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Book Review
Education, Conflict and Development
Julia Paulson (Ed.) Oxford: Symposium Books, 2011.

Allyson Larkin (University of Western Ontario)

Julia Paulson's introduction to the collection of articles in the recent volume of the *Oxford Series, Education, Conflict and Development*, opens with a sobering statistic: more than half of the 100 million out-of-school children in the world (as of 2005 statistics, Save the Children), live in countries and communities affected by violent conflict. Already disadvantaged due to socioeconomic factors, the impact of conflict on children's ability to attend school is clear. But this volume includes another actor, "development", both its policy and practice, into the equation of children, conflict and access to schooling. The articles it contains seek to answer questions such as: Is it conflict alone that is barring children from receiving an education? How have development interventions contributed to conflicts in developing societies? Does education itself lead to ethnic or socioeconomic clashes? The essays collected here, diverse in their topics and methodological approaches, all address the complex relationship between education, conflict and development.

Although there is ample literature available on the interaction between education and conflict, and education and development, what is less well-known is how "education, development and conflict" interact as interventions into particular communities. It is the impact and practice of education in the midst of, and in the period following conflict that the volume *Education, Conflict and Development*, sets its sights on. I believe that it is a significant contribution to the literature in this field and clearly points out several areas in need of focused attention and further research, including the potential for developing effective peace-building pedagogies and strategies, specifically those explored by Cunningham in the final entry, that are among the most useful and urgent for additional investigation.

The inclusion of development to the traditional analysis of education and conflict, grows out of increasing attention in the development literature given to education in emergency situations. Paulson notes that "conflict" is the focus of not only the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report but also the 2011 World Development Report, produced by the World Bank. It would seem that this

collection is a timely addition to the study of an issue currently in the global spotlight.

Paulson brings together a broad spectrum of contributors to this volume, each with an area of expertise in research. Paulson herself brings a breadth and depth of experience, both in the field working for different NGOs and UN organizations such as UNICEF and as a lecturer and researcher. While I found the contributions in this collection interesting in their focus and topic, thoroughly researched and valuable individual contributions to their respective fields, the collection as a whole did impress me as a bit awkward and the flow from one essay to the next required a reassessment of its position within the book as a whole. However, when taken in groups organized by three related articles, the volume will be very useful to those exploring either: conceptual analyses of the relationship between conflict, education and development; particular country case studies highlighting the relationship between, or specific interests in the experience of Northern Uganda.

Moving forward, Bengtsson and Rappleye's articles dovetail the debates surrounding education, conflict and development producing clear and detailed analyses, deconstructing the discourse used in policy and planning documents. Bengtsson's caveat to avoid "conceptual nebulosity" with respect to relying on familiar terms used to describe the conditions of conflict in particular states addresses the issue of over-used terminology—for example the term "fragile state"—the ubiquitousness with which it is used in policy documents has ultimately obscured its meaning and this opacity results in different responses from different stakeholders. Rappleye's very detailed analysis of the causes of and responses to conflict in Nepal reveal how policy and discourse, as used by different actors and agencies, selectively edit and influence how conflict is perceived, understood and acted upon.

The mid-section of this volume brings together three case studies; the first two, by Pagen and Matsumoto, articulately contextualize the experiences of Southern Sudan and Sierra Leone and their respective conflicts, exploring how effective efforts to engage in peace building, human rights and democracy education are when social structures are nearly completely destroyed. It is the third piece in this section that I found to be a fascinating contribution: Otsuki's exploration of the possibilities of "transnational textbook writing," which describes a project between Japan, Korean and China to collectively produce an historical account of their relationship, including efforts to promote reconciliation. It is the only

project to ever engage “tri-laterally” in the production of such a textbook and her account of the experience, negotiations and disputations are revealing. Especially given its position in the volume following two focused accounts of the impact of conflict on education, the experiences Osuki recounts of the former adversaries coming together to develop a common narrative, acceptable to all, suggest a potential mechanism by which conflict may be transformed into an educational experience itself. Despite official challenges, on-going disagreements about specific historical events and its use in schools only as a supplementary text rather than primary, *Future* (its title) exists in publication and has been the recipient of several awards. Perhaps it is a blueprint for future projects and programmes in other situations throughout the world.

