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Education Programs in Post-Conflict Environments: a Review from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa¹

*Programas de Educación en escenarios de posconflicto:
Una revisión de Liberia, Sierra Leona y Suráfrica*



*Hernando Barrios-Tao*²

Universidad Militar Nueva Granada
Bogotá, Colombia

hernando.barrios@unimilitar.edu.co

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8999-0586>

*José María Siciliani-Barraza*³

Universidad de La Salle
Bogotá, Colombia

josemariasiciliani@gmail.com

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9639-2277>

*Bibiana Bonilla-Barrios*⁴

Universidad del Rosario
Bogotá, Colombia

bibiana.bonilla@urosario.edu.co

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0793-8758>

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² Ph. D. Humanities Sciences. Professor at Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Bogotá (Colombia). He was Dean of Faculty Education and Humanities at Universidad Militar Nueva Granada. Author of articles and books related to his research interest: education, narrative, bioethics, humanities.

³ Ph. D. Social Sciences. Professor at Universidad de la Salle, Bogotá (Colombia); Research Assistant, Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Bogotá (Colombia). Director of the "PhD in Humanities. Humanism and Person" at Universidad de San Buenaventura, Bogotá (Colombia). Author of articles and books related to his research interest: narrative.

⁴ LLM International and European Public Law. Research Assistant, Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Bogotá (Colombia). Assistant Professor, Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá (Colombia).



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Abstract: Education should be considered as one of the mechanisms for governments and nations to succeed in a post-conflict process. The purpose of this Review Article is twofold: to explain the importance of education in a post-conflict setting, and to describe a few strategies that post-conflict societies have implemented. In terms of research design, a multiple case study approach has been implemented. The paper reviews a unique topic with specific reference to education plans implemented in post-conflict societies such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. Each of them has experienced violent conflicts and has used education as a tool to succeed in their post-conflict process. In sum, there are several educational programs that involve children, young people, survivors, parents, teachers, and local communities as well as curriculums focused on teaching of cultural values and technical skills to improve the quality of life in a post-conflict setting.

Keywords: Education, post-conflict, narrative, programs, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa.

Resumen: La educación debe ser considerada como uno de los principales mecanismos para que gobiernos y naciones tengan éxito en un proceso de post-conflicto. El propósito de este artículo de revisión es doble: explicar la importancia de la educación en situación de posconflicto y describir algunas estrategias que sociedades en posconflicto han implementado. En términos de diseño de la investigación, un enfoque múltiple estudio de caso se ha aplicado y el artículo revisa un tópico único, con referencia específica a los planes de educación implementados en sociedades en posconflicto tales como Liberia, Sierra Leona y Sudáfrica. Cada uno ha experimentado conflictos violentos y ha utilizado la educación como herramienta para tener éxito en su proceso de posconflicto. En suma, hay varios programas educativos que involucran a niños, jóvenes, sobrevivientes, padres, maestros y comunidades locales, así como planes de estudios centrados en la enseñanza de valores culturales y habilidades técnicas para mejorar la calidad de vida en un entorno de posconflicto.

Palabras clave: Educación, posconflicto, narrativa, programas, Liberia, Sierra Leona, Suráfrica.

Introduction

Education is a victim in a violent conflict and the damage it has suffered last long after a conflict has ended (Unesco, 2011). Questions such as how education systems operate in different societies is an ever more important issue for society as well as governments nowadays (Hayes & McAllister, 2009). Although education has been seen as an institution which could engender social differences or give rise to conflicts, it should also be seen as a key and a vital mechanism in both sustaining and mitigating inequality aiming at empowerment rather than at social control (Smith, 2005). Without a doubt, to start a process of reconciliation in a post-conflict setting, it is needed to focus on the role that educational systems play to improve the divisions caused by conflicts (Hayes & McAllister, 2009). Furthermore, education systems should be designed with some "sensitivity to conflict that embrace efforts to transform structures, behaviours, and attitudes not only towards the absence of conflict, but towards the presence of peace" (Buchert, 2013, p. 13). The education system should be moved to centre-stage as a core component in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies (Hayes & McAllister, 2009).



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Taking into account the importance of education in today's society, and more importantly, its role as a key to rebuild society and prevent overcoming future conflicts (Vargas-Barón & Bernal, 2005), the aim of the present article is to review the role of education in post-conflict settings, and to describe some strategies that post-conflict societies have implemented to succeed in their reconciliation process. The reason to conduct the present research on education in post-conflict settings is to adopt lessons from different societies to design and improve educational practices. For instance, Africa "represents about 40 per cent of the world conflicts and several of the bloodiest wars of these last twenty years" (Dubois & Trabelsi, 2007, p. 55). Countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa have experienced conflicts characterized by being dreadful violent, perceived as a zero sum game, irreconcilable, with plenty of human rights abuses. Thus, there is an emphasis on the applied lessons that could be learned from research on education in these contexts of intractable conflicts (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005; De Yeaza & Fox, 2013).

