PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT AFFECTED CONTEXTS: A FRAMING PAPER

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ABSTRACT

The private sector, through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), has increasingly become engaged in the delivery, management, and evaluation of education systems around the world. While a fair amount has been written, assessing the role and involvement of private actors in education in both developed and developing countries, much less has been done on those contexts grappling with, or emerging out of, armed conflict and civil war, natural or bio-medical disasters, or “fragile” contexts where the state lacks the capacity or willingness to implement/deliver public services. This framing paper seeks to lay out some of the issues related to the role of private actors and PPPs in these kinds of crisis and conflict affected contexts. In doing so, it seeks to bring together insights from the field of Education in Emergencies, particularly research on education in conflict affected contexts, and link this to already existing work on PPPs in some of these contexts. This paper raises a number of issues that need to be addressed and suggests a possible approach through which Education PPPs might be researched, monitored, and evaluated—prior to, during, and after implementation—to ensure that they contribute towards, rather than impede, education system development and post-conflict and crisis recovery.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES: PARAMETERS AND EVOLUTION</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parameters</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evolution</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYZING EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT AFFECTED Contexts</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN EDUCATION IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS CONTEXTS: EMERGING COUNTRY EVIDENCE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New Orleans</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Haiti</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Liberia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kenya</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uganda</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• South Sudan</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pakistan</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Afghanistan</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Syrian Refugees</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPPS IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS CONTEXTS: EMERGING ISSUES</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vulnerability/Fragility of National Governments</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• State Legitimacy and Private Sector Engagement</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The State-Building and Social Cohesion Role of Education</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Privatization, Stratification, and Segregation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers as Agents of Peacebuilding and Post-Crisis Reconstruction</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sustainability Of Private Sector Investment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transferability and Conflict/Crisis Sensitivity</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This framing paper will draw upon insights from more than 15 years of experience of working and researching education in conflict and crisis-affected contexts to reflect on the implications of increased private sector engagement through PPPs in national education systems in these contexts. The paper is a desk-based study that reviews some emergent evidence of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and private sector engagement in conflict and crisis contexts and links this to debates within the field of research and practice known as Education in Emergencies.

The main aim of the paper is to highlight the particularities of crisis and conflict-affected contexts, and what issues and factors we might wish to reflect upon when considering the role and utility, as well as the challenges, of education PPPs in contexts where states are faced with capacity constraints and systemic challenges in social services, including education. In the next section I will explore the field of research and practice known as “Education in Emergencies” (EIE). I will begin by exploring the particularities of these contexts, the challenges and constraints to education service delivery and management, and then move on to explore the parameters, evolution, and debates within the field of EIE. In the subsequent section I will clarify what PPPs are, their evolution, and some of the literature that has emerged to analyze their role and effects on education systems and the communities they serve. This will be followed by a reflection on how we might explore the implications of private sector and PPP engagement and investment in conflict and crisis-affected contexts. I will then review some of the evidence of private sector involvement in crisis and conflict-affected environments, both historic and emergent, the nature and content of these initiatives, and their potential implications. I will present a series of issues that emerge from this analysis in relation to education PPPs and private sector involvement in these contexts. Finally, in the conclusion I will summarize the key points raised in the paper and point towards possible ways forward for the research, monitoring, and evaluation of education PPPs in these contexts.

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES: PARAMETERS AND EVOLUTION

The term “Education in Emergencies” emerged in the run-up to the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar. The late 1990s saw a mounting realization that reaching the international targets of Education for All (EFA) would be impossible without addressing education systems facing conflict, natural disasters, and other crises where more than 50 percent of the world’s out-of-school children resided (Save the Children, 2010). Central to the rise and prominence of EIE has been the actions of the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE), which was founded pre-Dakar—in specific response to the failure to provide access to education in humanitarian and conflict contexts. INEE was created to improve inter-agency communication and collaboration within the context of education in emergencies and has proven to be a highly effective lobbying, advocacy, and policy coordination institution. INEE has also been central in developing tools, guidelines, and minimum standards for carrying out educational activities in these contexts.1

Parameters

The term “Education in Emergencies” is a broad concept that incorporates, as its area of concern, education challenges in contexts of armed conflict, natural disasters, “weak” or “fragile states” (that lack either the capacity or the will to deliver education), and countries in “protracted” crises. Definitions are contentious and often overlap, and there have been heated debates over the years over language such as “fragility” and “weak states.”2 The field of EIE is also not static, evidenced by recent expansion into areas such as education and gang violence in Latin America and current global concerns with education’s relationship to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).3 The term “emergencies” itself reflects the early phases of the development of the field, which has evolved well beyond a focus on the humanitarian “emergency” phase and now spans prevention, emergency, recovery, and post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction; for this reason I prefer the term “conflict and crisis-affected contexts.”

What unites the field is a concern with the particularities of education governance, management, and delivery in contexts of crisis—whether contexts of violent conflict or natural disaster—where education systems might have been disrupted, undermined, or destroyed; where the capacity of states to deliver education systems has been weakened by the particular crisis; and where there is urgent need to support the affected population, strengthen capacity, and provide assistance. From the conflict side, war tends to destroy education infrastructure; divert funding to the war-economy; and kill or displace teachers and students—who are often targeted or recruited and are invariably traumatized. Learning is interrupted and the state’s capacity to govern and manage the delivery of education is often seriously weakened. The education system itself may have also been a contributing catalyst to the conflict, whether through marginalizing or excluding certain groups, curriculum messages and school practice, language of instruction, corruption, or other dimensions (cf. Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). In the case of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, educational infrastructure is often destroyed and populations traumatized, displaced, and/or killed. State capacity to recover from the disaster is often weakened. While education is unlikely to cause natural disasters, lack of staff and student preparedness, poor educational infrastructure, and lack of investment can all contribute to increasing the severity of the effects of a natural disaster on the education system—highlighting the need for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In both conflict and natural disaster situations it is important not to over-generalize; each crisis is particular and interventions need to be tailored to context and type of crisis. However, key messages that emerge are that education can contribute to prevention/amelioration before a crisis happens, can assist during a crisis (i.e. has a protective role), and can help populations to recover and rebuild afterwards, and vice-versa. Contexts of crisis are also locations where external support is required, where resources are constrained, and where additional funding is often sought. There is also normally a strong and important role for international actors, UN agencies, and the broader international community (Novelli & Smith, 2011).

