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Schools and war: urgent agendas for comparative and international education

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A focus on conflict and education is one of the most pressing concerns of the current times, and yet the role of education in the perpetuation, or the mitigation, of international conflict is curiously underplayed and under-researched. This paper looks firstly at the contributions that education makes to conflict, through the reproduction of inequality and exclusion, through perpetuation of ethnic or religious divisions, through its acceptance of dominant aggressive masculinities, through selection, competition and fear, and through distorted curricular emphases on narrow cognitive areas of learning. However, the paper also outlines some 'possibilities for hope', such as resilient schools, the impact of peace education initiatives and the rise of global citizenship education. It is argued that comparative and international education has a highly important role in establishing patterns of educational contribution to peace or conflict, and in dissemination of research to act as a lobbying force to influence education policy and practice. The paper outlines eight priorities, including alternative international studies focusing on 'achievement' in peace education; cross-cultural or longitudinal studies of impact of peace education and war education; and tracer studies of why young people join fundamentalist organisations.

Keywords: *Conflict; Peace; Democracy; Global citizenship: Comparative education*

Introduction

It is my contention that a focus on conflict and education is one of the most pressing concerns of current times. There are no signs that conflict is decreasing in the world, quite the converse. No country is safe from the prospect or the actuality of aggression and violence; and yet the role of education in the perpetuation, or conversely the mitigation, of international conflict is curiously underplayed and under-researched. Some effects may, admittedly, be long term; but, in the interests of global survival, that is even more reason for urgency in addressing what schools

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and colleges are doing. While budgets for 'defence' and for the military are generally higher than for education, the latter is still a major spender in most countries. And I would argue it is actually a key player in the perpetuation of violence. We have a crisis: not of globalisation, not of the economy, but of something which transcends those. It is a crisis of the refusal to see what is happening to learning in our societies. Conflict is not only not decreasing, but escalating in terms of terror and the so-called—and dangerously so-called—'war on terror'. My argument is that unless we look at schools and colleges and at how, or what, young people (and adults) learn, this spiral into violence and destruction can only continue.

There are a number of myths to be challenged, and this means a strong role for comparative and international education. One myth is that education is generally beneficial and that more education is therefore even more beneficial. The three way interface between education, poverty and conflict is complex and cast doubts on education's benign role. Despite the lack of a demonstrable cause and effect relationship between poverty and conflict, nonetheless out of the 34 countries furthest away from the international development goals, some 20 are in conflict or emerging from conflict (DFID, 2000). Conflict has a self-sustaining nature: the state in some countries has often lost the monopoly over decision-making and there is large scale availability of arms. We are looking at regional trading blocs and a growth in protectionism, even if the World Trade Organisation is supposedly opening up markets; and, more sinister, an extension of military power. But where is education in this? While increased access to schooling can be shown to help political stability within a country, comparative analysis can question the myth that universal formal education also automatically creates international harmony.

In my recent book *Conflict and Education: Complexity and Chaos* (2004) I have examined the complex relationship between education and conflict, and want to develop some of the ideas from the book in this address. Theoretically, the book uses complexity theory to try to understand the linkages, and while there is no space here to develop this, the language will inevitably creep into my analysis. Very briefly, key relevant insights from complexity theory are the non-linearity of complex systems (such as brains or economies or indeed education systems) which means turbulence and unpredictability, but also unique adaptations to new interventions; amplification and the 'butterfly effect', with tiny perturbations not remaining tiny, and a yawn, epidemic, rumour or life style spreading through a population; the self-organisation of systems, through intense interaction and communication, rather than necessarily 'leadership'; and information, feedback loops, 'connectivities' and networks—and I give Al-Quaeda as an example of a powerful network. In the search for adaptation or survival, complex systems have to reach 'the edge of chaos' where 'emergence' to a new or better order is possible. Chaos is actually extremely complex information, rather than an absence of order. But chance plays a role too, and of relevance to conflict theorising is the notion of 'frozen accidents' (the QWERTY keyboard and attitudes to women, for example, being seen as appropriate at some stage but then never discarded). Formal education systems, and even nation states, could be seen as 'frozen accidents', in the sense that they were a product of some policy or thinking

at a particular point in time which then become taken for granted as the only reality. This has huge implications for the ways we see relationships with each other.

