Teacher wellbeing and retention: what keeps teachers going in situations of forced displacement?

Internally displaced teachers in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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“few studies to date have examined teachers’ role in refugee and emergency contexts” [...] anecdotal in nature [...] The literature that does concentrate on teachers focuses almost exclusively on those who teach in refugee camps or settlements, and “very little is known about those refugees who are living in urban areas or displaced internally” (Ring & West 2015)

“currently, monitoring and reporting pays too little attention to the impact of attacks on education systems, such as the negative effects on teacher retention and recruitment” (Education under attack 2010)

• Focus on number and type of attack and means to protect teachers

BUT: HIGH RELEVANCE
Observation: WORK DESPITE NO PAYMENTS

• “What is striking in this is not, as Sommers perhaps wryly observes, that ‘Not paying teachers has a direct and negative impact on educational quality,’ but that there are so many accounts of teachers continuing to teach in such circumstances despite not being paid.” (World Bank 2010, p. 16f)
Factors influencing teacher motivation in fragile contexts

- Security situation
- Status / appreciation

Community

- Accreditation
- Sufficient salaries

Government

Adapted from World Bank (2010)
Resilience and incentives

• “Resilience, while a now commonly accepted and valued discourse for education in conflict-affected context, may put teachers in compromised and dangerous positions as the front line actors tasked with maintaining the status quo.“ (Lopes Cardozo and Shah 2016, 17)

• Lot of talk about motivation, incentives, rational choices, social status, recognition, resilience...
Teachers between armed groups and the state

• “caught in the middle of political, ideological, sectarian, and military struggles in conflict-affected countries” (Smith et al. 2014, 7)
• “Caught between two stones” (Sri Lanka (Lopes Cardozo & Shah 2016))
• “Teachers as front-line actors” (Peru, (Wilson 2001))
• “Caught between the state’s projects of modernization and the communities’ very opposition and resistance to such endeavors” (Nepal (Pherali 2013))
• “Teachers are key agents used by governing powers to enable emergency measures and signal the return to normalcy” (Iraq, Vongalis-Macrow 2007)
Case study: Democratic Republic of Congo
Case study: DR Congo

*Teacher in 2015:* “I am not in favor of returning. Everything I have gone through, that doesn’t allows me to return. If I were to be forced to return, I would stop being a teacher.”

*The same teacher in 2016:* “We are here because we were left with no choice. The educational administrators forced us”. After three displacements over the last ten years, all teachers of his school returned.

*Another principal:* No. Even our priest hadn’t returned. It was due to the chief and his deputy. The chief himself stayed in another village. It was the deputy who contacted the educational authorities to make us return.

“We returned because it was an order of the state, under the menace to bloc salaries and suspend the school”.

“I did it voluntarily, but I had to”
Two sides of the same coin: Retention and insecurity

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<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Government</th>
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- Due to their status, teachers are used to signal a return to normalcy.

- Short-term pacification: in some contexts, this means a return to insecurity.

- From research in Aceh/Indonesia we know that higher salaries might make teachers more vulnerable to attacks and extortion (Lopes Cardozo and Shah 2016).

- Meager salaries levels *per se* are a reflection of weak state capabilities, but – embedded in a network of administrators, decrees and physical payment modalities – can be used as a means of enforcing state regulation.
Conclusion

• *We started with the statement:* “currently, monitoring and reporting pays too little attention to the impact of attacks on education systems, such as the negative effects on teacher retention and recruitment” (Education under attack 2010 & 2014)

• *We can add that:* “research pays too little attention to adverse effects of teacher retention and recruitment on attacks on education”

• Overall, research on teacher retention needs to be more conflict-sensitive. Quantitative data ought to be complemented with ethnographic qualitative data
References