A concentrated focus on the region of Northern Uganda rounds out the volume’s discussion on the impact of conflict on education and development. The decades’ long civil war in Uganda has been particularly vicious, employing tactics such as mass rape, torture and arson to destabilize and demoralize the civilian population. Murphy et al’s study on the impact of sexual violence on girls’ school attendance reveals that the victims are “doubly disadvantaged.” Outlining the tragic consequences of such violence, their conclusions nonetheless point to the cultural and traditional values that are biased against girls with respect to education and find that sexual violence toward women and girls has its roots in the same values and norms that devalue their overall role in society. Until there are changes in family, cultural and community attitudes toward girls and women, girls’ access to education, whether victims of sexual violence or not, will continue to be limited.

The dehumanizing effect of the war is clearly revealed in Akullu Ezati et al’s study on the attitudes and behaviours of children in schools in Northern Uganda, where the complete collapse of cultural and moral norms as a result of the inter-generational conflict has thoroughly impaired teachers’ and students’ abilities to create effective learning spaces in schools. This essay is striking given the inclusion of students’ and teachers’ voices excerpted in passages from interviews. The opportunity for schools to contribute to the project of peace-building is the strongest conclusion emerging from this study and is one that warrants further exploration throughout the literature on education, conflict and development overall. It is on this note that Jeremy Cunningham’s essay on peace-building in schools concludes the volume. He begins his analysis of the opportunities for peace-building through education by acknowledging that the relationship here is still poorly understood within the field of education and

conflict studies, but that it offers tremendous possibilities through emphasis on the skills necessary for building capacity in peace making: negotiation, consensus building and deep understanding of difference.

In his fieldwork in Northern Uganda, exploring the knowledge of rights among school age children, Cunningham found that children were learning about human rights, not from school curricula but from workshops largely organized by NGOs and religious organizations. Their understanding of rights was largely “issue specific” such as “girls’ rights” or “children’s rights.” He argues that a holistic presentation of “human rights” is necessary so that other avenues for division and conflict are not left open to manipulation and agenda-specific interpretation.

Overall this is an excellent volume on the complex web of relationships that exists between education, conflict and development efforts. Each article addresses significant issues and opens the way for further research to contribute to the understanding how each intervention interacts with the other. The collection works on a number of different levels: from the philosophical, discursive and policy analyses of the first section; specific case studies analyzing relationships in conflict in the second, and finally, the collection of essays focusing on the violence that has plagued Northern Uganda that form the conclusion. Although the landscape for education in the midst of conflict is fraught with challenges, the volume ends not in despair but the hope for future research and the development of peace-building pedagogies to contribute solutions to enduring conflict. It is to that end, after all, that the field of education and conflict ought to be aiming toward effective strategies and policies to build societies capable of resolving conflict intelligently, seeking to make violence a primitive response of the past.

Book Review
New Thinking in Comparative Education:
Honouring Robert Cowen.
Marianne Larsen (Ed.) Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2010.