The relationship between education and conflict includes the more obvious effect of war and violence on education itself—disruption, loss of physical and human resources, hardening of attitudes to the enemy, to the outgroup; but there is the perhaps less obvious reverse impact of education on conflict. I will argue in this address that this is through the reproduction or amplification of inequality, exclusion and social polarisation; through the hardening of ethnic or religious identifications and divisions; and through its acceptance of dominant macho, aggressive, militaristic and homophobic masculinities. I will argue that the selection functions of education in most countries contribute to competition and fear, easily played on by those seeking to instil hatred or to urge acceptance of aggression. I will argue that the distorted curricular emphases on narrow cognitive areas of learning, only worsened by the international achievement studies, leave little space for democratic critical pedagogy and the preparation for active citizenship and resistance. I will now develop these in a little more detail here, in order to derive a new agenda for comparative and international education activity and research.

Contributions to the roots of conflict

The antecedents to conflict are, by definition, complex and interdependent, but I distinguish three main areas in order to pinpoint the role of education. First is *economic or class relations*. Real and perceived economic injustices can generate conflict; and those conflicts that appear to have a religious or cultural base can often be traced back to an economic root, such as unequal access to power, employment, housing or water. Education has an ambiguous role here. On the one hand is the conventional human capital analysis that education can serve to lift a country out of absolute and relative poverty and hence out of the economic marginalisation that can be a precursor to instability in a country; on the other hand is the argument that education produces and reproduces—or actually exaggerates—social divisions, therefore contributing to the likelihood of tension. Within this second strand of analysis is admittedly the palliative function of education as acting to legitimate inequality—that is, by attributing economic inequality to 'ability', people do not challenge their position. Yet the book argues that the reproductive role of education is the strongest, and provides examples from many parts of the world of how education systems have served to increase marginalisation and social exclusion. The acquisition of formal education and credentials legitimises class differentials and, because education is a gate-keeping operation, is actually designed to exclude significant proportions of people in any country. Social exclusion is not random, but concentrated in already marginalised groups. Globalisation and simplistic neo-liberal market economics (in which education has joined) have added to such divisions and to the frustrations of the economically abandoned. The increased emphasis on 'standards', credentials and competitiveness between schools and countries means, as in markets, winners and losers. Inequalities are becoming more

polarised. Class conflicts internal to a country have added to bifurcation, polarisation and social exclusion. As Porter so eloquently comments,

> The efforts to ameliorate the steadily growing divisions in the world are marginal and are failing to stem the dangerous and ultimately disastrous descent into a world that is so split that many will assume that violence is the only available way to seize wealth or power…it is the pervading hopelessness and cynicism of the economically abandoned that may prove to be the most dangerous and ultimately destructive element…support for terrorism has its roots in the desperation of the reviled, the poor, the ignored and those that have no opportunity for a decent life or for influence or power in the existing situation (1999, p. 39).

I would argue that the polarisation of achievement is directly linked to the breakdown of social cohesion. To succeed in the market, schools have to promote individual competitiveness at the expense of any emphasis on collaboration or responsibility to others. The only responsibility is to self and the school, to get the desired grades. And those failing to get grades will rarely have experienced reciprocal help.

A second antecedent to conflict is that of *gender relations*. Women have a different relationship to some of the elements which link to conflict, such as environmental degradation, poverty and human rights violations. Women, with few exceptions, have not taken part in the management of international security. While there are many ways to be masculine—just as there are many ways to be feminine—dominant masculinity in many countries is that characterised by toughness, misogyny, homophobia, confrontational sport and use or threat of violence and fighting (Connell, 2000). Dominant masculinity is closely linked to militarism, to the cult of the 'hero' and, at the extreme, to the use of the rape of 'enemy' women to signify power and humiliation. While describing some of the women's peace movements 'across the divide', the book also however gives examples of how women can have a role in violence; complexity theory enables us to see how class intersects with gender to find women carving out political spaces which use aggression, as well as seeing how men can be active in peace movements. Yet while the 'gender gap' is closing in many parts of the world, it has not historically been underachieving females who have been the contributory force to violence: it is normally males (and some powerful or educated females) adopting particular versions of masculinist aggression who do so.