In accordance with the Research Project HUM-1808 "The teaching of the humanities in higher education, mediated by narrative", the methodology assumed is analytic, and geographically limited to three African countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa, whose history of violence and, especially, reconciliation are enlightening. The literature review is performed by searching databases and international systems (Science Direct, Proquest, Ebsco, Redalyc, Scopus) on the delimitation of the following categories: education, programs, narrative, memory, and post-conflict. The analysis highlights the most significant of these processes of national reconciliation focusing on some aspects of educational programs implemented immediately after the signing of the peace accords. The categories of "Teaching of history" (Liberia), "the cultivation of memory" (Sierra Leone) and "parental participatory citizenship" in South Africa stand out. It is noted that in each national context these categories are determined as the guiding lines for strengthening educational processes of reconciliation and peace. Furthermore, it is underlined that educational processes are associated with socio-structural transformations that modify inequality and exclusion conditions, which are present as a factor in the resurgence of violence or civil war.

In order to expand upon and explain the importance of the education, the article presents, firstly, an overview of what education means in a post-conflict society. Subsequently, the main characteristics of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa educational programs are reviewed. To finalize, it will be outlined that education should strongly be seen as an essential tool to bring society into a peace environment.

Education: An overview of its importance

Education has been identified as on "a relatively small number of centrally important beings and doings that are crucial to well-being" (Nussbaum, 1997, 2002, 2004, 2006 cited by Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 8). Education is considered as a basic capability that affects directly the



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development and the expansion of other capabilities of a human being: "A basic capability is a capability to enjoy a functioning that is defined at a general level and refers to a basic need, in other words a *capability to meet a basic need* (a capability to avoid malnourishment; a capability to be educated)" (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 27). To have the prospect for education and the improvement of an education, capability expands human freedoms. On the contrary, people who do not have education are been harmed and been forced to choose paths of life that could hurt themselves as well as the surrounding community. Education achieves an instrumental social role, for instance, it promotes public debate and dialogue about social and political arrangements that should be made with society. It has an influential role by expanding the people one comes into contact with, broadening our horizons. Lastly, education has the power to distribute role in facilitating and simplifying the ability of people who are disadvantaged, marginalized, and excluded to organize politically within their communities. It has redistributive effects in and between social groups, households, and within families. Education can make significant contributions and impact interpersonal relations where, effectively, people use the benefits of education to help themselves and others, and henceforward contribute to the social good and democratic freedoms. In brief, education is a categorical good for human capability expansion and human freedom (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

Now, what is important in capability terms is not merely the amount of resources that should be spent on education, nor the production of educational "outputs", looking at it in terms of qualification and years of schooling. Instead, the capability approach should be focused on the contribution that the basic capability to be educated provide to the formation and expansion of human capabilities, and hence to the contribution it makes to the growth and development of people (Terzi, 2007).

In view of the above, education should be called into the conflict arena as a tool of reconciliation, and conflict prevention (King, 2005). Although, it has been suggested that education is not always a force for good, nor even benign, and could contribute to conflict; schools may be locations where the community is believed and constructed in ways that create oppositional groups to conflict (King, 2005). It should be taking into account that a devastating conflict could established regressive dynamics in the setting up of capabilities. "It encourages a life where people may use their capabilities for destructive objectives. In turn such capabilities are based on fear and defiance as resources, supporting regressive attitudes. In such situation, it is challenging to develop the positive capability to live the life that one supposed people aspires to live" (Dubois & Trabelsi, 2007, pp. 53-54).

As a complement, education could save lives in emergencies situations. It sustains life by giving children and youth a sense of the restoration of normality, familiar routine and hope for the future, all of which are necessary to lessen the psychosocial impact of violence and displacement that communities have undergone. A good quality education would counteract



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the fundamental causes of violence, by nurturing values of inclusion, tolerance, human rights and conflict resolution. This can help with long-term processes of post-conflicts reconstruction and strengthening social cohesion. In general, whether governments want to balance development with economic growth, it is needed that people from all social backgrounds are stimulated and fortified with literacy, numeracy and basic information technology and vocational skills to rebuild national economies (Talbot, 2013).

Furthermore, education is and will be an essential element

by which societies meet their intergenerational commitment (Vargas-Baron and McClure, 1998) When a nation is unable to prepare the next generation by means of teaching its cultural values and traditions, as well as core knowledge and skills, the foundation of society is eroded. ... Education is more than a building block of societies; it is the cement and mortar –the process and structure that binds together the elements that compose the foundation of societies ... these foundational elements must be strengthened, especially by reforming the processes, structures, and content of education. (Vargas-Baron & Bernal, 2005, p. 7)

educational interventions can contribute not only to “nationbuilding” in the political and structural sense but also to the more personal, communal, and enduring process of “building nationhood.” Loosely defined, “building nationhood” means ensuring that citizens feel that they belong to and can contribute to their country. As the case studies in this book testify, education for positive citizenship can help achieve more equitable socioeconomic development and greater social justice. It can also promote cultural maintenance and growth, intercultural understanding, respect and tolerance, and self-directed evolution for all groups within a nation. Education can help develop more resilient and durable socioeconomic systems, maintain security, and attain peace with development (Vargas-Barón & Bernal, 2005, p. 8).

