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(Re)Building a feeling of belonging in complex emergencies
Challenges and opportunities in the education of refugee children through the experiences of Afghans in Pakistan

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Article abstract

In an effort to contribute to the development of the emerging field of studies related to complex emergencies, this article seeks to define recent trends in curriculum studies and research methodology in comparative and international education (CIE) and will suggest crucial areas where CIE and curriculum studies contribute to theory building for a qualitative praxis of implementing learning environments in complex emergency contexts. It goes on to test the emerging sense of a critical learning theory for survival against the case study of Afghan refugee education in south-west Pakistan during the Taliban era. This represents an attempt by emergency educationists to move away from solely focusing on the practical aspects of their field towards thinking more strategically and deeply about the nature of the field itself and suggesting early directions that theory development might usefully take. The paper draws on the author's firsthand experiences of managing refugee education programmes, as well as publicly available policy documents, field reports, and the strong theoretical traditions within curriculum studies, thereby highlighting the need for rigorously developing a deeper understanding of education for survival in complex emergency environments.

(Re)Building a feeling of belonging in complex emergencies

Challenges and opportunities in the education of refugee children through the experiences of Afghans in Pakistan[1]

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> …[an] entire education system has been almost totally destroyed. There is inadequate training of teachers, inadequate quality of teaching, inadequate monitoring systems… in short, inadequate teaching and learning (UNESCO in Sommers 2002 : 1)

The study of education in complex emergencies — contexts embroiled in cycles of war, natural disaster, environmental and/or economic hardship — is an emerging academic discipline within the field of Comparative and International Education (CIE) which is itself a sub-specialist field of curriculum studies. In this emerging field, researchers struggle with how to understand both the social space of the emergency-effected and how to design and conduct research in a constantly changing, demanding, and often insecure environment. In an effort to contribute to the development of this diverse field, this article seeks to define recent trends in curriculum studies and research methodology in CIE, and thereby suggest crucial areas where CIE and curriculum studies might contribute to theory building for a qualitative praxis of implementing learning environments in complex emergency

contexts. This theoretical literature review reveals what might be called a theory of education for survival hinged upon existing notions of learning for self and community development. The second half of the article tests the theoretical case built up in the first half by examining the case of Afghan refugees living in Pakistani refugee villages (RVs) during the Taliban era. Drawing on what Connelly and Clandinin (1988) refer to as "personal practical knowledge", this article draws on the author's first hand experiences of managing refugee education programmes, publicly available policy documents and field reports, and the strong theoretical traditions within curriculum studies, thereby highlighting the need for rigorously developing a theoretical understanding of education for survival in complex emergency environments.

Curriculum Theory Building for Complex Emergencies

Redefining "Refugees" as Border Crossers

The notion of a complex emergency environment suggests the study of spaces both inside and closely related to the emergency itself — or all areas where affected populations might be living. Such a broad concept of environment allows for the inclusion of war and disaster affected groups which have not been displaced as well as displaced groups. As is usual in new areas of research, it is perhaps useful to begin a study of this scope with whichever group has been more researched or is more readily accessible for research. Within the scope of complex emergencies, one of the most accessible and previously researched groups is that of refugees, particularly in the context of their migration and resettlement phases, with less being disseminated about pre-migration and return phases.

Rather than to understand the term "refugee" solely as an essentialist legal definition from international legal frameworks, a more salient possibility lies in the way Henry Giroux defines the cyberworld of middle class American youth.

> This is a world in which one is condemned to wander across, within, and between multiple borders and spaces marked by excess, otherness, difference, and a dislocating notion of meaning and attention (Giroux 2000 : 180).

In keeping with Giroux's vision, refugees belong neither in the cultural space they left behind nor to the one in which they are living. The space of origin does not remain static except in the refugee's memories, while the new social space — sterile in its conformity to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees camp design models — requires acculturation and the carving out of a new sociocultural and economic space which reflects the old but is imposed upon the new. The process of acculturation to the new reflects learning from experience, or from the familiar, and the process of constructing new community ties. Refugee space, and the refugee him/herself, is therefore definable as an "other" space — unknowable to those who have not directly experienced it. While field-based practitioners and researchers might be able to construct sympathy for this otherly dimensional space, they cannot hope to gain full empathy. However, in understanding refugee space thus, the possibility is opened for a curriculum praxis of learning which reaches explicitly into the social and political experiences of the refugee youth.