Analyses of how schools act to reproduce gender relations and how they can be sites for gender-based violence do not paint a comfortable picture for education. Studies of the gender regime in schools do reveal some attempts, in some countries, to provide a range of masculinities and to outlaw harassment or male devaluation of females, but there is also much gender-based violence, which is ignored or condoned by schools. Sexual abuse and homophobia are part of everyday life for many students, affecting both males and females, students and teachers (Leach *et al*, 2002); of key importance for our study is the denial of 'softer' forms of masculinity which might offer alternatives to aggression and violence as the definers of male normality in adolescence and beyond. Research has found that the themes in societies which lead to interpersonal and inter-societal violence are war-like ideals for

manhood; male public and economic leadership; female invisibility in politics; gender segregation; and emotional displays of male virility (Kimmel, 2000). I suggest a counter to these, of the promotion of differing ideals of manhood and femalehood; encouragement of female participation in politics and economic life; coeducation; and education for emotional literacy for both sexes. Post-structuralist feminists such as Weiner would attack the notion of fixed and unitary cultural identities, and argue for the recovery of 'hitherto under-represented forms of the feminine' (1997, p. 150). I would want to recover under-represented forms of the masculine, too.

A third, and equally important area of analysis is that of pluralism or diversity in terms of *ethnicity, religion, tribalism and nationalism*. While pluralism characterises virtually all societies, this can be positive and harmonious; but peace research and security studies reveal that a large number of armed conflicts are those defined by ethnic or other forms of 'difference'. Here our concern is how identities become 'essentialist', that is how particular identities can be mobilised for conflict, by stressing 'otherness' and eventually hatred or depersonalisation (as in South Africa, Sri Lanka or Northern Ireland). Within education, our question is what sorts of collective identities schools transmit or reinforce. There is a need to look at religious schools as well as nationalistic curriculum. How do schools construct 'us' and 'others'? In countries such as Bosnia–Herzegovina, the claims to nationalism and 'pure' national identity, however mythological, were and still are in parts similarly reinforced by separate schooling, by differentiated curriculum and by different versions of history. Do schools prepare for the political mobilisation around identity which is the cornerstone of mistrust of others? What message does segregated schooling provide about the need to be educated apart from others of different faiths, or from others taking a secular position? I am aware that in UK, many faith-based schools may have a multicultural and multifaith student population; but strictly segregated schools as in Sri Lanka or Northern Ireland raise the question of whether separated schooling on religious or ethnic grounds at best does not challenge the ignorance, intolerance and suspicion of 'others'. Sometimes this is 'violence by omission' (Salmi, 1999)—a reluctance or refusal to tackle the racism or intolerance which may be endemic outside the school. Sometimes it is system-wide racism (as in the old South African apartheid schooling); but it can be less obvious 'institutionalised racism' which may deny opportunity to pupils from particular ethnic or religious groups and thus contribute to frustration and feelings of exclusion; or it can be a similar bifurcation to that of social class, through the *de facto* ethnically segregated schooling that results from population movements and housing allocations.

It is interesting that the economist Amyrta Sen, talking at the Commonwealth Ministers conference in 2003, homed in on issues such as fundamentalist religious schools and the 'narrowing of horizons, especially of children, that illiberal and intolerant education can produce'. To define people just in terms of religion-based classification of civilisations can itself contribute to political insecurity (people belonging to 'the Muslim world' or 'the Western world' or 'the Hindu world' etc.)

He (and I) believe the UK government made a mistake in expanding rather than reducing faith-based state schools, 'especially when the new religious schools leave children very little opportunity to cultivate reasoned choice and decide how the various components of their identities…should receive attention'. As he said, in the schooling of children, we have to make sure that we do not have smallness (rather than greatness) thrust upon the young.

There have been many analyses of whether multicultural education and/or anti-racist policies can act to promote 'tolerance'; my view is that there are still dangers of this 'tolerance' constructing images of 'the other'. I prefer—in line with complexity theory—the recognition of hybrid identities (Babha, 1994). This celebrates not just the multiple identities in all of us, but that of the fusion between them: we are all unique in the ways that different histories combine in our identity, albeit sharing with others the fact that none of us is 'pure' in a nationalistic way. Citizenship education has the potential to celebrate hybridity, as long as it is not hijacked into nationalistic civics or into a narrow form of values education which is not based on international conventions on human rights. But how to handle identity and difference is still a key debate.

