

46TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

WORKSHOP 2 :

Social exclusion and violence: Education for social cohesion

BACKGROUND PAPER

Introduction

Compulsory, standardized, public schooling has traditionally been a central vehicle for the creation and consolidation of a common sense of belonging, identity and of social cohesion within the model of the nation-state. Yet, schooling sometimes fails in this essential function, reflecting and even exacerbating existing social and political tensions and conflicts. The efficiency of formal education as an instrument of integration and social cohesion is thus being increasingly called into question as rapid structural changes associated with the multiple processes of globalization weaken traditional models of social, political and economic organization. Concerns with the deterioration of social cohesion are most often related to observed increases in inequalities in income distribution both within and across countries, increases in social exclusion and an apparent rise in the incidence of diverse manifestations of violence in all societies. Social exclusion, armed conflict, and school-based violence have recently emerged as important social concerns calling for a radical reexamination of the role of education in ensuring social cohesion.

How do the multiple manifestations of violence relate to social exclusion ? In attempting to establish links between processes of social exclusion and violence, it is crucial to bear in mind that exclusion from basic social services, modes of production, security, political participation, or from citizenship, is first and foremost a clear violation of basic human rights. Attempts at establishing links between processes of social exclusion and diverse manifestations of violence must not cloud the fact that the main issue is not simply a functional concern with violence reduction and the strengthening of social cohesion : It is a concern with equity and the fulfilment of basic rights of all people. With this note of caution in mind, the multiple processes of social exclusion are generally understood as involving the weakening or disintegration of social bonds, or what may be termed « de-socialisation », at the economic, symbolic, or

political levels. If this is the case, then social exclusion may be perceived as a threat to social cohesion and consequently as a risk to social stability.

"One of the great dangers facing the world today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities"¹.

The problem

If violence clearly represents a threat to social cohesion, does the weakening or disintegration of social cohesion necessarily lead to violence ? It may be argued that manifestations of physical violence are indicative of the breakdown of social bonds associated with the multiple processes of social exclusion at the cultural, political and economic levels. How do the content and processes of formal education relate to processes of social exclusion and to patterns of violence associated with the breakdown of social cohesion? After the necessary epistemological clarifications of the terms social exclusion and violence, this paper sketches out some ideas relative to the causes and consequences of diverse manifestations of violence from the perspective of their dialectical links with the content and process of education. More specifically, the discussion will be organized around the following clusters of guiding questions :

1. What consequences does societal violence have on education ? How much of, and in what ways does societal violence translate into the learning experience in schools ? In what way is societal violence related to school-based violence ?
2. To what extent and how does formal education act as a catalyst or precipitating factor in the process of social disintegration and the outbreak of violence ?
3. How can education effectively contribute to strengthening or rebuilding social cohesion and to preventing violence at school and in society at large ?

EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES

Any attempt at identifying and exploring the interrelations between social exclusion, violence and education requires clear definitions of the boundaries of these normative terms. Although widely used, terms such as violence and social exclusion contain multiple components and may be approached in different ways. As a result, they are difficult to define and a differential focus on any of the constituent components produces very different interpretations and usages of the concept. The absence of a clear

¹ UNESCO (1998).

and accurate definition of what is meant by the terms undermines their analytical relevance. This section thus briefly considers some of the epistemological issues around the two terms of social exclusion and violence before going on to identify interrelations between them.

Social exclusion

The term social exclusion is a social paradigm originating in Western Europe at least some forty years ago and used in reference to exclusion of the poor from the benefits associated with economic growth and progress. At that time, the term described a state of poverty and vulnerability, of social inadaptation and marginalization². The progressive association of the notion of exclusion with equality has made the term analytically relevant for policy formulation through the focus on the identification, not only of groups defined as excluded, but more importantly, on the political and cultural processes that generate inequality and exclusion. Within this framework, both the process and content of formal education ; that is, the inadaptation and uniformity of schooling, combined with inequalities in access, were seen as contributing to the reproduction of wider social inequalities and exclusion.

As of the mid-seventies, the term social exclusion became used essentially in reference to the emergence of structural unemployment. It designated not only exclusion from the labor market, but also from the accompanying socialization experienced through access to consumption, identity and the social recognition associated with income generating activity. Exclusion from the labor market thus denoted a risk of marginalization - a weakening, or even a breakdown, of social bonds associated with integration in the labor market. In addition to inequalities in access to employment, income, and consumption, social exclusion came to be associated with processes of accumulation of social handicaps and the progressive breakdown of social bonds.