Multiple Learning Praxes in Emergency Education

The proliferation of crises since 1989 has sparked recognition in the humanitarian assistance field for the need of a richer understanding of the multiple roles learning plays within emergency contexts as a tool of adaptation, survival, community (re)building and political will. Much of the literature in the emergency education field is written by a small group of concerned field-based practitioners (Crisp, Talbot and Cipollone 2001; Sinclair 2002; Sommers 2002), who plan, design and implement learning programmes in challenging environments in the practical tradition of Joseph Schwab (1969; 1983). Much of the documentation covers discrete aspects of field practice including planning, peace education, attainment, qualitative education, human rights education, and technical education among them. Perhaps because emergency education is steeped in the practical, the tensions between theory and practice in education, noted by Carr and Kemmis (1994: 113-116) and Schwab (1969: 27), cannot be resolved without significant struggle on the part of researchers. The concept of "praxis", first conceived by Aristotle, refers to undertaking informed action, or doing rather than making action (Carr and Kemmis 1994: 32, 132). While the practical aspects of emergency education curricula are extremely important to creating a comprehensive understanding of structuring

effective learning spaces within emergencies, Margaret Sinclair's argument for the development of academic research praxis for education in emergencies from within the specialist field of CIE suggests an appreciation for the potential in a symbiotic relationship between theory and the practical in emergencies (2002: 128).

While Dewey (1938) argues that theory informs praxis, the field of CIE has merged field lessons and practices with theory in a cyclical collaboration wherein theory informs praxis and vice versa (Arnove 1999; Hayhoe 2000; Thomas 1990). This notion of mutually beneficial knowledge building is one of the reasons why CIE has the potential to be useful to emergency educationists. CIE has focused on the systematic study of educational process within state structures, using a combination of positivistic methods of comparison through quantitative studies and enhanced by sociological and other qualitative research methods (Arnove 1999). Arnove has distinguished three dimensions of CIE: the scientific (theory building), the pragmatic (sharing and improving policy practice in education), and the global (study which contributes to international understanding and peace) (1999: 4-10). In order to build theory, Arnove suggests, comparative methods examine case studies and search for "generalisable propositions about the workings of school systems and their interactions with their surrounding economies, polities, cultures, and social orders" (1999: 4). Hence, locating the study of education in complex emergencies within the realm of CIE seems entirely appropriate as emergency practitioners move from the practical to a richer understanding of their field.

Making Space for Critical Theory in CIE

Having established that CIE may be the correct location through which education in emergencies can explore a deeper understanding of itself as an academic field, it must be stated that CIE is not without limitations — limitations which may challenge emergency practitioners as they embark upon this journey. In spite of CIE's focus on postcolonial locations in development education, on the whole the field has yet to fully embrace the potential which lies in critical theory critique and the centring of the other in curriculum design (Morrow and Torres 1999: 104; Welch 1999: 37-43; Hayhoe 2000). Although Hayhoe, for one, concludes that the metanarrative of case studies is useful to her

understanding of education, she does not address how critique of the metanarrative allows hidden or excluded voices to arise, which may be problematic by marginalising othered children in the study of education. On a theoretical level, it is this inability to actively seek out and address the hidden voices within comparative education research which has kept education in complex emergencies outside of the discourse. Hence, while case studies are useful to fostering deeper understanding and theory building, they must be inclusive rather than exclusive of the other.

Nowhere is this failure to seek out the othered voice in comparative education more prevalent than in studies related to Central/South Asia — regions which harbour large populations of displaced and working children, who, being excluded from state-run forms of education, would be considered "the other" in educational research about the region. An economic and gross indicator metanarrative on South Asian education, as was written by Zhixin Su (1999) for example, represents a model of comparative education research which does not create space for conceptualising the unschooled learning patterns of the large group(s) of non-enrolled Asian children and youth including refugee children, war-affected children, working children, trafficked children, girls, and nomadic children. Even a broader approach, such as that presented by ul Haq and Haq (1998), which includes non-formal education programmes, technical education programmes, and covers some aspects of qualitative research, does not integrate either refugee children's education programmes or children's own experience of society into the study of education, thereby limiting our full understanding of curriculum, the role schools play in unschooled lives, and unschooled learning patterns (Illich 1970; Eisner 1979; Jackson 1992). As such, while a traditional comparative approach may be valid for studying the institution of schooling, the field of CIE has not yet fully contemplated the role which critical theory could play in making the comparative study of teaching and learning inclusive of unschooled learning processes as much as it is about schooling.

Margaret Sinclair amiably points out that research in emergency contexts can be arduous due to rapidly changing social, political and economic situations, funding issues, and security problems (Sinclair 2002: 128-9). Given these challenges to the emergency context as well as the fact that some emergency contexts can often be non-state

or chaotic-state situations, the use of some comparative methods may be contraindicated. However, the incorporation of case studies as an influencing factor in theory building, through the careful study of and critical questioning of existing practice in complex emergencies, allows past and existing praxis to inform theory such that hidden educational theories at work can be identified and made useful for the context. The use of CIE methods and knowledge in engaging in a study of complex emergency environments and learning, however, can be included if one takes a more critical view of the other and how the other is centred in the study. Hence, for CIE to become truly useful to emegency education paradigms, researchers will have to acknowledge and enter headfirst into engaging a more critical picture of learning, education, and the needs of others. No longer may this perspective sit on the margins of the CIE field.