Joseph P. Farrell (Professor Emeritus, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto)

This book is a worthy addition to a long list of “readers” or edited compendia of essays designed in one way or another to “capture” the state of play in the field of comparative education and advance it further. Some attempt to encompass the field as a whole and serve as core textbooks (going back at least as far as Adams’ *Introduction to Education: a Comparative Analysis*, (Adams, 1964). Others include ,among many examples, Arnove, Altbach and Kelly’s *Emergent Issues in Education: Comparative Perspectives* (1992), Bray’s *Comparative Education: Continuing Traditions, New Challenges, and New Perspectives* (2003), Arnove and Torres’ *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local* (1999—now entering into its fourth edition) and, aimed specifically at pre-service and in-service teachers, Mundy et. al. *Comparative and International Education: Issues for Teachers*.(2008). Other such compendia focus on more specific issues within the general field, or intend to advance a particular theoretical agenda, for example, among many others, Kelly and Elliott, *Women’s Education in the Third World: Comparative Perspectives* (1982), Ginsburg, *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology and the State* (1991), Farrell and Heyneman, *Textbooks in the Developing World: Economic and Educational Choices*, (1989), Fuller and Rubinson, *the Political Construction of Education: The State, School Expansion, and Economic Change* (1992), and Hershock, Mason and Hawkins, *Changing Education: Leadership, Innovation and Development in a Globalizing Asia Pacific* (2007). . These lists are not meant to be comprehensive; they are the ones that quickly come to my mind. There are many others. What they indicate is that the production of such “readers” is a long, honourable and very useful tradition.

This book, which is intended as a *Festschrift* in honour of Robert Cowen, recently retired from his position of Professor at the Institute of Education, University of London (but certainly not from active scholarly life), is a strong addition to that long list. A particular feature is, as the title suggests, its focus on “new thinking” in the field. This could perhaps

be better phrased as “new thinkers..” Almost all of the principle authors are relatively, to very, new to the published literature. They are still in their doctoral programs, have relatively recently completed their doctorates, or are still rather early in their careers. An exception is Thomas Popkewitz, who has “been around” the field for rather a long time. The distinction between “thinking” and “thinkers” is important as much of the thinking here isn’t so entirely new. It could hardly be otherwise since the contributors were requested to draw their inspiration from the work of Professor Cowen, much of which has been available for rather a long time. This comment is not meant to fault this book; most of the chapters are interesting and instructive analyses of, extended commentaries on, or expansions of many core ideas in Cowen’s published work. There is much to ponder over and learn from in these chapters, generally regarding issues and questions which have in one way or another been current in the field for a very long time (indeed many of the core questions and issues were in debate when I began my doctoral studies in comparative education in 1963—albeit in different forms and often different “language”). This primarily indicates that many of the core questions are very complex, difficult, and in some cases perhaps not really “resolvable.” So it is good that each new generation of “new thinkers” re-visits these perennial questions with fresh eyes. These chapters are interwoven with brief commentaries from “more senior” scholars, contemporaries and students of Prof. Cowen, which provide a nice contrast, “old” and “new.”

As always with edited volumes the chapters vary in quality, but in this case they vary at the high end of the scale. The editor chose her authors well! Which ones a reader particularly likes or not will depend more on the tastes and interests and enthusiasms the reader brings to the book than on variations in quality among the chapters. My particular favorite is by Jeremy Rappleye: “Compasses, Maps and Mirrors: Relocating Episteme(s) of Transfer, Reorienting the Comparative Kosmos.” He speaks of questions of “transfer” (which I now tend to think of as “cross-boundary learning”) which have been core aspects of my own thinking for some years now, and has contributed greatly to my own pondering and wondering. My least favorite chapter is by Thomas Popkewitz: “Comparative Studies and Unthinking Comparative ‘Thought.’” “There is nothing at all “new” in the chapter, except the framing of some classic arguments in complex and obscurantist language which makes the ideas *seem* newer than they are. It is littered with complex sentence structures and words/phrases such as “abjections”, “excurses,” “agentic individual,” “instantiation,” and the like,

the reading of which is rather like hacking one's way through dense brush only to discover that one hasn't learned anything worth the trouble. I find such language usage abhorrent, generally intended (consciously or not) to use the "complex and forbidding language of High Theory" (Walker, 1994) to identify oneself as having an "epistemic privilege" as part of a "group of deep knowers" who have knowledge and insights unavailable to the rest of us. (Crews, 1986). I have long held and preached, in contrast, that if one cannot express one's ideas in straightforward and accessible language, then in a deep sense one does not really know what one is talking about. Other readers may find this less offensive.