War education

In the light of the above, in the book I look at how schools do engage in peace education, but I look also at how schools are engaged in 'war education'. This includes firstly the *direct preparation of children for conflict*, as in specialist camps and military schools, but also through cadet forces and various versions of the 'defence curriculum'. There is still much done under this label in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Israel and North and South Korea, including everything from gun practice to how to lay mines.

Violent schools secondly can be found in many violent societies, where gun cultures, drug or gang cultures and the aftermath of domestic violence permeate the school compounds; yet violent schools are not just to be found in overtly violent contexts. Epp and Watkinson's *Systemic Violence* (1996) reveals the complicity of schools in Canada in supporting violence, dehumanisation and stratification. Harber (2004) provides a complex overview of 'schooling as violence' across the globe, much of it in 'normal' authoritarian schools. Physical punishment is an obvious preparation for the idea that violence is a good solution to a problem, and there are large numbers of teachers, parents and students in countries ranging from the USA to Taiwan, from Morocco to Zimbabwe, who still support corporal punishment as a viable way to 'correct' pupils (even if it is not officially sanctioned). The 'code of silence' about all this in schools is again Salmi's 'violence by omission'. But there is also symbolic violence, the way that students may be harmed through labelling and humiliation. A significant area in learning how to treat others is that of acceptance of the need for revenge—a key driver of reprisal attacks and cycles of retribution. Schooling, through its punishment regimes, may promote revenge as a viable option in its 'discipline' procedures.

In *curriculum*, thirdly, the preparation is by way of the legitimation of military activity. In the history curriculum, the teaching of peace and non-violence is mainly rhetorical, theoretical and sporadic. In contrast, the teaching about struggle, war and violence is historically grounded, well illustrated and well fitted into the context of the development of civilisation (Najcevska, 2000). Children are mentally prepared for war this way. The acceptance by large chunks of the US and UK public (and MPs) of the need to go to war with Iraq in 2003, I would argue, is at least partly because of this portrayal of war as part of the natural chain of events. Another reason is the absence of critical pedagogy in many schools and the decline of political education which would enable critical examination of political messages.

Fourthly is the whole question of *examinations and fear*. Research is starting to show that indiscipline, and therefore conflict, is a direct result of teaching methods that encourage competition. Failure can lead to frustration and low self-esteem, predisposing to violence or tension; generalised fear shows itself in a gun culture which insists on the right to protect oneself, as in the USA. Cultures of fear engender cheating on a massive scale as well as child suicides. Corruption and cheating in examinations can become part of the breakdown of trust and responsibility which ought to characterise peaceful societies. There is the deskilling of cooperation, collaboration and decision-making, and instead competition and testing are spiralling in countries such as England. A fearful population is more easily mobilised for war. And what better place to start a culture of fear than in the school? As indicated earlier, the greed for success is fuelled by obsessions with 'standards' and winners in education. Such obsessions and league tables are in turn fuelled by international studies of achievement, based on narrow definitions of cognitive competence. There are hence myriad ways in which a culture of testing can militate against the promotion of peace. What is disturbing is that all of this is ignored in the race for supremacy in educational achievement, and is fuelled by neo-liberal market economics (Porter, 1999).

And finally there is the question that ties together many of the above: do schools teach alternative realities, skills in political or social analysis and the constant need for vigilance about messages? Do they give a secure enough identity? We need more research on why young people would join terrorist or fundamentalist organisations. In Irshad Manji's new book *The Trouble with Islam*, she talks of the problem of 'literalism' in Islam, whereby she claims that unlike Christianity or Judaism, there is less (no) tradition of debate and dialogue. The Koran came after the Bible and the Torah, and is thus seen as the 'last word', to be taken literally. This is no doubt comforting to believers, but would be contrary to the principles of critical pedagogy and democratic deliberation. Fundamentalist Christian and creationist schools also eschew reasoned debate and acceptance of alternatives. We all want certainties (human rights, true love, a diet that works); but certainties about what are in effect beliefs are antithetical to complex adaptation.