Education is both a silent victim of a violent conflict as well as a key role in conflict prevention and in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies (Buckland, 2004; Unesco, 2011). In the former, public institutions, schools, classrooms, colleges have been destroyed, teachers and children have fled or been killed, and unsafe environments prevent children from going to school. Moreover, degraded living conditions considerably increase the levels of children’s malnutrition having negative impacts on their health (Blattman, Hartman & Blair, 2011); this, in turn, affects their capacity to learn, destroy scenarios for prosperity and growth, and inequalities are increased between areas that are and are not damaged by conflict (Montjourides, 2013, p. 86).

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Furthermore, countries with complex scenarios

failed [their] policies and programs; institutional rigidities, limitations of organizational and coordination structures, and dysfunctional traditional teaching methods and contents often are at fault. Both formal and non-formal education programs can share these problems and should be assessed for their role in promoting conflicts as well as helping ensure long term education reform. (Vargas-Barón & Bernal, 2005, p. 5)

In the latter, as every education system may have had the potential to aggravate the conditions that contribute to violent conflict, it also has the potential to address them. Disregarding education, or delaying educational response, should not be an option in any conflict or post-conflict situation. Even when education is part of emergency response, it should be assumed with an evolving and developing perspective to contribute to reversing the damage that have been done by conflict. As schools and education systems are debilitated by conflict, they are left weakened, damaged, and under resourced, it is “precisely the time when communities, governments, and international agencies require them to play a role in rebuilding and transforming themselves and the societies they serve. This ... mandate of reform and reconstruction offers ... opportunities and ... challenges to societies emerging from conflict” (Buckland, 2004, pp. 1-2).

Even more fundamentally, education reflects national values and identities. Often there are cultural, religious, social, and economic dimensions of educational failures in many countries afflicted by civil strife, conflict, or war. For example, indigenous peoples, females, various ethnic groups, and others who are the most vulnerable in society are often marginalized, under-served, and receive low-quality education services. Many complex educational emergencies occur because of inter-group or inter-ethnic strife. Special and timely attention must be paid to these concerns or they will reappear to cause future friction and violence. (Vargas-Barón & Bernal, 2005, p. 5)

As every conflict has its unique background, programmes need to be formulated or even adapted to meet specific psychological, political, social and cultural settings in which the conflict took place, and consequently the recovery process occurs. Nevertheless, there are a number of basic elements that are necessary to take into account to design a reconciliation programme. Topics such as: justice, tolerance, respect for human rights and peace must be interlink into any education curriculum. Education for reconciliation in a post conflict setting should therefore: (a) bolster an understanding of the roots, consequences and resolutions of conflict. (b) Introduce and develop the skills necessary to rebuild relationships that were damaged by violent conflict. (c) Develop an understanding to resolve the differences that may exist in experience, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs and culture. To achieve these goals it must be embedded in fundamental values such as respect, dignity and equality, as well as it must be concerned and addressed specific issues of pluralism, culture, identity, class and



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gender. Governments and society must guarantee that education for reconciliation in a post conflict situation is realistic and liable praxis. Education for reconciliation needs also to be a fundamental part of non-formal education systems, particularly in situations where the education system is still strongly divided along with social classes and political lines. Projects should be practical and original, and need to be simple in the face of complex and devastating conflict. They should present an opportunity to people who have been separated by violent conflict to come together, rebuild their own lives and ensure that the cycle of violence ends (Huyse, 2003).

In general, schools and curricula are site of the construction, mobilization, and politicization, as well as ease the complex relationship between education and reconciliation process in a post-conflict (King, 2005). It should be pointed out that a low quality education may turn into a divisive sphere, mostly when decisions about curriculum content, textbooks or language of instruction ignore or allow denigration of social groups, or when education program reinforces messages ... favouring violence to solve personal, social or political problems. The real challenge for persons who supports education programs in emergencies is to avoid such errors and look to reinforce peace and social cohesion (Talbot, 2013).

In sum, curriculum reform in a post-conflict is a crucial tool to improve the overall quality of education. Likewise curriculum is significant "to avoid reproducing contents that at worst have contributed to conflict and, at best, have done nothing to prevent it" (Tawil & Harley, 2004, cited by Save the Children, 2008, p. 20). It "main concern is with the cultivation of orienting, perception, emotional communicational and creative abilities, the creation of positive and supportive classroom environments, as well as the development of conflict resolution skills" (Kupermintz, & Salomon, 2005, p. 55).

