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Transforming pedagogies: Emerging contexts and texts of teaching learning

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Transforming Pedagogies: Emerging Contexts and Texts of Teaching Learning

Policy Brief

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Education in Emergencies

Definition of Emergencies

“...emergencies are defined as urgent situations in which there is clear evidence that an event or series of events has occurred which causes human suffering or imminently threatens human lives or livelihoods and which the government concerned has not the means to remedy; and it is a demonstrably abnormal event or series of events which produces dislocation in the life of a community on an exceptional scale.” (World Food Programme, 2005)

Executive Summary

This brief offers recommendations for policy and practice around ensuring continuity of education in emergency situations. It also aims at engaging important stakeholders to assert the need for education in emergencies in countries like Pakistan, which frequently confront natural and human-led disasters. This brief also discusses the need for ‘education in emergencies’ in a ‘low HDI’ developing nation such as Pakistan, where being exposed to natural and human-led disasters seems to be a way of life. It provides an initial platform for those who are interested in understanding the scope of this theme, as well as designing and delivering educational programmes in areas situations of conflict, disaster and tragedy. Education provision in emergency situations can comprise a wide range of programmatic interventions ranging from non-formal education activities (that can be arranged using minimum resources, whilst demanding parental support and participation), to formal (school-based) activities (requiring investment in intensive training, community involvement and co-operation of local authorities) (Betancourt, 2005). Further, it is characterized by the acquisition of certain skill-sets and a positive, determined attitude highlighted in the following table:

Skills

conflict resolution; problem-solving; decision-making; communication (assertiveness, self-expression); critical thinking, dealing with emotions, cooperation

Attitudes

tolerance; self-esteem/self-respect; commitment to justice and equity; bias awareness; respect for rights and responsibilities

Knowledge

safety (e.g. landmines); the environment; health and healthy life style; peace and conflict; rights and responsibilities; and cultural heritage

Rationale

It seems that emergency circumstances have almost become a way of life in developing nations. Events such as the recent typhoons Haiyan and Phailin; the war in Afghanistan and Iraq; armed conflicts, droughts, and epidemics in Africa; earthquakes, tsunamis, and many other events to date, have affected billions of peoples around the world.

In the case of Pakistan, on the one hand, natural disasters such as the recurring floods of 2010, 2011 and 2012, and the earthquakes of 2005 and 2008, have affected an estimated 29 million peoples in the country (IRIN: humanitarian news and analysis, 2011). On the other hand, insurgencies, local sectarian, tribal, and political conflicts such as the “War on Terror,” continue to cause havoc in the country. It has been estimated that over 3.5 million peoples have been displaced in Pakistan due to recent human-led disasters (ODI-HPI, 2009). Additionally, Pakistan hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, approx. 1.7 million peoples, mainly from Afghanistan (UNHCR, 2011). Yet there are scores of affected people who remain unreported.

Victims of emergency situations need not only basic necessities such as food, shelter, and medical aid, but also educational facilitation and continuity. This is crucial since mitigation efforts often take years, which can have effects over generations. If mitigation strategies are not well planned and executed there is a great risk that the affected populace can get into an intergenerational poverty trap. This phenomenon can have harmful effects on the development of society at large.

By studying the economic and political situation of the country one can clearly deduce that Pakistan lacks the resources and institutional capacity to handle an influx of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). One can only estimate the severity of the situation that has gradually evolved in Pakistan, especially in the case of education provision. Research by Arif Hassan, Church World Service (Pakistan) and other NGOs, has pointed out the abysmal condition of the victims of emergencies. A Case in point is the relief camps setup around Karachi's vicinity since 2010, for the Sindh flood victims, which are gradually transforming into urban slums due to poorly planned mitigation strategies by the government.

It has also been estimated that up to 2.5 million children have been severely affected just by the 2010 floods in Pakistan (IRIN: humanitarian news and analysis, 2011). Over the years, the increment of affected children places an even greater strain on Pakistan's already weak education system. Physical damages to school buildings, lack of trained human capital, and the lack of strategically planned inputs across affected areas places an additional fiscal strain on the country. It has been estimated that over 5600 schools were used as IDP shelters during the 2010 floods, and as many as 10,000 schools suffered physical damage. As yet, many of these schools have not been reopened or have been reopened with damaged conditions (Alexander, 2011).