**Evolution**

In response to the post-Dakar work of INEE and the many actors and agencies that operate in contexts of conflict and crisis, education, like food and shelter, has slowly become seen as part of the core building blocks of human development and a necessary and vital part of humanitarian response (Save the Children, 2007, 2010). In 2008, education became an official part of the international humanitarian response with the creation of the Global Education Cluster, headed by UNICEF and the International Save the Children Alliance. The cluster coordinates the educational response in emergency situations, as part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) that assumes overall coordination and develops policy involving UN and non-UN humanitarian partners operating in conflict zones.

What is also important to note is that the post-Cold War and post-9/11 world has seen large increases in both Humanitarian and Development Assistance. The UK’s DFID for example, spends nearly 50 percent of all its development assistance in fragile and conflict affected settings; other bi-lateral development agencies appear to be following a similar path (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). As with these more general increases in development aid to conflict affected zones, increases in aid to education in conflict affected countries are at least partly due to the capacity of organizations like Save the Children, INEE, and UNICEF to successfully lobby for an expansion of their own mandates and activities in education by justifying why education service delivery should be at the heart of humanitarian and development responses to conflict and post-conflict situations. An important part of the justification comes from the notion that education can play a lifesaving role in emergency situations, but also that education can potentially play a catalytic and preventive role in situations of conflict and post-conflict (Novelli & Smith, 2011; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Furthermore, over the years, practitioners and the agencies they represent have developed a variety of approaches to address the particular needs of children in conflict and post-conflict situations to deal with the often deep and long-lasting psychological effects of war, conflict, and natural disasters, and contribute to sustainable post-conflict and post-disaster recovery (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009).
Further impetus for attention to education and conflict emerged after the events of 9/11, when Northern governments became increasingly concerned with the relationship between zones of conflict in low-income countries and their own citizens’ (in) security (Duffield, 2010; Novelli, 2010). Prompted by concerns over radical madrasas operating as terrorist training camps, out-of-school youth being recruited into insurgent groups, and education systems failing millions of poor people around the world, there was a meeting of concern and interest by international development agencies and national security institutions on the importance of education’s potential role in conflict affected states. This interest in the role of education in the counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization agenda has increased and expanded since the fallout from the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Arab Spring, and the ongoing civil war in Syria. Furthermore, recent concern with the massive outflow of Syrian refugees resulted in the launch of the Education Cannot Wait Fund at the Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, May 2016. The fund aims to “to close the $8.5 billion funding gap needed to reach 75 million out-of-school children and youth” and secured USD$90 million to launch and support its initial operations.

In summing up this section on the scope and evolution of the field of education in emergencies, we can evidence that it has sought to respond to the particular challenges of conflict and crisis affected contexts. We can also see that educational assistance to conflict and disaster affected contexts has been driven by a wide variety of impulses such as human rights concerns, mission creep on the part of agencies seeing increased resources directed to conflict and crisis contexts, Western security concerns, the security concerns of populations living in conflict affected states, Western military strategy and tactics, and regular occurrences of natural disasters (earthquakes, etc.) and bio-medical emergencies (e.g. Ebola) that serve to destabilize education systems.

Central to contemporary thinking in EIE is the need for context-based conflict sensitivity in programming, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the education sector’s relationship to a particular crisis and conflict, as well as the need to reflect on how any intervention or educational reform might effect, improve, or aggravate the situation. This is a significant move away from the broader approach in international development and education where the debate often revolves mainly around efficiency versus equity, and risk is assessed more in terms of investment versus results. I will explore this in greater detail later in the paper, but will first turn to PPPs.

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4 For further information, see www.huffingtonpost.com/kolleen-bouchane/education-cannot-wait-fund_b_10144906.html
PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The literature on education PPPs suggests that the concept represents “a very broad category that covers any joining of the public and private sectors in education” (Menashy, 2015). The research has emerged in response to the sharp increase in engagement by the private sector in education systems since the 1980s. The World Bank sees public private partnerships as a continuum ranging from fully public education systems with no private sector engagement to the fully private antithesis (see Figure 1).

Private sector engagement in education takes different forms and various private sector actors engage in different aspects of the education system from school construction, textbook production, and provision of teachers to the total control and management of the system. Private sector involvement in this process should also be understood as being driven by different and often overlapping motivations, including profit, philanthropy, and corporate social responsibility—and ranging from local entrepreneurs to global corporations. In work on the global governance of education, Dale (2005) produced an interesting and helpful model for reflecting on the changing landscape of educational governance that has accompanied the increased involvement of private actors in education. Dale’s model (see Figure 2) allows us to explore the multi-scalar engagement of a range of actors, including the private sector, in the emergent functional and scalar re-organization of national education systems, which appears relevant for exploring education systems in low-income developing contexts.
The model alerts us to questions such as who funds, owns, provides, and regulates education systems locally, sub-nationally, nationally, regionally, and globally. It also allows us to reflect on the implications of these governance arrangements and their effects on educational, social, political, and economic objectives or outcomes. PPPs in their variant forms are part of these “new” governance arrangements where, to a greater or lesser degree, the private sector and the state sector are working together in the national education system and producing both intended and unintended outcomes.

