern tsunami' against a 'southern ripple'.

In addition to the fading national borders, there is the development that governments are retreating in favour of citizen initiative in the so-called participation society (see for example RoB, 2012). A recent Dutch study (van den Berg, 2012) discusses the fact that private initiatives in international cooperation are becoming more and more important next to established large charities. The study includes projects of diaspora from developing countries living in the Netherlands, but does not pay special attention to this 'transnational' aspect. This may be a lost opportunity if we look at the way the views on development cooperation have changed. As the lack of contextualisation is a common pitfall in implementing capacity development (OECD, 2006), members of the diaspora with their knowledge of both South and North would be excellent partners in developing capacity and joint knowledge production. The contribution of the members of diaspora may thus stretch substantially beyond sending remittances (UNDP, 2009a, 2009b). The way in which these new partnerships succeed in avoiding the pitfall mentioned is a critical issue to be tackled in this article.

3. Non-formal education, lifelong learning and development

In his book 'Globalisation, lifelong learning and the learning society', Jarvis (2007) discusses lifelong learning as the ongoing process by which people learn from experience in different ways and in different settings. In Jarvis' view, what triggers learning is the feeling that new situations cannot be understood and negotiated, based on available knowledge. Jarvis calls this 'disjuncture'. Overcoming the feeling of 'disjuncture' is a holistic learning process in the sense that it involves the whole person. In this respect van der Kamp and Toren (2003) point to the importance of a powerful learning environment for groups at risk, acknowledging the learners as human beings with valuable experience in the way Freire (1970) proposes. Unfortunately, due to globalisation and the influence of the social economic structure, the dominant type of learning is not that holistic. It is rather functionalistic, serving the capitalist system and only considering the part of the learner that is of interest to the system instead of including the person as a whole (see Nussy, 2015, pp. 257–274).

Also Preece (2009a) criticises the narrow, functionalistic approach of lifelong learning. She gave her book 'Lifelong Learning and Development' the subtitle 'A Southern perspective' and approvingly quotes Torres (2003, p. 20), who criticises international cooperation agencies that 'prescribe narrow basic education ceilings for poor countries'. According to Preece, international aid policies, based on the Millennium Development Goals, put a straightjacket on the educational policies of countries in the South, forcing them to focus on primary education and only on lifelong learning in terms of skills for economic, human capital purposes. Inspired by philosophical traditions from the South like Nyerere's Ujamaa, she claims that it must be possible to 'embrace indigenous philosophical world views, [...] in a way that also recognises the hybrid nature of the contemporary world' (2009a, p. 1). Preece refers to Pant (2003) to show how gender equality can be promoted in an integrated literacy and skills training approach. Key components of this approach are: a participatory approach, mobilisation of community resources, partnerships with local organisations and capacity building of the local community. Apart from formal education in schools and informal learning in everyday life, non-formal education is pre-eminently suited for this kind of education (Preece, 2009b). Non-formal education includes non-institutionalised practices, which play an important role in lifelong learning practices, especially in developing countries (van der Linden and Manuel, 2011).

To shed more light on how indigenous worldviews can be integrated with the demands of global reality at a programme level, the concept of 'pedagogy of contingency' (von Kotze, 2013) could be useful. von Kotze uses this concept analysing skills development training for urban informal workers in precarious situations in South Africa. The pedagogy of contingency contends that training should be contingent upon the trainees and their backgrounds and should go hand in hand with activities to bend macro policies in a favourable direction to support the livelihood strategies of the trainees. In the words of Nussbaum (2011), apart from internal capabilities, favourable conditions are needed for the realisation of capabilities, which she calls 'functionings'. The capabilities approach looks at each person as an individual, entitled to freedom, choice and basic social justice. According to Nussbaum, this is a better measure for development than the Gross Domestic Product. Education, in the view of Nussbaum, plays the role of 'fertile functioning' because of its fertile role for other capabilities or functionings, opening options and chances in different areas and on different levels. From a social justice perspective quality education could then be defined as developing capabilities valued by individuals and societies (Tikly and Barrett, 2011). In this article we look at how non-formal education can fulfil these expectations, maintaining its flexibility, without losing the connection with formal education.

4. Non-formal education and new partnerships in a (post-)conflict situation

In (post-)conflict situations conditions are almost by definition adverse for internal capabilities to become functionings, using Nussbaum's words (2011). Yet, this is needed for people to take charge of their own lives and of their environment. Also, for young people this provides alternatives to taking up arms. Davies (2012) reports on education in conflict-affected areas: 'physical destruction of infrastructure, negative impact on access, retention and learning outcomes and damage to the teaching force, as well as exacerbation of gender inequity' (p. 5). She proposes a combination of community participation, provision of resources and incentives and training for teachers to repair the damage. According to UNESCO (2011) both in situations of crisis and reconstruction, education is of vital importance. Education for internally displaced persons and

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