Education projects in post-conflict environments

As it is already known, conflicts have a devastating impact on education, consequently a devastating impact on children and youth lives. Formal and non-formal education structures are corroded, communities displaces and fragmented and educational inputs threatened. Maintaining a sufficient educational corps, recruiting educators and ensuring that they are properly trained and remunerated becomes a challenge; physical structures are also affected, and there are not safe environments for learning. This combination of factors considerably reduces the quality of education in any circumstances. "When discussing education needs, it is critical to remember that learning takes place in both formal and non-formal learning environments, and that both environments must be conducive to the learner's needs" (Castle, Elder, Baxter & Cornu, 2005, p. 32). It has been recommended by UNESCO to implement into the education curriculum the following threefold: teaching of specific "life skills", "learning to be", and "learning to live together" to the reinforcement of people's positive capabilities (Dubois & Trabelsi, 2007, p. 54).



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The Liberia Project: Parents, Teachers and History

Liberia's civil war lasted 14 years before it ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in Ghana in 2003. As far as education is concerned, Liberia had to deal with the strong backlog of the generation that failed to receive appropriate education. This nation had to address the difficulty to transform the schooling, teaching, and instruction areas, as well as rebuilding the entire infrastructure. The wartime left most of the schools and other education related buildings destroyed, as well as the total absence of teachers ([IBIS Education For Development, 2012; 2013](#)).

To start with, Liberia's government increased its focus on quality education and its promotion at primary school level with the slogan "back-to-school" efforts and towards "stay-in-school" ([Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, pp. 6-7](#)).

As Liberians are returning to their homes in large numbers, and child soldiers [were] being demobilized and reintegrated into communities, it is seen as increasingly important that quality ... schools are accessible, so that children felt comfortable attending. Because there is virtually no infrastructure left, the transitional government is starting from scratch as it attempts to build schools and identify what supplies Liberian children needed most. ([Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, p. 7](#))

It states that these areas will be those where children are returning from lives as ex-combatants, refugees, and internal displacement. Inherent in this focusing will be an integrated community approach, which will combine essential elements of water/sanitation, health and protection into sustainable, community driven activities". ([UNMIL, 2005, cited by Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, p. 7](#))

The Liberian Project taught two essential points. First, history was a powerful tool that gave students a sense of place and a foundation for society where they live. Second, that as Eleanor Roosevelt argued, universal human rights "begin in small places close to home... and that unless they have meaning there, they will have little meaning anywhere" ([Benson, 2008, p. 48](#)). The main objective of Liberia project was to combine teaching history, with global awareness, with grass roots philanthropy. They began teaching their students about Liberia and its difficult relationship to the United States, from the antebellum era to the present. They taught how the increasingly murderous fourteen-year civil destroyed the country. They then introduced the students to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, discussed her campaign as "Ma Ellen" and "the Iron Lady of Liberia", and asked the students to monitor and asses her presidency. Throughout, they asked students to examine the relationship between rights and responsibilities, conflict and compromise, and the reciprocal relationship between domestic policy and foreign affairs and American history and international human rights ([Benson, 2008](#)).



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Parent Teacher Associations were part of the official school structure in Liberia. The support of solid family-school linkages has been increasingly and widely viewed as an indispensable component of strategies to improve students' educational outcomes. The membership of the Association has been such that they are members during the time their children are enrolled in the school. As new students were admitted to the school, new parents generally were inducted into the Parent Association. However, although it was a relevant strategy, it was a real challenge to create this Association since most of parents were illiterate and teachers not properly trained in how to manage the committees. As a result, Parents were often unable to function according to their purpose to improve and lead the development of the schools. Besides, as active members were leaving the Association as their children were also leaving the school, the Parents left with a human resource gap. It was therefore, "recommended by the government that parents who were active members were asked to attend to more few meetings in which there were new members so that there could be smooth transfer of knowledge and also of responsibilities. This could be done through active involvement of the principal who could keep track of such parents" (IBIS Education for Development, 2013, p. 12).

However, offer great potential for community engagement, and it is "believed that involving parents directly to collaborate with teachers in the running of their children's schools can greatly improve the quality of education. [It is] considered the Parent associations allies in the work to improve school management and supports their development in all relevant projects, for example by teaching the members to monitor teacher and pupil attendance (especially for girls), sexual harassment and violence against students" (IBIS Education for Development, 2012, pp. 13-14).

Ensuring that teachers have the capacity to undertake reconciliation education is an enormous challenge. The conflict reduced the pool of teachers, making it even harder to find those with the skills to teach sensitive new topic. Teachers themselves are part of the culture and have their own values. The emotional issues surrounding the past conflict make enormous demands on the traditionally technical background of teachers. Addressing conflict and reconciliation, of course, require knowledge of child rights, expertise in pedagogy and skills in facilitating discussion of controversial issues. Teachers are probably the single most important factors in mediating the curriculum and the values it conveys, and any education strategy needed to take account of their central role. (Smith, 2010, pp. 18-19)

In Liberia a significant amount of teachers had no formal teaching qualifications, affecting the quality of their teaching. As a result, too many children left primary school without being able to effectively read or write. That is why teacher training was another central element to improve the quality of education in Liberia (IBIS Education for Development, 2015). However, the approach that the Liberia's government gave regarding to teachers, was that the role of the teacher should not be limited to the class room. The teacher was considered an educator



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who may educate the community at large. Role of the Principal is extremely important ([IBIS Education for Development, 2012](#)). Teachers are a vital factor in preserving an appropriate schooling atmosphere. Given the critical role that teachers play in alleviating conflict wounds, it is important to highlight that during times of unrest teachers should receive the recognition and motivation to engender constructive values by providing sufficient training and motivation to stay in their own localities. It means that government should commit to pay them regularly an adequate salary ([Save the Children, 2008](#)).