Since the initial static definition in terms of poverty lines, social exclusion has since taken on a more dynamic and multidimensional connotation. More than a simple description of a state, social exclusion now attempts to capture the various political, social and economic processes of social disadvantage that produce a state of exclusion. The notion may therefore be seen as encompassing a series of exclusions that may be economic in nature (exclusion from employment, means of production, land...), political (denial of security, representation, citizenship, rights...), or social (exclusion from

² Paugam (1996).

education, health services, or housing...). Although such forms of exclusion are first and foremost a violation of basic human rights, the resulting weakening or breakdown of social bonds, or what may be termed "de-socialisation" or "social disintegration", at the familial, economic, symbolic, political or cultural levels, may be perceived as weakening social cohesion and potentially contributing to social instability and violence.

Violence

The current expansion of the application of the term violence often obscures fundamental distinctions between the nature and level of violence and reduces the analytical relevance of the term³. Indeed, a single broad sweeping definition of violence covering a wide array of human interactions ranging, for example, from the collective violence of armed conflict, to individual acts of aggression in the street or in the home, to forms of denial of human dignity associated with extreme poverty, is of questionable utility for social analysis. The concept is only useful to advancing our understanding of interrelations between processes of social exclusion and education if it is narrowly defined. A crucial distinction therefore needs to be made between overt visible forms of (active) violence related to individual acts of physical violence, to gang violence and armed conflict, for instance, and covert invisible (passive) forms of structural, symbolic and cultural violence. While the latter are necessarily institutionalized collective forms of violence, overt manifestations of violence (in addition to violence against property) may include (i) intergroup violence in the form of armed conflict, state violence, political violence against the state, organized crime, (ii) interpersonal violence perpetrated by individuals against other individuals whether in the home, on the street, or at school, or (iii) intrapersonal violence : that is, self-inflicted violence related to substance abuse and other risk behaviors.

This paper focuses on overt forms of violence understood as the use or the threat of the use of force at the collective intergroup or interpersonal levels. Intrapersonal self-inflicted violence constitutes a health issue and is outside the scope of this discussion. In addition to these distinctions, it is also important to consider the legality or illegality, as well as the perceived legitimacy or illegitimacy, of recourse to violence on the part of individuals, groups and the state. Finally, it is important to note that, while the destructive effects of overt violence on individuals, communities, and nations are clearly identifiable, the combination of precipitating factors that may explain recourse

³ Platt (1992).

to overt violence are not always easy to disentangle. This paper sketches out some of the possible links between education and the socio-economic, cultural and political processes that may be associated with diverse manifestations of violence that signal a breakdown of social cohesion.

Overt violence

Category	Possible manifestations	Level of interaction
Armed conflict	Genocide Ethnocide Interstate wars Internal civil strife Ethnic/communal violence Armed liberation struggles	Collective : Inter-group Group against person Group against property
State violence	Denial of political and cultural rights Authoritarian repression Police brutality Institutional discrimination	
Violence against state: Political opposition	Civil unrest Terrorism Violent demonstrations Riots	
Street violence	Gang warfare Organized crime	
Domestic violence	Murder Mugging Sexual aggression Violence against women	Interpersonal : Person to person Person against property
School-based violence		
Risk behaviors	Substance-abuse Suicide	

EDUCATION AS A VICTIM OF SOCIETAL VIOLENCE

What consequences do different manifestations of societal violence have on education ?
To what extent and how does societal violence translate into the educational experience in schools ? In what way is societal violence related to school-based violence ?

Armed conflict and access to basic education

Armed conflict is the most extreme manifestation of collective violence and educational systems are among its many victims. Indeed, intentional and unintentional destruction of physical infrastructure, killing and enlistment of students and teachers, widespread

insecurity, curfews, collapsing management structures and dwindling resources constitute important impediments to fulfilling the right to basic education in conflict-affected areas. Indeed, a significant number of countries in which declining school enrollments were observed during the 1980s were already recognized as being affected by chronic political instability, insecurity and armed conflict⁴. During the past decade of international efforts toward EFA, political violence was progressively recognized as an "emerging challenge"⁵ and the "needs of (...) children and adults affected by armed conflict" came to figure in the Dakar Framework for Action⁶.

What proportion of the reported 113,000,000 out-of-school children around the world reside in areas affected by political violence and armed conflict?

Are EFA goals attainable given the apparent spread in internal armed conflicts around the world?

To what extent is the enrollment of an estimated 300,000 child soldiers around the world the result of exclusion from basic education?

To what extent have educational interventions been successfully integrated into the design of emergency relief responses?