The debate on PPPs, embedded in a broader debate on the role and impact of the private sector in education, has both advocates (e.g. Patrinos, Barrera Osorio, & Guaqueta, 2009; Tooley, 2000, 2008, 2009) and skeptics (e.g. Riep 2015; Verger 2012) presenting contrasting evidence on the place, role, and effects of the private sector in national education systems related to efficiency, inequalities, quality, effectiveness, etc., and the broader effects of reshaping relations between the public and private spheres. This is not merely an academic debate, but reflects real tensions and social struggles between capital and labor, civil society and the state, national sovereignty versus international intervention, and democratic control versus corporate power. Each tension in its own ways reflects a broader debate on the rise of neoliberal economics and its effects on national and international politics, power, and inequalities (cf. Piketty, 2014).

ANALYZING EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT AFFECTED CONTEXTS

In this section we reflect on some of the particularities of conflict and crisis affected contexts and possible implications for private sector and PPP engagement. One of the central approaches or changes that occurs when one takes a conflict or crisis perspective on education interventions is that the role of education is often re-framed beyond the dominant parameters of human capital theory to explore education’s role in social cohesion, nation building and identity construction, national reconciliation and recovery, and psycho-social and emotional support to students affected by crisis and conflict.

For example, in a conflict situation, a conflict sensitive analysis would ask questions about whether an intended intervention might increase conflict tensions between different and competing ethnic or social groups. It might also lead to different priorities, such as the prioritization of youth interventions targeting young males (as those most likely to partake in violence) as opposed to targeting females (based on global equity agendas). That is not to say that efficiency and equity discussions and priorities are ignored, but that they might be tempered or transformed by other competing demands and priorities for promoting post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration, disaster-risk reduction, reconciliation, state-building, etc.

In work for UNICEF over the last years, I worked with colleagues from the University of Amsterdam, Sussex and University of Ulster to develop an analytical framework that can assist us in reflecting on the effects of educational reforms, including the involvement of the private sector and PPPs, on the dynamics of conflict and crisis. The resultant framework (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, & Smith, 2015), applied in research in eight conflict affected contexts (Pakistan, Rwanda, South Sudan, Kenya, Myanmar, Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa), has assisted us in exploring educational governance, policy, and practice in relation to education and peacebuilding. The framework drew on well-established conflict research suggesting that inequalities and injustice (including within the education system) are central to understanding the reasons for the outbreak of violent conflicts (the drivers of conflict), and that addressing inequalities (including in education) is necessary to bring about “positive peace” and overcome the legacies of conflict.

In this approach, we recognized that economic inequalities in education might be only part of the story. For this reason, we drew on a version of Nancy Fraser’s (1995, 2005) theory of social justice, exploring educational inequalities in terms of Redistribution, Recognition,
and Representation. In our work these were linked to economic inequalities relating to the funding and management of education (Redistribution); inequalities and injustices related to cultural representation and misrecognition (Recognition); and inequalities linked to participation and democratic deficits in the governance and management of education (Representation). These “3Rs” helped us to explore different dimensions of educational inequalities (economic, cultural, and political) as drivers of conflict in education. We also added a fourth “R,” Reconciliation, which allowed us to explore not only the potential drivers of conflict, but also the legacies of conflict and how in and through education we might bring communities together through processes of healing and psycho-social interventions and transitional justice (truth, justice, and reparations). The “4R” approach then allowed us to develop a theoretically informed heuristic device to explore the multi-dimensional ways that education systems might produce or reduce educational and societal inequalities and, in so doing, undermine or promote sustainable peace and development in and through education (see Figure 3).

This type of approach helps to sharpen our analytical lenses to better understand how education relates to conflict and provide policy makers with a tool to reflect on education’s relationship to non-educational phenomena (war, peace, post-conflict recovery, etc.), to ensure that education policy is in line with broader government strategy. While there might be tensions and difficult decisions to be made between human capital objectives and broader peacebuilding objectives, bringing these out in the open helps to inform better and more cohesive policy-making. Though the 4R Framework was developed specifically in relation to conflict affected contexts, it could also be adapted to reflect on the way the education system might contribute to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Post-Disaster Trauma Interventions, and other potentially useful education sector supports for post-disaster recovery. In that sense, the fourth “R” in the conflict model, Reconciliation, might be replaced with Recovery to address DRR and psycho-social interventions, among others.
THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN EDUCATION IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS CONTEXTS: EMERGING COUNTRY EVIDENCE

In this section I will explore some evidence that has emerged from PPPs and related private sector involvement in the education systems of crisis and conflict affected environments, both historic and recent/ongoing, and explore some of the issues that have arisen as a result.

NEW ORLEANS

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the New Orleans public school system was replaced by a charter school system, with privately operated charter schools receiving public funding. The Recovery School District was established and assumed control of 107 of 129 public schools in New Orleans, chartering most of them, with the federal government providing USD$45 million for the establishment of charter schools in the first 10 months after the hurricane (by 2009/10 more than 30 different providers were operating charter schools) (Buras, 2011). Privatization reforms in New Orleans were promoted by Milton Friedman and conservative think tanks such as The Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institution (Buras, 2011; Sanchez, 2010; Sanders, 2015), with private investment in charter schools coming from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Doris and Donald Fisher Fund, and the Walton Family Foundation (Walmart) (Simon, 2007; Walton Family Foundation, 2016).