Agreements with IBIS organization has offered untrained and low-skilled teachers a training course that included how to teach basic reading and writing, and pedagogical methods that engage the children actively in the classroom and, more importantly encouraging dialogue between teacher and student. Additionally, teachers were also trained in planning in accordance with the national curriculum, so they covered all the mandatory topics of the subject ([IBIS Education for Development, 2015](#)). As part of the teacher training, "the teachers were supported to attain high school diplomas, and then prepared for the admission test to Teacher College so they could become fully trained teachers. This way, they increased the quality of their teaching while becoming certified teachers, eligible to get on the payroll" ([IBIS Education for Development, 2015, p. 16](#)).

Liberia has to cope with large numbers of children and youth who missed out on formal education due to the war, and who are generally over-aged. In line with its commitment to facilitating this group's school participation and integration into age-appropriate grades in the regular school system, the government greatly expanded the so-called Accelerated Learning Program ... Its aim was to keep children in school in order to reduce the risk of their recruitment as combatants, and to help in the process of reintegration ... into society, as well as provide educational opportunities for older youth through structures separate from conventional primary schools ([IIEP, 2011, p. 37](#)).

The Accelerated Learning Program [was] designed to enable children who ... missed out on at least two years of schooling to finish primary school in three years rather than six, and be in class with people of their own age. The goal of [Accelerated Learning was] that students will graduate and go on to ... be incorporated into a regular age-appropriate classroom, enter vocational training or enter the work force. There had been huge demand for this program-classrooms were packed. ([Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, p. 11](#)).

Creative Associates, in partnership with an all Liberian team, ... developed a very early non formal education program called *Youth Education for Life Skills Project*. The curriculum focused on civic education and conflict resolution combined with basis literacy and numeracy, but little else in the way of conventional education ([Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, p. 11](#)).

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USAID [funded] a number of INGOs, including IRC and Save the Children UK, in their provision of hybrid vocational/formal education programs. Local tradespeople/business owner [were] approached and asked if they would be interested in providing hands-on training in their craft. Children and youth [worked] and learnt in the shop (carpentry, tailoring, tie dye) in the morning and attended basic literacy and numeracy classes in the afternoon. The tradespeople/business owners were compensated for their time and were provided with seminars in business skills ([Women's Commission interview with Sharon Pauling, 2005 cited by, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, p. 11](#)).

The Sierra Leone Project: Memory, Environment and Non-Formal Education

Sierra Leone ... emerged from a brutal civil war that lasted a decade (1991-2002) and destroyed most of the country's social, economic, and physical infrastructure. It left a multitude of scars in the education sector: devastated school infrastructure, severe shortages of teaching materials, overcrowding in many classrooms in safer areas, displacement of teachers and delay in paying their salaries, frequent disruptions of schooling, disorientation and psychological trauma among children, poor learning outcomes, weakened institutional capacity to manage the system, and a serious lack of information and data to plan service provision ([The World Bank, 2007, p. 15](#)).

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, ... [Sierra Leone had the challenge to implement a] set of education programmes that deal with the reintegration of ex-combatants, accelerated learning programmes for students that ... missed out on education, school reconstruction and refurbishment, psychosocial support and peace education initiatives. [In this country, there was a profoundly] interest and appreciation of the importance of education in the immediate post-war period, and government ... struggle to cope with the upsurge in demand. [In such a way], the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) programme in Sierra Leone was [its first-ever] educational intervention with a programme rationale that providing an accelerated learning programme for children who missed out on their education during the war would help children move on in the lives and improve their situation. ([Novelli & Smith, 2011, p. 29](#))

Sierra Leone is "endowed with mineral, agricultural and fishing resources, [nonetheless] the majority of the population [relied] on subsistence agriculture and few industries were developed" ([Skuce, 2002, p. 41](#)). There was a willingness to promote a series of eco-curriculum models to take a positive advantage of their resources. Initially the environmental education was informal, mainly aimed at awareness-building through the media and community activities. Shortly after, the environment project was introduced to the formal education system where



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it [was] mentioned as a topic in ... courses...: geography, agriculture and integrated science. In a nation where life expectancy is so low, the link between environment and health is also extremely relevant. ... Each of the modules addresses a specific aspect of the environment such as biodiversity, food security or pollution. ... There were attempts to bring international issues to local level and local issues to an international scale. For example, Sierra Leone itself releases few greenhouse gases due to its lack of industry and few automobiles but increasingly it is deforested and is obviously affected by climate change as a coastal country" (Skuce, 2002, pp. 41-43).