There is also a tension, perhaps even a contradiction, which runs through many of the essays, often implicitly, which reflects a deep tension in the "field", and also a tension in some of Cowen's own work. It revolves around the perennial question: "What *is* comparative education anyway?" Is it a single unified "field", different from other distinct "fields"? If so, what does it include and thus (of necessity with any boundary-setting" exercise), what does it exclude? Or is it a cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary "field of activity" involving many different sorts of people with many different work settings (universities, national and international agencies, governments, NGOs, whatever), who do quite different things and draw upon very different fields of knowledge and practice? Or something else altogether? A browse through, for example, the "presidential addresses" of successive presidents of the Comparative and International Education Society (as published annually in *The Comparative Education Review*) will show a continuing, and inconclusive, concern with these questions.

The tension among these "meanings" of the "field" are found clearly in Cowen's work. In his brief commentary in this volume Kazamias notes (p. 53) that Cowen held "there is no single or unified 'comparative education' but there are multiple comparative educations." But on the following page (54) Kazamias quotes Cowen as wanting "to redefine the theoretical categories which underpin the work agenda of comparative education." But, if there are multiple comparative educations, how can they have "a" work agenda. Indeed, there is here, and throughout much of the book, inspired as it is by Cowen's work, a tendency to reification of an abstract category or classification such as "comparative education" (or more generally "field"). Fields don't do anything: people do. Fields don't have agendas, people do. People with the same "field" label have many different agendas; People with roughly the same agendas have many

different “field” labels. This is necessarily the case, as the “fields” as labels are themselves human creations. I take as a core text in thinking about these issues a comment made by J. K. Galbraith in 1967. In “an Addendum on ...the nature of social argument,” after noting that specialization is not a virtue but a convenience, he observes: “But, at least in the social sciences, specialization is also a source of error. The world to its discredit does not divide neatly along the lines that separate the specialists. Those lines were drawn in the first instance by deans, department chairmen or academic committees. They were meant to provide guidance in appointing professors, establishing courses and supporting research. Excellent though the architects were, they cannot be credited with a uniquely valid view of the segments into which society naturally divides itself.” (1967, pp. 408-409) After nearly 50 years of professional life my work has been variously labeled as comparative education, sociology, political science, social history, economics, anthropology, educational planning, adult education, curriculum studies, teacher development, and narrative enquiry. It is in a way all and none of those things, as am I. The work is simply what I have done over the decades in response to various questions as they caught my attention and interest, drawing upon a wide variety of folks, variously labeled, whose work I have found useful and instructive to my own wrestling with the questions to hand. My sense is that that is true of most if not all of us. The label matters little; the work much.

Cowen’s work, and the arguments in many of the chapters of this book, seem directed to one particular aspect of the “multiple comparative educations,” that is practiced mostly by people who are university-based “scholars” who concern themselves with theoretical explorations of matters such as “work agendas”, paradigms, epistemes and such.. Schriewer’s comment in this book is aptly titled: “An Enlightenment Scholar in English Robes.” This is certainly a worthy and important sort of work (indeed I have done it sometimes myself) but it is only one (rather small) part of the sorts of works carried out under the label of “comparative education.” Witness the contents of major journals in the “field.” Personally I see comparative education primarily not as a “field” but as a way of seeing and being in the world, a lens through which one can most usefully see and understand the social world in which we live. Again, this commentary is not to fault the book, but to more precisely locate it. . These issues are also perennial—they were “old” when I entered the “field” in 1963. It is

good and instructive for each new generation of “new thinkers” to wrestle with them anew.

In sum, this is an important and instructive book, well worth adding to the shelves of people who work within the “field” of comparative (and international) education. There is much to think about here, much well worth the reading and pondering.

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