New Orleans became the U.S.’s first all-charter school district in 2014 (Mullins, 2014), with 25 percent of all students attending a private institution, representing the highest proportion of private school enrolment of all cities in the U.S. (Davidson, 2014). Charter school reform was framed as improving standards for New Orleans’ under-performing schools as well as increasing choice, quality control, academic outcomes, innovation, and competition (Adamson, Cook-Harvey, & Darling-Hammond, 2015; Ashton, 2015; Buras, 2011; Mullins, 2014). Charter school policy allows for “selective enrolment/admissions” practices (e.g. based on academic scores and/or recommendations), enabling admission based on “positively viewed socioeconomic, academic, and behavioural characteristics” (Adamson et al., 2015; Sanchez, 2010).

Improvements in standardized test scores have been reported under the charter school system, although wide disparities exist between charter school and public school performance at the state level (with better outcomes in public schools) and low graduation rates have been reported for charter schools (Kimmett, 2015; Uberti, 2015). Charter and private schools have been described as resulting in segregation and inequalities, with access to different “tiers” of schools based on racial background and class/poverty—African American students, poor students, and students with “special needs” being less likely to access top tier/higher performing schools (Adamson et al., 2015; Mullins, 2014; Sanders, 2015).

According to Buras (2011), school construction and closure was “wholly racialized,” with most of the public schools closed after the hurricane in low-income, working class, African American neighborhoods, and a federal civil rights complaint was filed by community groups in 2014 (Buras, 2011; Kimmett, 2015). Charter schools have been described as characterized by strict and punitive (“no excuses”) behavioral and disciplinary codes, with little consistency in student discipline procedures; high levels of student suspensions and other disciplinary action disproportionately impact African American and Hispanic students (with implications for the “school-to-prison pipeline”) (Govan, Perry, & Vaughan, 2015; Kimmit, 2015; Mullins, 2014; Uberti, 2015).

Charter system implementation involved the mass termination of about 7,500 public school teachers and employees (Adamson et al., 2015; Buras, 2011; Mullins, 2014; Uberti, 2015), who were replaced mainly by young, inexperienced Teach for America teachers.
Most (if not all) charter schools are non-unionised (Sanchez, 2010). Charter schools are managed by unelected school boards, effectively removing community members from decision-making and oversight processes (Sanders, 2015). Furthermore, control over school management has been taken out of the state, assigned to the Chicago-based National Association of Charter School Authorizers (Sanchez, 2010), and shortly after the hurricane, certain charter school law provisions were suspended, including the need to consult/obtain approval from faculty, staff, and parents before converting public schools to charter schools (Buras, 2011). In 2012/13, African American teachers accounted for 51 percent of all teachers in New Orleans, compared to 74 percent in 2003/04 (approximately 87 percent of students are African American), with parents lamenting a lack of Black role models for children (Govan et al., 2015; Kimmett, 2015; Sanders, 2015). Sanchez (2010) in a nod to Naomi Klein’s The Shock Doctrine (2007), refers to the New Orleans experience as the “education shock doctrine,” a “case of using the disaster as a way to push through the largest and quickest privatization scheme of any public school system ever attempted.” While privatization efforts had begun before the hurricane, the hurricane “provided the window of opportunity” to accelerate and expand the process (Buras, 2011).

**HAITI**

Prior to the 2010 earthquake, non-public (privately run) schools accounted for 80 to 90 percent of all schools in Haiti (World Bank, 2012, 2015a, 2015b), and this has continued since the earthquake, with 20 percent of school supply coming from the public education sector and private schools accounting for 80 percent of the school system (Global Affairs Canada, 2015; IDB, 2014). Before the earthquake, donors were supporting private education, with the World Bank and Caribbean Development Bank providing financial and technical support for a tuition waiver program since 2007 (providing $90 per student annually to private schools) (World Bank, 2015a). This approach continued under the Programme de scolarisation universelle, gratuite et obligatoire (Program for Free and Obligatory universal Education). Private schools received $90 per student to provide free schooling to those unable to access government schools (Charles, 2015), although the tuition waiver program is reportedly being phased out, due to problems with low quality in non-public schools (Baron, 2016).

Government implementation of the national Education for All strategy (the first Education for All Phase I project) was funded by the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency. Documents refer to the “preparation of the Project’s activities toward improved public-private partnerships in the education sector” (World Bank, 2012, 2015b), with EFA activities described as “dependent on public-private partnerships” (World Bank, 2012). Targets included per-student subsidies to over 1,000 non-public schools, allocated by “multi-stakeholder committees” (Public Private Partnerships), with public funds used to support private schools (World Bank, 2012, 2015b). The Education for All Phase II project for 2012-17, funded by the World Bank, GPE, and the Haiti Reconstruction Fund (investment of USD$109 million), focuses on non-public school tuition waivers (Baron, 2016). Canada-Haiti development cooperation for 2006-13 (ex-CIDA) included credit for school fees and education loans to parents (Global Affairs Canada, 2015). The Inter-American Development Bank invested USD$250 million over five years, with tuition waivers for private primary schools a key component of the program, although it was noted that it was impossible to ensure that specific children benefited from the waivers or remained enrolled (IDB, 2014). Digicel (a mobile phone company) invested USD$35 million to build 150 schools in Haiti (Earley, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2011).
Liberia’s Minister of Education has argued that the public system alone cannot address the number of primary school-aged children who are out of school (estimated at 42 percent). Liberia’s Minister of Education has argued that the public system alone cannot address the number of primary school-aged children who are out of school (estimated at 42 percent); he framed the Bridge partnership as a strategy of “working collaboratively” to strengthen public schooling (Werner, 2016). The Minister referred to New Orleans’ post-hurricane charter school system as the “first inspiration” for this reform. Bridge (2016b) has described the partnership as “guaranteeing” parents safe spaces for their children. Under the Memorandum of Understanding, Bridge chooses the principals for the pilot schools as well as which government teachers will remain in the pilot schools (those who are not selected are “turned over to the government” and can be transferred to other schools) (Bridge, 2016a).