Taking into account this context, and the fact that the cause of environmental degradation in Sierra Leone is diamonds, the government implemented the Technical Vocational Education and Training program. The objective was to promote the mining industry as the most important sector in the region, and to providing employment opportunities for many people (GIZ, 2013).

The Memory Project was a voluntary avenue for those who desire the opportunity and feel ready to share their stories. The project's mission was both: a healing mechanism and a cultural imperative to confront and learn from the past. As uncomfortable as past deeds may be, they constitute an important aspect in any archival institution and form a major component of society's culture and history (Kargbo, 2008).

Moreover, the growing trend towards restorative justice ... and the fundamental human rights principles of dignity and the "right to know" require the participation of victims, perpetrators, and all of society ... and restore community harmony. ... In the West African tradition, the responsibility of transmitting history from one generation to another rested with storytellers – griots. ... These devoted storytellers conveyed in great lyrical details the traumatic experiences. ... People gathered in town squares to listen to the stories of lone warriors who survived major atrocities in war. Sierra Leoneans believed that these stories were told so that communities might re-examine their past choices and properly evaluate their future decisions, bearing in mind past errors of judgment. Societies lamented and empathized with people like lone warriors and took actions to ameliorate their condition by, for example, offering them wives, making them chiefs, or providing them with land or seeds to give them a fresh start in the community. (Kaifala, 2014, p. 2)

In Sierra Leone explorations of issues related to oral traditions was and is a basic element in getting people with all background to recognize the extend and value of their own knowledge and it gave them the self-assurance and foundations for further learning about living in community (Kargbo, 2008).

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The concept of oral history was not a novel idea in Sierra Leonean society where historical knowledge has always been passed on from one generation to another. ... The idea of an oral history project that provided a forum for survivors of the civil war to voluntarily share their stories both as a tool for individual healing and collective national dialogue appeared to many as a deliberate attempt to reignite past traumatic experiences. It [was] interesting to note that even though some of those who raised concerns about opening "old wounds" were themselves survivors, they were not direct victims or perpetrators. And it was disconcerting that some people, mostly those occupying high offices in the country, were speaking for the rest of society. None of the victims or perpetrators that were consulted showed grave fears of opening "old wounds". In fact, they expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their stories with what was rapidly becoming a Sierra Leonean society indifferent to the visible scars of the past. (Kaifala, 2014, pp. 1-2).

One of the greatest aspects of oral history [was] that it is usually separate from the formal involvement of government. However, government as the trustee of the social contract was sometimes needed for the implementation of community recommendations following constructive dialogues generated by oral history in the aftermath of harrowing experiences. Ultimately, in order for communities to heal after shattering experiences, stories of their individual experiences, no matter how terrible must be told. The sharing of stories reveals connections and similarities despite societal differences and allows communities to focus on their common humanity and experience (Kaifala, 2014, p. 9).

The present was aimed at children and youth to complete a number of years of education in a shorter time period. It was designed for children from 10 to 16 who never attended primary school or whose primary school years were interrupted by the conflict. The programmes condense the primary cycle of six years into three years. In theory with these programs children were able to "catch up" in years of school so that they could enter ... secondary school at approximately the correct age (Baxter & Bethke, 2009, pp. 45-46).

To achieve the objective to support children to complete the number of years of education required in a short time, the curriculum was summarized by dropping non-core subjects such as art, sport and music and eliminating repetition and revision time for the core subjects. Schools focused on teaching the necessary subjects necessary to pass the national primary examination, namely: language, arts, mathematics, social studies and integrated science, and English, verbal aptitude, quantitative aptitude. Nonetheless, it was provided non-core subjects that were the "carriers" for "alternative" topics –for example, hygiene, peace education, environment, and sexual and reproductive health (Baxter & Bethke, 2009; The World Bank, 2007).



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The aim of peace education in Sierra Leone was to enrich, deepen and contextualize students' thinking about the concept of peace. The lesson to be learnt was not only the content of the concept but it was also to enact and implement the methodology of peace. Given that peace was active and participatory, the pedagogy of peace education was crucially important (Bretherton, Weston & Zbar, 2003). "Peace is not only what is done, but also a quality of the way in which it is done. While texts were important, the peace education curriculum also used role-playing, games and collaborative learning projects. Group's activities provided opportunities to learn about negotiation, co-operation and teamwork" (Bretherton et al., 2003, p. 78). If educators tried to transmit culture across this gap, then education itself contributed to the widening of the gap between rhetoric and representation and reality. It was not optional that the teacher tried to convey a peace culture without some practice. The teacher was important as a model of peaceful behaviour and his or her relationship with students was a powerful aspect of the learning process. Through enacting the values of peace in the relationship with the teacher, the students could experience an "actual culture of peace". For example, teachers could draw out observations about role-playing, encourage the exploration of different viewpoints through role reversals, and challenge the children to formulate different endings or ask judicious questions about the feelings of other characters. It was often in the de-briefing of the activity and the ensuing discussion that the full meaning and relevance of concepts could be realized (Bretherton et al., 2003).