What types of partnerships have proved effective in responding to educational needs of populations in conflict-affected areas?

School-based violence

Although not new, the phenomenon of school-based violence points to a social problem of increasing importance in countries both in the North and South as is reflected in the increasing media coverage of this complex phenomenon. Physical and symbolic manifestations of school-based violence are multiple and include bullying between youngsters, intimidation and physical aggression towards teaching personnel, vandalism, racketeering, and sexual violence. Any serious attempt to understand this particular category of violence goes well beyond the confines of the school itself to include wider social considerations relative to the strains of economic crisis and transition, cultural alienation and social exclusion. The symbolic and cultural violence of schooling largely reproduce and perpetuate structural inequalities. Learners from minority, immigrant, and other possibly disadvantaged groups are often less-well equipped to adjust to the normative and social demands of school culture that is anchored in middle class values.

⁴ Berstecher and Carr-Hill (1990).

⁵ The Amman Affirmation (1996).

⁶ Dakar Framework for Action (2000).

In this perspective, anti-school violence may be interpreted as a response to the violence of the educational process itself and to the inability of schooling to adapt to changes in the wider social environment. Finally, school-based violence may also be a reflection of violence in wider society, as active or passive participation of youth in domestic, street and political violence has direct repercussions on their learning experience in school.

Is not each manifestation of school-based violence different in nature thus calling for differential responses ?

How do the frustrations of unfulfilled expectations among youth confronted with unemployment, failed cultural integration and disintegration of popular cultures, translate into violence at school ?

To what extent is violence towards school by youth a product of, and a response to, the school experience and the symbolic violence imposed on students belonging to minority and other disadvantaged groups?

EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR VIOLENCE

As both an instrument of domination and oppression, or of democracy and liberation, education can incite conflict and violence. The growing recognition that education is often a target of political violence has prompted a greater concern with the ways in which the content and process of education may actually contribute to precipitate the outbreak and development of violent conflict⁷. The Dakar thematic assessment study on education in emergencies recognized that "weaknesses in education structures and content may have contributed to civil conflict" and that "an education system that reinforces social fissures can represent a dangerous source of conflict"⁸.

What role does education play as a catalyst to the multiple socioeconomic, cultural and political processes that may be associated with the weakening and general breakdown of social cohesion and the outbreak of violence?

How does formal education contribute to the multiple social processes of exclusion at the economic, political and cultural levels?

How does the failure of schooling in its integrative and distributive functions contribute to undermine the legitimacy of existing authority structures?

To what extent has research been successful in establishing causal links between the content and the processes of education and political violence?

⁷ See, for example, Tawil (1997).

⁸ *Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis* (1999).

Education and social exclusion

Although the concept of social exclusion clearly overlaps with more conventional conceptual frameworks such as poverty, inequality, and marginalization, educational exclusion is often seen as being central to other processes of exclusion.

"Exclusion from minimum schooling leads to a lifetime of exclusion from other basic entitlements, from employment, from social acceptance and dignity and above all from the right of citizenship"⁹.

The continued denial of access to basic education for a significant proportion of children in many regions of the world dramatically demonstrates how formal education systems contribute to perpetuating economic disparities and inequalities. The recent shift in focus from supply to demand-side considerations when approaching the issue of educational exclusion, indicates that household poverty and the quality of educational provision have become key to understanding why over 110 million primary school-age children in the developing world continue to be denied access to school. Exclusion from education may be seen as "part of an intricate web of human rights violations"¹⁰, and the widespread and increasing failure of schooling to ensure socioeconomic integration of individuals and groups to the labour market, to adequate levels of consumption, for example, questions the efficiency of formal education as an instrument both of redistribution and of upward mobility.

Formal education may therefore contribute to income disparities and social exclusion. The differential identities that result from a structure of inequality may constitute an important threat to social cohesion and to a common sense of national identity. Furthermore, the failure of formal education in its nation-building and distributive functions is often accompanied by the creation of false expectations and frustrations among those who are economically, culturally and politically excluded, thereby undermining the legitimacy of existing power structures and exacerbating existing social tensions and conflicts and the potential for violence¹¹.

Given the frustration gap and economic inequities generated through schooling, what implications does the gap between the distribution of formal education and the

⁹ Majumdar (1996).

¹⁰ *Education for All and children who are excluded* (2000).

¹¹ See for example, Wright in Tawil (1997).

unequal distribution of real earning and consumption possibilities have on pursuing the democratisation of education?