Criticism of the Bridge partnership has come from civil society organizations (Liberian United Civil Society for Education Dialogue) such as the National Teachers’ Association of Liberia, who launched anti-PPP advocacy campaigns and protests (Education International, April 2016; Fallah, 2016). The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education also criticized the proposals, saying it is “unacceptable for Liberia to outsource its primary education system to a private company” because this represents a violation of its legal and moral obligation regarding the right to education as a public good (OHCHR, 2016). In a subsequent press release, Bridge stated: “The only aim of the partnership is to provide Liberian children with the quality education they deserve. An education that engages their hearts and minds, that enables them to gain employment, start Liberian businesses and to be the successful leaders that the Liberian people need.” (Bridge, 2016b)

While it is too early to understand the effects of this partnership on the Liberian education system, case studies from Kenya might provide further insights.

Kenya

Since 2005, the Kenyan Ministry of Education has extended financial support to low-fee private schools, providing the same learning and materials supports to both public and private schools. The 2011 Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training policy refers to access to grant funds, teacher training, and infrastructure development for private schools (Edwards, Klees, & Wildish, 2015; Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015).

Government support for private schools was intended to increase their accountability, efficiency (by reducing waste in school spending), and competition, and to increase access for larger numbers of out-of-school children (Edwards et al., 2015; Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015).
The increase in the number of private schools has been “most severely felt” in urban informal settlements (e.g. Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret), where more than 50 percent of children attended low-fee private schools in 2013 (Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015). However, it has been reported that government support to low-fee private schools has not decreased tuition fees (Edwards et al., 2015), and they have been reported to contribute to social segregation and inequality (Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015).

Bridge International Academies has played a particularly important role in Kenya. This for-profit, low-cost chain of private schools (“academies”) use technology-enabled approaches (tablets) with standardized and scripted curricula and lessons for teachers (“academy in a box” model). Launched in 2009, there were approximately 400 academies in 2015 (Center for Education Innovations, 2015a). The academies are intended to decrease overhead costs and increase the quality of education, enabling rapid scaling-up across the country and targeting out-of-school children, orphans and vulnerable children, and low-income families (Center for Education Innovations, 2015a). Bridge charges a “low” fee of $6 per month, though it is reported that this amount is unrealistic for many families, particularly families with multiple children, given average monthly wages, housing/food costs, and unemployment rates in Kenya (Edwards et al., 2015; Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015).

Bridge has received a USD$10 million investment from the International Finance Corporation (private sector investment arm of the World Bank), along with over USD$100 million from international investors such as DFID, Bill Gates, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, and American venture capital/investment firms (Learn Capital, Khosla Ventures, New Enterprise Associates, and Omidyar Network) (Center for Education Innovations, 2015a; Curtis, 2015; Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015).

The Bridge scheme has been criticised by Kenya’s National Union of Teachers; the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNESCO expressed concerns regarding access, teaching, and quality (Education International, January 2016); and 119 civil society organisations (including 30 in Kenya and Uganda) released a statement in 2015 criticizing the World Bank for their support to Bridge, highlighting unaffordable fees and lack of parallel funding to public education.

Government support for private schools was intended to increase their accountability, efficiency (by reducing waste in school spending), and competition, and to increase access for larger numbers of out-of-school children.

The DFID-funded Kenya Essential Education Programme (four years, GBP 39 million) includes a focus on investment in low-cost private schools (75 percent of the 50,000 children targeted will reportedly be in low-cost private schools) and on arid/semi-arid lands and informal urban settlements, with the majority of funds (GBP 25 million) appearing to go to Adam Smith International for implementation oversight (Adam Smith International, n.d.; Curtis, 2015; DFID, 2016b). DFID’s “flagship” GBP 355 million Girls’ Education Challenge (2011-17) is implemented in Kenya, as well as in Uganda, South Sudan, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other countries. Management of the program has been devolved to Price Waterhouse Cooper (British multinational) and Nathan Associates Ltd. (private sector development consultancy), FHI 360, and Social Development Direct Ltd. (Curtis, 2015; DFID, 2016a). PPPs are central to the initiative, with one of the three core strategies involving the development of “strategic partnerships” with the private sector (GEC, 2013, 2015), including Avanti Communications (in Kenya), the Coca Cola Company (in Nigeria), Discovery Communications (in Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana), and Ericsson (in Myanmar) (Curtis, 2015; DFID, 2016a; GEC, 2013).

Let All Girls Read, a DFID-funded Girls’ Education Challenge project led by CBTF targeting marginalised girls in arid/semi-arid lands and urban slums, advocates for government funding to low-cost private schools (GEC, 2015). DFID’s GBP 75 million, 13-year Impact Fund, launched in 2012/13, focuses on private sector investments (including in the education sector) in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
The government of Uganda is encouraging public private partnerships with secondary-level private providers as a means of achieving universal secondary education (USE) by increasing the number of secondary schools and secondary enrolment (primarily in rural areas). The partnership between London-based Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) and the Ugandan government is one example. PEAS receives per-student subsidies from the government for 28 low-fee secondary schools across the country (Center for Education Innovations, 2015b; Mwesigye, 2016; PEAS, 2014). PEAS secured a three-year grant of nearly GBP 2 million from DFID’s Girls’ Education Challenge for the Girls’ Enrolment, Access, Retention and Results program, using their low-cost private schools approach (GEC, 2015; PEAS, 2014). PEAS has also received funding from ELMA Philanthropies (ELMA Electronic Inc.), Mastercard Foundation, UBS Optimus Foundation (UBS global financial firm), The Four Venture Partnership Foundation, RBS, Oxford Royale, Fondation Eagle, and the Equitable Charitable Trust (PEAS, 2014).