An interesting article in the Sunday Times (LeBor, 2004) on the recent drama documentary 'The Hamburg Cell' talks of why the young men in Hamburg joined the Al-Qaeda cell and how their sense of mission was cemented. The Al-Qaeda

training manual specifically instructs operators to move to neighbourhoods where people are coming and going and neighbours do not take an interest in each other. In the evenings, the comrades watched jihadi videos, which show grisly footage of the Muslim struggles in Bosnia, Chechyna and other war-torn lands.

> The message of the films is always the same: Muslims are being killed while the world stands by. The United States is the source of all evil in the world, and must be destroyed. The answer is to fight a jihad, a holy war'. Death in jihad guarantees entrance to paradise. 'Suicide is forbidden in Islam, but martyrdom is glorious and to be welcomed. Dying is painless, the hijackers assured each other, and all martyrs are borne to heaven by virgins at the moment of their deaths(p. 29).

It is important not to portray terrorists as cowards or robots; instead we need to understand how it is that people come to believe the messages and to invest themselves personally into advancing them. Schools could have a key role here: not just in media education and media analysis, but upfront analysis of how young people are being trained for 'defence' or even attack within a range of different national or religious ideologies, with such analysis to help continue the struggle against dogmatic views of the world. As with sex education, you will have the panic stricken reaction that this will make more young people join terrorist groups; but years of Religious Education (RE) in school never made me join any church. It is a risk worth taking. But it needs to be done against a backcloth of giving young people a sense of identity, self-worth and group membership. It also needs to be done in relation to other forms of moral high ground messages, and indoctrination.

Possibilities for hope

While for me the above catalogue of horrors is well enough documented, needless to say, more research would be needed in many different contexts in order to convey the urgency I sense. This needs to be done in concert with the 'good news', the efforts that educational institutions are making or can make in the interests of peace. First might be what we term 'resilient schools'. In conflict zones, schools and universities may be destroyed or taken over by the military so that teachers or librarians return to buildings bearing signs of a complete disregard for their original function, as I saw in Kosovo. Educational records are wiped out, so that people may not even know who is missing. Psychologically, there is the aftermath of trauma and stress in children from witnessing, or even participating in, armed violence. However, there are some inspiring examples of schools that have been resilient to the conflict around them, in countries such as Lebanon, Uganda, Bosnia, Nepal and Liberia. The 'parallel education system' set up by the Albanians under Serb occupation was a classic example of 'self-organisation' in complexity terms. Schools 'modelled' a future where they would be independent, and in such modelling created sound and important beliefs for the future. 'Safe schools' projects in South Africa similarly model a better world without violence, using connectivity with other schools and with the police. Examples of resilience to the inexorable push of conflict do give hope and transferable ideas. But why do some schools or staff remain

resilient in the face of conflict? What inspires some heads to resist threats from opposing forces?

Second is the impact of peace initiatives in education. This ranges from the many excellent peace education 'packages' which schools and NGOs can use, to those schools that overall try to 'make sense' of the world in different ways. Peace education is not—or should not be—just about 'being nice to each other' (Fisher *et al*, 2000). It is about creating a degree of turbulence in the system, by challenging the taken-for-granted realities about problem solutions and about 'difference'. My book also runs through other ways in which peace education can be done—through human rights education, through the democratic organisation of the school, through fostering dialogue and encounters across cultures or across divides of a dispute. It concludes that 'Emergence' into a different state comes from yet more Es—the three Es of exposure, encounter and experience. Paradoxically, peace education seems to come from exposure to conflict, learning from people who disagree with you rather than those who agree. Initiatives 'across the divide' in Israel/Palestine or in Northern Ireland have been very successful in fostering such encounters. They seem difficult to sustain or to spread country wide, and research is ongoing on why this is and how sustainability can be built.