Conflicting processes of socialization

In its most general acceptation, education may be defined as the combined processes of socialization that results in the reproduction of knowledge, norms, values, beliefs and myths from one generation to another. The schooling system is the historically dominant institutional model of formal education and a central instrument of social cohesion. In its central function of nation-building, schooling destroys traditional social bonds of the extended family, the clan or group and institutes a direct relationship between individuals as citizens and the state at national level. In doing so, tensions and conflicts are often generated between local culture and national culture imposed through schooling. Moreover, the increasing competition and contradiction between the values, attitudes, beliefs and world views transmitted by diverse agents of socialisation such as the family, peer groups, schooling, the media, and religious organisations, erode traditional sources of normative authority and constitute an additional threat to social cohesion, particularly in a context of deteriorating relevance of the nation-state model of organisation in the lives of individuals and communities.

How can the diverse agents of socialization work together in a spirit of complementarity to constitute coherent and comprehensive processes of socialization and education?

Schooling as an instrument of political domination

Schooling functions as an ideological vehicle for political domination. This can be explicitly achieved through authoritarian educational structures functioning as mediums of repression, apartheid and discrimination, or through symbolic forms of violence such as the imposition of an official language of instruction in a multilingual context. Political socialisation is also shaped by what is transmitted through the official curriculum, particularly in such subject areas as civic education, history, geography and religious studies. In recognition of that fact, there has been a greater recent emphasis in educational research on content analysis of textbooks in terms of their portrayal of in and out group identity and their potential indirect contribution to conflict and communal strife¹². Political socialisation is also largely defined by the hidden curriculum and the values, attitudes, and beliefs that are informally transmitted through the everyday

¹² See examples mentioned in Heynemann and Todoric-Bebic.

practice of teachers. The importance of the hidden curriculum and the informal transmission of values, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs are not to be underestimated.

To what extent is there a contradiction between the values, attitudes and beliefs informal transmitted through teachers and the content of the official curriculum?

More generally, schooling systems may also fail in their function of political socialisation creating often unintended consequences in terms of greater awareness of educational and social processes generating inequality, discrimination and domination. In the absence of possibilities for greater political representation and participation, violence may constitute the sole mode of conflict resolution.

Is the expansion of educational access sustainable in the absence for real possibilities of economic and political participation?

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AND PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION

While the content and unintended consequences of schooling may act as precipitating factors in the general breakdown of social cohesion and the possible outbreak of violence and armed conflict, formal education has an important role to play in strengthening or rebuilding social cohesion in the wake of violent conflict.

What conditions are necessary for education systems to minimize, if not prevent, wider social and political tensions?

How can education best contribute to rebuilding social cohesion, particularly in the wake of violent civil conflict and confrontation?

What successful strategies exist in terms of curriculum design and educational management that overcome the tensions inherent to contradictory aims such as selection and competitiveness versus egalitarianism, standardization versus respect for particularisms, centralization versus decentralization, nation-building versus universalism?

In the case of school-based violence, measures taken to prevent or reduce the incidence of violence are commonly articulated around information, prevention, and repression. In addition to the necessary external controls of repressive measures, preventing violence aims to develop a commitment to norms and values imbedded in social networks may inhibit the recourse to violent behavior.

To what extent can the schooling system alone be expected to be effective in preventing or reducing the incidence of school-based violence ?

What successful strategies have been documented in differing contexts of school violence ?

What types of partnerships have obtained positive results ?

Peace education

A wide range of educational initiatives aiming at promoting tolerance, mutual understanding, and non-violence, often grouped under the heading of peace education all potentially contribute to strengthening or rebuilding social cohesion. Peace education initiatives, however, are often based on a number of underlying assumptions that are not always properly supported by evidence. The questions related to these assumptions require further research.

Peace education initiatives often tend to focus on the level of interpersonal behaviour, while so much of violent conflict is generated at the group level. Does the development of interpersonal mediation and conflict resolution skills have any significant impact on communal strife, armed conflict, and other forms of inter-group violence?

If one accepts that most violent attitudes and behaviours are learned, it must also be assumed that some violent behaviour is also not learned at all. If this is the case, then what is the potential effectiveness of educational interventions to "unlearn" violent attitudes and behavior?

Can the effectiveness of educational initiatives to reduce or prevent physical violence actually be measured? If so, how ? What does evaluation and research tell us about the impact of educational initiatives on violence reduction ?

Peace is often defined simply as the absence of physical violence neglecting considerations relative to structural and cultural violence, as well as to issues of equity. To what extent can peace education programmes realistically be expected to contribute to peace when the roots of violence are to be found in macro historical and political considerations ?

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