In 2014, roughly 48 percent of USE program secondary schools were privately owned, and 45 percent of USE students were enrolled in private schools (Wokadale & Barungi, 2015). A USD$4 million investment from the Internal Finance Corporation to a private secondary school in Entebbe that same year was intended to increase secondary enrolment (including for students from conflict affected states) and to develop an educated and trained workforce (Waiswa, 2015).

Because lack of investment in public education has been described as “forcing” children into private schools and dropouts often occur when low-income families fail to pay fees, low-fee private schools are argued to contribute to segregation, stratification, and inequality (GISER, 2015; Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015). A recent study of government spending on private secondary schools intended to achieve USE reports that richer households benefit more than poor households, with PPPs showing limited achievements regarding funding to the poor (Wokadale & Barungi, 2015).

**SOUTH SUDAN**

DFID’s country strategy for South Sudan states specifically that funds be channeled through NGOs, multilateral bodies, and private sector firms, rather than through the government (DFID, 2014b). DFID’s Girls’ Education South Sudan (GESS) program, a five-year program involving GBP 60 million from UK Aid and SSP 60 million from South Sudan’s government, is managed and implemented by Mott MacDonald (a management, engineering, and development consultancy), BBC Media Action, Winrock International, and Charlie Goldsmith Associates.7 DFID’s GESS business case refers to “evidence that external private contractors have been more effective than multilateral organisations in managing service delivery and other programmes in South Sudan” (DFID, 2012).
Public Private Partnerships in Education in Crisis and Conflict Affected Contexts

Pakistan

Roughly one-third of all primary and secondary students in Pakistan were attending private schools in 2014, ranging from low-cost to elite private schools (Aziz et al., 2014; Nguyen & Raju, 2014, 2015). Private schooling accounts for up to 50 percent of enrolment in some provinces (e.g. Punjab) and up to 70 percent of enrolment in urban areas (UNDP, 2014), with low-cost private schools accounting for over 40 percent of all private school enrolment in 2013 (Muzaffar, 2013).

The number of private schools increased by 69 percent between 1999/2000 and 2008/09 (compared to an 8 percent increase in the number of government schools), representing 30 percent of all education institutions; enrolment in private schools increased from 6 million to 12 million children (representing 34 percent of all enrolment) over the same period (I-SAPS, 2010). There are significant disparities in private schools between rural and urban areas (and across levels of education): between 1999/2000 and 2008/09, the number of private schools in rural areas increased by 25 percent at the primary level and 209 percent at the secondary level (compared to 10 percent and 113 percent, respectively, in urban areas) (I-SAPS, 2010).

Pakistan’s 2002 Education Sector Reform Plan provided for private sector incentives, including tax exemption (50 percent income tax rebates for private sector institutes and faculty), exemption of customs duties for educational equipment import, provision or subsidization of land, and subsidized utilities. The 2009 National Education Policy recommended the development of PPPs (Ali, 2012; Ulhaq & Kayani, 2011), with the government referring to the “pivotal role” of private education institutes in providing quality education (The News, 2015).

Total grants in aid to private education increased by 20 percent between 2007/08 and 2009/10, mainly through the establishment of PPPs, while allocations from federal and provincial governments to education foundations for PPPs increased by 28 percent (e.g. grants or loans to private schools, tuition voucher programs) (I-SAPS, 2010). PPP schools in Pakistan are generally run by provincial education foundations (e.g. Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh Education Foundations) (Amjad, 2014), “autonomous” statutory bodies of provincial governments established to promote PPPs in education (Muzaffar, 2013).

The privatization of education has been described as promoting children’s security, as teachers may be more likely to be present in private schools, and children have to travel shorter distances than if they were to travel to government schools (UNDP, 2014).

The promotion of PPPs is framed as improving access (with 21 percent of school-aged children out of school in 2013) in “marginalized and under-served” areas, particularly in rural areas and for low-income families, as well as improving quality of education (Ali, 2012; Center for Education Innovations, 2015c). The privatization of education has been described as promoting children’s security, as teachers may be more likely to be present in private schools, and children have to travel shorter distances than if they were to travel to government schools (UNDP, 2014).

PPP education programs and private schooling programs in Pakistan have been funded by USAID, DFID, and the World Bank, as well as by the Engro Foundation (Engro Corporation is a Pakistani multinational corporation involved in petrochemical, chemical, and fertilizer production) (Ali, 2012).

While academic performance in PPP schools has been reported to be higher than in government schools (linked to better facilities, qualified teachers, and access to supplementary tuition), students from poorer families are the minority in PPP schools (the majority of such students are enrolled in government schools) (Amjad, 2014); students in private schools tend to come from urban, wealthier, and more educated households (Nguyen & Raju, 2014, 2015).

7 See http://girleducationsouthsudan.org/
AFGHANISTAN

The Constitution of Afghanistan, adopted in 2004, stipulates that the establishment of private general, technical, and vocation education will be allowed and regulated by law (ICEF Monitor, 2015), and the number of private schools increased after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 with the return of former refugees from neighboring countries (Tolson, 2015).