Problems such as lack of coordination; duplication of relief efforts; lack of partnership platforms; little or no understanding about pooled funding mechanisms; laxness of the local governments; and inaccurate monitoring and evaluation figures by federal institutions, have been reflected in relief and rehabilitation efforts for recent disasters in Pakistan. In terms of policy, it is critical to recognize that the central focus for the preparation of education provision during emergencies should be on the development of a valuable knowledge base. Research at AKU-IED (Alam, 2011; Begum, 2011, and Khan, 2013) has highlighted the urgency of educational provision for the upliftment of the communities in the disaster affected regions.

In such a scenario Pakistan severely lacks frameworks, policies, and institutions to provide education in emergencies. The 18th Constitutional amendment of 2009 has provided "autonomy" to the provinces to make key policy interventions towards improving the quality of education. To this end, the government of Sindh, through its recently launched Sindh Education Sector Plan (2014), has taken a step forward in recognizing the issues of education in emergencies. In particular, the education sector plan has laid policy emphasis on developing the capacity of educational managers, school management committees, and teachers, to manage and support

educational processes in education in emergencies. Large scale and broad-based awareness campaigns on education in emergencies has also been recognized as an important objective. Although the National Education Policy 2009 references the idea of education in emergencies, more effort is needed in terms of presenting clear and concise policies to address the large number of diverse peoples in diverse contexts, affected by various forms of emergencies.

If the aim of 'education for all' is to be realized and universal access to education is to be achieved, then efforts to reach out and include crisis affected populations in the education streams, should be one of the highest priorities of the government and other stakeholders.

Proposed Approach

'Education in emergencies' programmes are "carried out in situations where children lack access to their national and community education systems due to the occurrence of complex emergencies or natural disasters" (Nicholai & Triplehorn, 2003: 2).

The aftermath of the various crises in developing states requires multidimensional strategic approaches towards restoration. These strategies constitute physical, psychological, and human resource development interventions. Physical renewal entails replacing buildings and restoring infrastructure. Psychological renewal entails helping victims cope with trauma, feelings of insecurity, loss, and displacement. Human resource development entails building the capacity of teachers and community members alike.

Through various evaluation-based research, it has been found that both students and teachers experience high amounts of psychological stress in emergency situations. In these situations, children need more than just schools and teachers who teach core subjects. They require a sense of normalcy to be able to ease back into the formal education system. Therefore, education in emergencies needs to be delivered in phases (Kagawa, 2005). UNICEF's 'Education in Emergencies' toolkit initiates the rehabilitation of affected peoples from a recreational phase to non-formal education, then towards a return to formal education.

Besides developing low/no-cost educational materials and alternative pedagogies, mental health programmes such as counselling are needed to be incorporated in interventions strategies, which aim to provide education. These interventions should be targeted to assist affected children and their families, as part of holistic development programmes, in order to help people cope with education in emergencies more effectively (Betancourt, 2005). Investment in teacher-training programmes, especially

in the area of psychological counselling, is suggested as a first step to reaching out to children in affected circumstances.

Emergencies can also be used as a window of opportunity to address the existing educational concerns in affected areas. Pakistan already faces an ongoing educational crisis in terms of educational access and quality education provision. Efficient and effective long-term planning can ensure that the affected communities develop resilience, and that their institutions are well-equipped to handle future emergencies. This would relieve pressure off the government in areas where recurring emergencies are eminent.

Good practices of resilience development include disseminating knowledge of seismically sound school infrastructure to reduce fears of earthquakes; conducting vulnerability assessment using a participatory approach with third¹ sector organizations; incorporating disaster risk reduction (DRR) components in mainstream curricula; and using child-to-child and child-to-parent learning approaches to spread knowledge about DRR education in schools and communities. It should be noted here that Pakistan is also a signatory of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), an initiative of the UNISDR. Spreading knowledge about this platform on national, provincial, and local levels of governance would contribute towards resilience development and the continuation of education in emergency situations.