As well as using active learning methods, the teacher needed to be effective in managing the emotional climate. An important issue for teachers was the extent to which war, trauma, injury and weapons were discussed. An unrealistic denial of the darker side of life will endanger the credibility of the programme. However, special sensitivity was needed to ensure that material was appropriate to the age of the children. For instance, when peace education was introduced into Australian schools in the 1980s, there were doubts about the ethics of discussing war and violence with children. However, this concern was based on the assumption that children could be sheltered from knowledge. It has taken time for most people accept the fact that information about war and violence was readily available to young children through television. Furthermore, many children around the world knew about armed conflict from direct experience. Even in communities at peace, the movement of refugees around the world increased the probability that children will learn from other children who have had direct experience. Thus, talking about war and conflict could be seen not as an introduction to war and violence, but rather as a chance to discuss, clarify and correct what is already known. Discussion with adults could mitigate the harmful effects of viewing violence. Dealing with trauma was thus a core issue in any peace education programme in Sierra Leone (Bretherton et al., 2003).

Peace was, of course, always understood as relationships between people. When peace education was to be implemented there was a need to work on building positive relationships which encourage co-operation between people and deal with difference and conflict in non-violent ways. School could contribute to this both by becoming more peaceful places themselves,



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and by playing an active role in modelling and promoting peace in their local communities. With this in mind, the kit contained a section specifically dedicated to whole-school and community activities, which could help to generate peaceful and positive relations within the school, between the school and the community, and within the community as a whole. The school-based units focused on the four areas of: behaviour and discipline, based on a logical-consequences approach which relates directly to the behaviour exhibited, whose values were known by everyone in advance and were respectful of the child and others involved; examining all subjects as a means of engaging more teachers in the process and ensuring that their approaches and messages were consistent with building a more peaceful Sierra Leone; promoting students participation at school, both within classrooms and at a broader level, including through the creation of representative student councils; and the adoption of appropriate teaching techniques, which involved students and invite other to participate. A range of ideas is advanced to connect the school to its community and the community to the school (Bretherton et al., 2003).

The South Africa equity project

South Africa's history was blemished by racial discrimination and political violence (Bray & Joubert, 2007). In the Apartheid era, "it [was] established that access to education was often a status reward that was distributed differentially, [on the basis of ethnicity], and that education could be a mechanism of social control" (Johnson, 1982, p. 214). "In the education sphere, a white minority regime forced upon the majority of South Africans (i.e., blacks) an inferior and discriminatory Bantu Education Act that resulted in schools and universities being turned into bloody battlefields" (Bray & Joubert, 2007, p. 50).

South African's democratic government inherited a fragmented and divided education system. During the Apartheid, South Africa had 19 different educational departments separated by race, geography, and ideology. In each of these "19 systems learners were prepared in a different way for the positions they were expected to occupy social, economic, and political life under apartheid. In each, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality" (Bray & Joubert, 2007, p. 53). Most of the resources were reserved on schools to serve white students while the black majority were deprived of qualified teachers, physical resources and teaching aids such as textbooks and stationary. Blacks were given poor education so as to keep them out of the modern sector of the economy and domestic service sectors (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

Education programs changed in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately after the 1994 elections. The Revised National Curriculum from the Department of Education envisaged the infusion of the values of human dignity, social justice, equity, and democracy across the curriculum. The social sciences learning area, for example, involves the study of relationships between people and between people and the environment at various times and various



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places. These relationships have social, political, economic, and environmental dimensions. The curriculum aims to develop informed, critical, and responsible citizens who are able to participate constructively in a culturally diverse and changing South Africa society (Bray & Joubert, 2007).

A key demand in the debate over educational governance in South Africa was the call for greater parental participation in schooling. Increased parental participation was the officially stated goal of virtually every progressive educational organization in South Africa. It began by conceiving parents, at one level, as citizens in a constitutional democracy. They were thus seen as individuals with citizenship rights that were to be exercised in the context of devolved school governance. In this instance, parents, as citizens, were granted the right to participate in the determination of key areas of school policy. This right was manifested in their representation on school governing bodies; yet with such representation came a set of responsibilities, user fees being a key example (Sayed, 1997).

Parents' "school citizenship" status was guaranteed by the conferring of juristic persona on school governing bodies. As the second *White Paper on Education* (WP2) indicated, "the citizen-parent was an individual whose rights were interactively constituted in the context of a strong commitment to equity and redress. These rights were held in partnership with the relevant education authorities; they do not imply, as stated in the WP2 "turning over the school to parents" (Sayed, 1997, p. 361). Instead, parents are seen as assisting with the professional functioning of the school. The parent was envisioned as one who works with the school and was not, as has been the case in the past, the locus of opposition. The parent was constituted in the image of the state, as a citizen who was unlikely to come into conflict with educational authorities. This could be viewed as deconcentration of administrative educational control, indeed, as a form of administrative "downloading", with parents expected to take on greater administrative responsibility for their children's schooling (Sayed, 1997).