Most donors channel funds through the World Bank-administered Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and its Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) (Strand, 2015). Launched in 2008, project objectives refer to support for private providers in order to increase education access and quality (Lahire, 2016). USD$2 million was invested by the World Bank for EQUIP implementation monitoring, which is “often contracted to private consulting companies” (IJAMEC, 2015), though specific actors are not identified.

The 2015 report on education financing (prepared by the Christian Michelsen Institute for the Oslo Summit, coordinated by the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution) notes that “private sector contributions are virtually non-existent” but government should “find ways to tap into private sector funds” (Strand, 2015). Some tensions have been reported between private schools and the national government, including government investigation and closure of private schools, based on claims that private schools were teaching English rather than Dari or Pashto and setting “exorbitant” fees (Safi & Habib, 2011). It is reported that 90 percent of private school teachers in Afghanistan are women, and that private school teachers earn less than public school teachers and are less experienced and less skilled; USAID has supported a capacity-building program for female private sector employees, including teachers, intended to improve teacher quality in private schools (Tolson, 2015).

SYRIAN REFUGEES

The 2016 UNICEF MENARO Syria Crisis Education Strategic Paper (based on the London conference) highlights the need for private sector partnership to provide education to Syrian refugee children. PPPs are part of the response plan for Syrian refugee education (e.g. teachers, books, infrastructure, technology), which seeks to provide 1 million school places through PPPs, with a reported commitment of $75 million from the private sector and partners to support Syrian refugee education in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey (Brown, 2016; Simone & Litchman, 2016; Simone, Zang, & Litchman, 2016). The UK-based Global Business Coalition for Education has been playing a central role in PPPs/business-sector response to education for Syrian refugees.

The need for PPPs has been linked to a lack of humanitarian funding for education due to focus on food, shelter, and health care, and the problem of “ordinary” aid budgets being unable to respond quickly enough. PPPs are being presented as a new type of humanitarian funding for education (Brown, 2016; Simone & Litchman, 2016). For Sarah Brown, Executive Chair of the Global Business Coalition for Education, the Syrian intervention is just a starting point: “If we can show that business and public sectors can help Syrian refugees, the plan is then to secure help for the 24 million out-of-school children spread across conflict zones in Africa and Asia as well as the Middle East” (Brown, 2016). Private institutions (including “free,” faith-based, and other private schools) have been described as increasingly filling the gap in education provision for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, due to limited access and integration in public schools (Shuayb, Makkouk, & Tuttunki, 2014).

In Lebanon in 2012/13, an estimated 16,500 Syrian refugees were in private schools, while roughly 43,500 were in public schools (nearly one-third were in private schools), according to Shuayb et al. (2014). The 2016 UNICEF MENARO report estimates up to 40,000 Syrian refugee children in private schools (including publicly-subsidized schools) in Lebanon.

It is reported that 90 percent of private school teachers in Afghanistan are women, and that private school teachers earn less than public school teachers & are less experienced and less skilled.
In this section, I will now reflect on the education PPP case studies presented above, using the conflict and crisis lens presented earlier. This is important, as very few of the programs/initiatives promoting privatization or public-private partnerships (including low-fee private schooling) outlined in the previous section actually explain why this approach might be effective or useful in response to conflict and crisis (marginalization, equity, etc.), beyond responding to a lack of government resources and large numbers of out-of-school children, and some references to providing “innovative” solutions to education in emergency contexts. When applying the thinking in this framework to PPPs, the following issues and questions emerge. This list is illustrative of the approach, rather than exhaustive, and could perhaps constitute the beginning of a fruitful research agenda.

- **Vulnerability/Fragility of National Governments**
  One reality that needs to be reflected on in contexts where governments (whether national or regional) are recovering from armed conflict or natural disaster is that the government may be particularly vulnerable to external actors’ pressure to transform the education system in particular directions. Indeed, Naomi Klein’s (2007) book on “the shock doctrine” makes the case that neoliberal reforms promoting the private sector are opportunistically pushed through during moments of crisis when neither the state nor civil society are positioned to resist. This might be due to lack of national resources or national capacity (undermined during war or crisis), or a result of the trauma that has been experienced. The case of Liberia presented in the previous section is illustrative. Though Liberia has emerged from more than a decade of civil war (1989–2003) and the recent Ebola crisis (2014–2016), the country remains one of the world’s poorest and most aid-dependent countries.8 This raises questions of legitimacy, morality, power, and the ethics of experimenting on vulnerable communities and nations. It also raises the question of who will step in and pick up the pieces if the initiative is unsuccessful or funders change their minds.9

- **State Legitimacy and Private Sector Engagement**
  In conflict, peacebuilding, and nation building literature there is strong recognition of the need to build and strengthen state legitimacy after conflicts. The restoration of the education sector, as a key social sector and social service, is a vital component of building state legitimacy and signaling a return to normality (Novelli & Smith, 2011). Management of education systems by non-state actors may undermine that legitimacy in the eyes of the population, and also undermine reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. In this process, international actors can play an important role in building state legitimacy by providing international development assistance directly to the state, which can then administer the education system. In the case of South Sudan, DFID, one of the major donors in the country, appears to be bypassing the state and funding private providers and managing agents, which may be further undermining state legitimacy. More generally, in many of the case studies presented in this framing paper, particularly in the case of Bridge International Academies, there appears to be large-scale investment by a range of actors and agencies into PPPs and the education private sector, though investment presumably could have gone directly into the state education systems. This has led some commentators to argue that public education systems are being undermined (cf. Education International, January 2016).