The National Education Policy 2009 also recommends that teacher education institutions, schools, and universities should store disaster related guides and other educational materials in case of an emergency. This recommendation brings forth the issue of curricular content development (of Disaster Risk Reduction), and its implementation. In this case, modification in the standards and objectives of the national curriculum are recommended, in order to prepare teachers, students, and staff for these calamities.

Implications for Various Stakeholders

Policy makers

More concerted efforts are needed to frame concrete policies and procedures for emergency situations within the federal, provincial, and local tiers of government. Also, private and third sector organizations should be accounted as vital stakeholders in the strategy development of education provision in emergencies, in order to produce effective and efficient outputs. Education can be used as a medium to provide other humanitarian services in war-torn or disaster-affected areas.

- i. The National Disaster Response Plan (NDRP) should include how to address the psychological concerns of IDPs, and how to return back to the formal education system in a timely manner.
- ii. Inter-Agency Network for Emergency Education (INEE-UNICEF) suggests 19 minimum education standards that need to be a part of humanitarian aid efforts. Developing nations can use these standards to enlighten their policies for education in emergency situations. If these standards are incorporated in the NDRP, then Pakistan would greatly benefit from these policies

Research institutions

Research institutions should take an increased interest into this new and emerging field to answer certain questions, such as what kind of strategies need to be developed in order to prepare teachers to address emergency situations? What kind of curriculum is appropriate for children of war torn or disaster affected areas?

Efforts of international organizations can be studied to understand how they address education in emergency situations. For example:

- i. The International Rescue Committee in collaboration with the University of Nairobi has created a M.Ed. degree programme for Education in Emergencies (EiE).
- ii. Studying UNICEF's frameworks and curriculums, which aid workers follow in disaster-affected areas, can serve as a good start for further research.

Teacher training institutions

The NEP 2009 recommends that educational institutions should maintain emergency related materials within their vicinity. This should be a compulsory policy for all institutions. Teacher training institutions can include disaster risk reduction (DRR) components within their curriculums in order to trigger a domino effect for the perpetuation of DRR knowledge, to children and to the greater community.

- i. The curriculums of the B.Ed, M.Ed, and ADE degree programmes currently do not have any courses related

1 The third sector is also known as the Non-Profit or Voluntary Sector. The term was first coined by Amitai Etzioni, in his "The Third Sector and Domestic Missions," in 1973. The term "the third sector", was defined as "an alternative sector separate from and balancing the state and the market, themselves considered separate sectors. If something is ruled neither primarily by market logic nor via a bureaucratic chain of command, it must be part of the "third" sector. Many current operational definitions follow this basic schema." (Etzioni, 1973). For the British government, for example, "The term is used to distinguish such organizations from the other two sectors of the economy: the public sector ('government') and the private sector ('businesses')" (National Audit Office, 2009).

to the provision of education in emergency situations. Some courses exist, which touch upon the ideas of environment and inclusive education in teaching, but do not explicitly address emergency situations. Neither do they reference the modifications teachers should make in their teaching/learning practices in emergencies situations.

- ii. Since Pakistan's policy and research base is very limited in terms of education in emergencies, in the short-run, teacher educators can shoulder the responsibility of incorporating knowledge of various aspects of education provision emergency situations into existing courses.
- iii. Possible skills that would be needed by teachers in emergencies should be discussed and taught (for example, building opportunities for expression and social interaction, and creative activities including songs, music, dance, poetry, writing, etc.).

Curriculum developers

Topics related to emergencies have not been integrated into the national curriculum as proposed by the NEP 2009. Furthermore, the current national curriculum was created in 2006 and has not been updated since. It is recommended that the curriculum for Humanities be explored and further developed, with particular focus on subjects such as social studies, geography, literature and language. The curriculum themes should correspond to the emergencies that are likely to occur in a particular area, in order to cater to those who reside in those areas.

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