Some of the peace education manuals contain highly controversial material about global justice, and use case studies of real conflict situations to enable analysis of cause and effect as well as how to take action for peace. For example, The UNICEF manual *Children Working for Peace* (1995) has case studies of conflict resolution programmes in Liberia, Lebanon, Ireland and Sri Lanka, inviting young people to try out the activities. The Neve Shalom~Wahat al Salam pack *Dealing with Conflict* (1999) is a project for 14–18 year old students based on ideas developed at the School for Peace in the Arab/Jewish village called the 'Oasis of Peace', and it educates about the conflict as well as providing activities about encounters, everyday conflicts, inflammatory language etc. (Darke and Rustin, 1999). Alternatively, or surrounding such packages, peace education can be 'permeated' through curriculum or indeed the whole school, as in the 7400 UNESCO 'Associated Schools' which are found in 170 countries. Such schools join the Associated Schools network (ASPnet) and work through a National Coordinator in each country, linked to their UNESCO National Commission and thence to UNESCO in Paris. They are committed to the ideals of UNESCO in forging a culture of peace, democracy, rights and sustainable development, and they encourage students and teachers to take action in the community and beyond in pursuit of these ideals—to engage in 'daring acts'. The review of 50 years of ASPnet schools conducted by the Centre for International Education and Research at Birmingham (Davies, Harber & Schweisfurth, 2003) inevitably found some variation in interpretation by the schools of what this meant, and found some schools that focussed very much on another UNESCO ideal, that of preservation of heritage (as this was less threatening); but what seemed valuable was the 'badge' of a major international organisation to legitimate peace efforts and the inclusion of peace in an overcrowded curriculum. The more active schools (for example in Latin America) were engaged in marches and demonstrations for peace

and in community education against all forms of violence. The question is how schools can be legitimated to 'do peace' as a major activity, and what the antecedents are for some schools to have taken this up in the face of pressures relating to examination achievement or national curriculum. In our review, we argued for very different definitions of 'quality' in education, in line with UNESCO ideals.

The potential for global citizenship education

I put the next set of possibilities under the broad heading of global citizenship. Williams (2000) notes that the concept of 'global security' is being redefined from ensuring safety through military means alone to understanding threats to human well-being from development, environment and violence. I would say that two positive aspects of globalisation have been an agreement on human rights and the spread of democracy, however interpreted. There has also been a spread of environmental concerns. As Sen has pointed out, no democratic country has ever had a famine. In terms of enabling schools to counter negative conflict, my book uses a notion of 'interruptive democracy', which develops the ideas of dialogue, encounter and challenge mentioned above in order to promote positive conflict in educational institutions. I would like to see a large comparative education research study, a kind of 'alternative' PISA (the OECD *Programme for International Student Assessment*) which tracked the different 'achievements' schools made in democracy and peace, and how democracy was identified and advanced. There are seeds of hope in some of the models of participatory democracy in education, as can be seen in Brazil (Hatcher, 2002). Here thousands of local people participate in the education budget process as well as in policy making at local school level and at the state education system. The education policy is extremely radical, replacing for example selective and classificatory evaluation (which is seen as an instrument of exclusion) by participatory, diagnostic, investigative and emancipatory forms of evaluation. These models enable grassroots control of education and the re-integration of the working class into educational decision-making.

No comparative research agenda would be complete without a mention of globalisation and the globalisation of culture. It has been argued that MacDonalds did play a role in combating apartheid in South Africa, where they provided the only place where different races could share public space on an equal basis. Yet the sponsorship issue paints a different picture. After a few years of Pepsi-sponsored papal visits, or Nike after school basketball programmes, everything from small community events to large religious gatherings are believed to 'need a sponsor' to get off the ground. 'We become collectively convinced not that corporations are hitching a ride on our cultural and communal activities, but that creativity and congregation would be impossible without their generosity' (Klein, 2002, p,35). While generally supporting UNESCO activities and schools, I have the same problems with what I see as UNESCO 'selling out' to Daimler-Chrysler financing in setting up their Mondialogo project. In this global competition for the 'best' intercultural exchanges, the Daimler-Chrysler logo can sit side by side with the prestigious UNESCO one in

all the publicity. Brand managers are envisioning themselves as sensitive culture makers, and culture makers are adopting the hard-nosed business tactics of brand builders. So now there is the tension in culture between the ways that globalisation brings more standardisation and cultural homogeneity while also more fragmentation through the rise of locally oriented movements. Barber characterised this dichotomy in the title of his book *Jihad vs McWorld*. Burbules and Torres (2000) argue a third possibility of cultural homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity appearing simultaneously—the 'glocal' (meaning concurrent local and global expression). But I am not sure how you research this. We do now have a pressure towards global citizenship, with exhortations to feel part of the greater collectivity, and I put this under possibilities for hope.