- **The State-building and Social Cohesion Role of Education**
  Education systems do many things: they can contribute to the economy by providing the skills necessary for the labor market, but they can also promote social cohesion and nation building. Much of the discourse on the role of the private sector in education appears rooted in human capital understandings of education’s role, with little mention of citizenship or social cohesion. The strong focus on examinations, which is evident, might reduce emphasis on these important socialization functions of schools, so vital for countries emerging out of conflict and crisis. Many of the claims of success noted in the cases of Bridge Academies in Kenya and low-fee private schooling in Uganda are situated in traditional numeracy and literacy outcomes, but from a conflict and crisis perspective

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9 A recent article highlights failures and long-term effects on the local education authority as a result of educational reforms supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that would likely be amplified in vulnerable contexts such as Liberia. See [http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-gates-education-20160601-snap-story.html](http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-gates-education-20160601-snap-story.html)
we should also be interested in the development of the citizenship, human rights, and social cohesion dimensions of schooling. These “soft skills” would be important to monitor in any pilot interventions in these contexts.

**Privatization, Stratification, and Segregation**

Evidence related to some of the privatization and PPPs in education literature points to the tendency to increase competition between schools and increase the fragmentation and hierarchies of the education system. While the idea and intention might be that this will improve overall performance and raise the general standard of education, such strategies might also exacerbate existing class, ethnic, religious, and social divisions within society, which lie at the root of many contemporary conflicts and need to be reduced rather than aggravated. Evidence from Pakistan (Amjad, 2014; Nguyen & Raju, 2014, 2015) points to how the poor are marginalized and under-represented in PPPs and in private schools more generally. Similar evidence is noted in Uganda (Wokadale & Barungi, 2015) and in Kenya (Hakijamii & GIESCR, 2015). On the issue of “for profit, low fee private schooling,” the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016) heavily criticised the UK’s DFID for the “funding of low-fee, private and informal schools run by for-profit business enterprises,” arguing that development aid could have contributed to violating children’s rights in recipient countries. At the very least, there appears to be enough evidence to warrant further research and analysis in this domain.

**Teachers as Agents of Peacebuilding and Post-Crisis Reconstruction**

Implications for teachers seem to be huge, so it is not surprising that Education International and teacher unions more generally have often been the loudest oppositional voice in debates on PPPs and the role of the private sector in national education systems. As outlined, privatization initiatives in several contexts have involved the mass termination of teachers’ contracts, “assessments” of teacher quality for privately-run schools (with “poorly performing” teachers transferred to other schools), lower salaries in private schools compared to government schools, imposition of scripted lessons (removing teacher opportunities for participation), non-unionization in private schools, and, in New Orleans, even dramatic shifts in the racial composition of teachers. All of these dimensions may undermine the role and potential of teachers—key socializing agents in society—to work with the state to bring communities back together after conflict and crisis. Resistance to reforms that threaten teachers’ wellbeing might also provoke broader social conflicts at a time when unity and cooperation might be a priority. Consideration of the effects of these types of teacher reforms on conflict and crisis dimensions thus seems to be important.

**Sustainability of Private Sector Investment**

The issue of sustainability in conflict and crisis contexts is crucial. Funding in these contexts is notoriously unstable, with money invested in high profile contexts but then withdrawn later to be re-directed to new contexts (Novelli et al., 2015). There are real dangers of private sector investment raising expectations, setting up new governance, institutional structures, and partnerships, and then withdrawing funding when projects do not immediately bear fruit, leaving states without the resources or capacities to pick up the pieces.

**Transferability and Conflict/Crisis Sensitivity**

Finally, a cross-cutting issue in many of the cases is the prevalence of models or reforms exported from one context to another. Partnership Schools for Liberia is inspired by the experience of post-disaster New Orleans. A conflict/crisis sensitive approach would seek to analyze the particular context and the likely effects on that context prior to adopting strategies from a very different situation to avoid potential harm and ensure that the model or reform being considered appears likely to do some good. In the case of New Orleans, the evidence points to many potential challenges related to exporting the model to Liberia, which might have deleterious effects on both the education system and society; likely effects should be thoroughly reflected upon before implementation.
CONCLUSION

Having laid out some key areas for reflection on the relationship between education PPPs and conflict and crisis affected contexts, I now want to now conclude this framing paper by suggesting practical ways to move this discussion forward. What emerges out of the analysis is the need for more resources and an increased focus on education systems in these difficult and complex contexts—the challenges are immense and the funding gap is huge. This is the backdrop to the entry of more private sector actors into this field of practice. However, what constitutes the private sector, what the private sector is engaged in, and who is affected by that process also need to be clarified and explored. Low-fee private schools are a particularly contentious issue. Similarly, the use of public money—whether from international development donors such as DFID or from national governments—to fund private schools has provoked similar tensions. Clarity regarding which dimensions of PPPs we are concerned with is therefore paramount.

However, some more general points are also valid. First, what I hope has been highlighted is that education interventions in conflict and crisis affected environments need to be subject to interrogation on the basis not of their effects and outcomes on the educational system alone but also on the particular conflict and crisis context within which they are inserted. We need to ask whether specific interventions are having a positive/negative impact on, for example, post-conflict national recovery, or assisting the needs of a country recovering from a crisis event (e.g. the Ebola crisis in Liberia, or an earthquake or other natural disaster). Using the “4Rs” framework, pre-project risk assessments, monitoring, and evaluation look very different from traditional models of educational planning and policy monitoring. While this is by no means an easy task, it is necessary to ensure that Education PPPs are not aggravating already complex situations and that they are contributing to sustainable peace or crisis recovery—and broader sustainable development objectives.
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