The preceding point highlights two distinct conceptualizations of parents as citizens, fascinating account of citizenship and governing bodies. The first form of parental citizenship, that which was arguably invoked in the South African Statistical Association - SASA, viewed parents as self-reliant, not as hostages to the state. Parents' school citizenship was constituted on the basis of their efforts to make their children's and their own lives better so that they did not have to dependent on the state. This was a citizenship that attempts to regenerate and revitalize the cohesive bonds of the nuclear family and restore the political and moral order. The second version, heralded by the political left, is that of the parent who, through public association in the space of civil society, recognized the bonds of community and consequently worked for the public good and the assertion of civic virtue (Sayed, 1997).

Parents were the primary clients of the education system and should always be the majority constituency on school governing bodies. In the words of the second White Paper, parents "have the most stake in their child's education because of the heavy 'legal and financial decision for

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which governing bodies would be responsible'". Second, parents were constituted as consumers on the basis of the fees they pay "to provide additional finances for school provision beyond the state subsidy. The operation of the market in education engenders a conception of the citizen consumer as a self-interested, utility-maximizing, rational individual" (Sayed, 1997, p. 361).

Teachers are the most powerful socializing force within the school context, because they are responsible for providing the environment and encouragement for learning (Berns, 2001). To a large degree, teachers determine the quality and nature of the school environment, and their behavior, attitudes, motivation, and training are key to ensuring that a quality learning environment is maintained. Teachers are both authority figures and role models for children, and many interviewees felt that teachers should serve as guides who can advise children on how to behave. If schools are to emphasize nonviolent ways of interacting, then "values must be lived in schools" (#L-38), as a United Nations employee in Liberia pointed out, and "school staff need to act peacefully and be aware of how they teach and act around children" (#L-9), as a representative from the Liberian Ministry of Education stated. (Dupuy, 2008, p. 50)

Teacher education, as part of the larger transformation project in post-apartheid South Africa, underwent radical change and review since 1994. The teacher education system created by the apartheid government was inequitable and racially segregate: the majority of teachers (mostly Black) received state-controlled college teacher training and a minority of teachers (mostly White) received a university teacher education (Schäfer & Wilmot, 2012).

Under apartheid, the majority of teachers (that is, Black teachers) were trained in colleges; now the responsibility for initial teacher training for all South Africans falls on education departments at universities around the country. In the apartheid era, the majority of teachers became qualified with a two- or three-year diploma; now they need four years. What raised the bar was the need to modernize and align teaching qualifications with global trends, coupled with the ascendancy of competency-based discourse as the dominant global education discourse. Now teachers must either complete a four-year Bachelor of Education degree or "cap" an appropriate bachelor's degree with a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in order to become qualified. The minimum entry requirement of a bachelor's degree for the teaching profession is intended to resolve issues of quality in the system. Market-driven global forces evident in the discourse of standards-based education reform, along with standards-setting bodies to monitor performativity and quality assurance, have shaped teacher education since 1994. (Schäfer & Wilmot, 2012, p. 48)



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In light of strong disenchantment with the current approaches to teacher preparation, a call for a renewed focus on teacher education with strong connections to the local context is reiterated. In relation to South Africa, it was critical that such a focus on teacher education had to link with broader socio-political and cultural perspectives, given the apartheid history of segregating the education system, including teacher education, on the basis of race, ethnicity and language and now on the basis of social class. Thus, it was important that teacher education could be seen within the wider context of social theories of learning and frameworks (Islam, 2012).

Conclusion

To achieve a long-lasting post-conflict, among other things, governments and societies should rely on education. Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa, have shown different educational plans in which the community as a whole was taken into consideration to strengthen the reconciliation process. It is important to highlight that education programs have not only involved children and youth, it has also engaged survivors (all ages), parents, local communities, teachers, civil society, and local and international organizations. It means that it is absolutely important to have the social inclusion value as a guide in the post-conflict process to accomplish a long-term recovery of communities.

The purposes of all educational programs presented above from Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa are ultimately to bring reconciliation, enhancing respect for human rights, fairness and solidarity, as well as political stability. But more importantly, the findings of the present review suggest three points: first, education must be a priority issue in governments and society that want to overcome years of devastated conflicts, it cannot be postponed. Second, investment in infrastructure is quite important, however, investment in training teachers, parents and groups within communities are vital. Improving the quality of education will definitely have a positive impact in security, political and economic areas. And third, technical formal education should be well planned according to the countries' necessities, however, programs should have in first line the purpose to profess moral values such as respect for one another, respect for children, youth and elders, tolerance and the value of justice and equity.

Colombia should strongly regard education as a mechanism for reconciliation in the post-conflict. It does not only constitute a fundamental right, it is also a guarantee to secure people's rights and the entire development of Colombians. Of course, the Colombian government should provide safe learning environments, especially from remote areas where the State has not taken over yet, that is a challenge that should be achieved shortly, in order to prevent failure in providing adequate education to support the process of post-conflict reconciliation.



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