Yet local community is the real cultural space, rather than virtual ones created by electronic communication and networks of flows of goods and services. Here, identity politics can cohere around memories of conflict, failure, domination or nostalgia for a past age. We need more comparative education research on whether global citizenship studies do broaden out concepts of identity. September 11th and the attack on US capitalism did make people talk about the global haves and have-nots. And there is awareness that responsibility for international conflict may be very close to home. But free trade and democracy are being rebranded as the war on terrorism. To criticise the US or the UK government is to be on the side of the terrorists. A strong civil society to question global trade, global imperialism and global aggression is essential. The latest OXFAM manual *Making Sense of World Conflicts. Activities and source materials for teachers of English, Citizenship and PSE* (2005) has brilliant activities to enable young people to question the arms trade and challenge government policy. When it emerges that UK gains more finance in selling arms than it does in giving aid, then this can generate the 'outrage' needed to join in action.

Citizenship education studies are seeing an increased number of comparative studies. But these tend to compare the curriculum or evaluation processes of various countries (Torney-Purta *et al*, 1999; Kerr, 2000) and demonstrate how citizenship education is gaining prominence worldwide; but it is difficult to go deep into either the social and political context or into social impact, of how active people are over a long period after exposure to a citizenship curriculum. Torres (1998) argues that one of the problems of citizenship education research is contextualisation, and that in order to grasp the tension inherent in citizenship education between inclusion and exclusion, we need to look at the specific relationship between the state, citizenship as political identity and citizenship education. We need to draw on theories of democracy and multiculturalism, especially in diverse societies. Obviously how teachers model citizenship is a key issue. One interesting International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) study, for example, demonstrated that a code of conduct for teachers diminishes unethical behaviour. Teachers are the highest category of education spending in post-conflict societies, therefore it is worthwhile to implement a form of social control which is effective, such as a code of conduct (UNESCO/IIEP, 2004).

There are signs of a shift in recognition about conflict and how to teach it within a global citizenship curriculum: in the West, school-based learning about conflict and war used to be only about historical times or about far off places such as Rwanda or Sri Lanka. Increasingly with the war on Iraq and with other forms of aggression from so-called stable societies there is awareness that the responsibility for war may start much closer to home and that the impacts of war and terror are now global in their spread. We have recently completed a DFID funded research project on *Global Citizenship: The Needs of Teachers and Learners* (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2004) that found the key area that children identified as wanting to know about within global citizenship was war. This meant war in the contemporary context, in terms of the children's bewilderment about Iraq—reasons, justifications, impact. However, the schools and teachers in our research varied in their approach, ranging from tackling the controversial issues head on, and modelling resistance to violence, through to putting pupils in detention if they went on the peace march. There is another research agenda item here in terms of why some schools resist meeting pupils' needs for knowledge, understanding and action competence, and others do not.

Agendas for comparative education research

From all the above, I suggest a menu of eight priorities for comparative and international education research. I think we have a responsibility as comparativists not to remain neutral, nor simply to report on various country initiatives. Our job is to make life a little uncomfortable, if possible, for policy makers.

1. *Questioning of involvement in international comparative achievement studies based on maths and conventional literacy indicators, i.e. the old (linear) school effectiveness indicators*. There is interesting research to be done on the impact of such surveys and achievement studies: while there is no evidence, for example, that maths achievement helps economic competitiveness, let alone world peace, nonetheless countries enter a panic mode if they do 'badly' compared to competitor countries, and begin to expend yet more effort on it. We perhaps need to question the taken-for-granted assumption that achievement in certain areas helps employment, or growth, or poverty. We often have only evidence from employers saying that their employees cannot count—but this just reinforces the acceptance that schools are simply about providing fodder for the (capitalist) labour market. I would like to be convinced by solid correlations about maths achievement and poverty reduction.
2. *Beginning the alternative PISA, that is, ISAPSE—International Studies of Achievement in Peace or Security Education*. This involves starting to do more comparative studies based on indicators of 'achievement' or 'quality' in political literacy, pupil agency, democracy, peace education, human rights education and ecology—and perhaps trilingualism. If we are going to 'name and shame', then let us highlight those countries which choose not to expend effort on the important subjects for global survival. Some areas would be contained in the international citizenship studies (Kerr, 2000), but by no means all countries are signing up to these studies.

3. *Generation and publication of comparative statistics on the ratios of military to education spending, and the link to stability*. It is relatively easy to find the statistics on what is called the 'soldier-teacher ratio' (The UNDP annual reports are good for these); but there would be interesting work to do to start to correlate these against measures of social stability and democracy. While correlations do not show causation, just identifying links between military spending or military service and social cohesion (as well as trends over time) can start to raise questions about the spirals of spending that countries enter.
4. *How schools teach for active citizenship, peace and democracy* in terms of being able to do citizen research, demand accountability, analyse media and political messages or join non-violent social movements. While it is possible to ask about official curriculum on citizenship education, we need more on the teaching that would lead to active citizenship, not just knowledge and attitudes. Do teachers model active citizenship by joining voluntary movements, campaigns, demonstrations (or at least voting in elections), or are they swamped by government targets? Are young people taught the research skills and introduced to the networks which would enable them to take part in national or global campaigns?
5. *Comparative studies of how schools in conflict or post-conflict zones teach about conflict*. How do they teach about difference? Do they ignore it, deny it or normalise it? How do they teach about rights or justice? We know, in the Balkans for example, that countries and entities are trying to 'harmonise' curriculum and remove hostile references to previous 'enemies'; but how do they then present this complicated history and set of identities? How do Rwandan teachers teach about the genocide? What are government policies—are teachers, as in India after the riots following the assassination of Indira Ghandi, asked not to mention the conflict and to teach 'as normal'? (Kumar, 2001)
6. *Studies of how some schools remain resilient in times of conflict, while others do not survive*. Is their mission to be a shelter? Or a revolutionary opposing force? There are inspiring examples of schools in Bosnia, Kosovo, Libya, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Sudan that not only manage to stay open, but to resist demands of rebel leaders or opposing forces. What type of 'leadership' is being modelled here, or is it more a grassroots resistance?
7. *Cross-cultural or longitudinal studies of the impact of citizenship education or other types of education that have contributed to peace or conflict*. (We could look at assessment areas: Question one for exam paper: critically evaluate either the US/UK invasion of Iraq *or* World Bank education strategy, *or* both). This might include critical media education and consumer education. While from the international citizenship studies we do have some idea about what schools are teaching, we know less about the long-term impact of such teaching. Admittedly, there is an 'attribution gap' whereby it is difficult to attribute gains in peace to previous education policies and curriculum; but there are various sorts of 'backward mapping' whereby one can at least look at individuals

and groups that are engaged in efforts for social cohesion and trace significant trigger events in their educational histories.

8. *Why young people join fundamentalist or terrorist organisations*, and what security or identity is being sought. As with backwards mapping of those involved in civil renewal or voluntary work in the community, it would be instructive to look at the educational biographies of those who are inspired to join organisations or training camps aligned to violence. This would be extremely difficult research, but one suspects that the certainties involved would be attractive in an age of ambiguity and relativism.

In conclusion, I am arguing for comparativists to participate in a form of what I have termed 'interruptive democracy'. The interruption is to the 'normal' processes of exclusion and violence, to the 'frozen struggles' which characterise so much national and international warfare. I have defined interruptive democracy as 'the process by which people are enabled to intervene in practices which continue injustice'. It is an 'in-your-face' democracy—not just taking part, but the disposition to challenge. It is the democracy of the hand shooting up, the 'excuse-me' reflex. This means dissent, resilience and action, all within a framework of human rights. A democratic education has to handle identity and difference, it has to handle fear, and it has to take the risks of students learning from mistakes. We need to take risks too in doing unpopular comparative and international education studies. The huge problem for us all is getting money for such research, and having to put together (and compete for) bland bids for school improvement, access or conventional 'quality'. But a concerted effort to move conflict and peace up the educational agenda, both in school curriculum and in comparative studies, might start to shake the taken-for-granted, outmoded and now dangerous notions of what is a 'normal' priority in learning.

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