A Critical Sense of the "Curriculum" of Emergency Space

Perhaps a useful starting place for engaging in a more critical sense of CIE is to begin by seeking a richer notion of "curriculum". Understanding the word "curriculum" requires a complex treatment of learning praxis and is the focus of my work in refugee education wherein I seek to understand the lives of refugee children and youth by constructing a curriculum of significant relevance to their present and future. Dewey saw curriculum as being the study and practice of organising subject matter for teaching and learning in school environments, but deviated from traditional views in his belief that the process should include the learning experience as part of curriculum (1938: 17-20). Bobbitt went beyond the school environment in his understanding of curriculum including "the entire range of experiences, directed and undirected, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual" (in Jackson 1992: 7). Bobbitt, argues Jackson, focused on the curriculum of society as a whole seeking to understand how the school could better prepare the young to take on adult roles by identifying and rectifying gaps in learning goals versus outcomes (Jackson 1992: 11). Bobbitt's wider application of the term curriculum opens the field of curriculum studies to understanding the subtle connections between societal and community development with learning processes (Huiskamp 2002; Friere 1970; Illich 1970)

Like Deborah Britzman, and other postmodern feminist and/or critical pedagogues, I would argue that "curriculum" includes, yet

extends far beyond the institutions of schooling, the goals of learning set in those institutions, and the materials and methods used to attain a learned state (Britzman 1991: 40-41; Giroux 1992, 2000). Change in the discourse on curriculum since the early 1900s shows it to be an eclectic process in which variously and simultaneously explicit, implicit/hidden, and null goals, influences, and content merge in a struggle of competing power, values, and ideas creating self-knowledge (Eisner 1979; Jackson 1992). Central to the process of learning, or the process of curriculum, is the idea of individual experience — positive, negative, hidden, and null — and how the learners receive and participate in the process. This view of curriculum as an eclectic process of learning at an individual level suggests one way forward for viewing emergency education in general and refugee education in particular as an opportunity for personal change, brought on by sudden external violence leading to borderlessness, which has created new learning goals for (re)defining the location of the self within society.

Another potential way forward is also enabled by a different set of theorists, particularly those critical theorists and feminist theorists who place their roots in Marxist discourse and thereby engage the possibility of a curriculum of learning either for a collective sense of belonging to a community or group, or for developing political consciousness and action. Some such discourse is indicated in the work of people like Giroux and Britzman through the suggestion that the learning goals of institutions can be legitimators and/or facilitators of social belonging and identity discourse. However, by extending learning goals beyond the group to the individual, Grioux, Britzman and others suggest a different type of membership than one who is critically rooted in Marxist theory would expect. Theorists and practitioners such as Paolo Freire (1970, 1985), on the other hand, propose a group-oriented sense of learning through discussion resulting in group-oriented action leading to freedom from oppression for both the group and the individual within that group. A more realistic approach to finding a theoretical way forward may be to try to combine both paths in an effort to be more inclusive of individual needs and past experiences within the group, while equally finding common goals for action and expression of collective growth and development needs.

Seeking A Critical Curriculum in Refugee Education Policy

This eclectic view of curriculum leads one to question how refugee agencies in particular view the notion of curriculum in policy. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) curriculum policy for refugee schools (article 0.4) is broken into initial, normalisation, and curriculum enrichment subheadings suggesting that the home country curriculum be introduced and enriched by those subjects deemed important for the othered community, such as the host country's language, health education relating to camp hygiene issues, and trauma counselling (2002: 3-4). Significantly, article 0.4.3 stipulates that, "it is not normally appropriate to create a new curriculum or write new textbooks" (UNHCR 2002: 4). The vision of the curriculum implied here is decidedly traditional, with a focus on subject matter and materials, and is limited in that it does not implicitly bring in the concept of learner's daily experience or teaching methods under the notion of "curriculum". Moreover, there lies a tacit assumption that the methods implied through available materials will be sufficient in helping teachers and learners make sense of the cultural spaces in the refugee camp, at home, and just outside the camp in the host country. Although the policy extends into issues affecting an eclectic curriculum at all levels of formal and non-formal education including the early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, and vocational levels, there is no direct association that these issues of educational structure and practice are related to the curriculum of learning.

For refugee education praxis to benefit from curriculum theory, the notion of curriculum needs to be extended further than the confines of traditional understandings and to reach into a semantic use of the terminology. This includes modifying the idea that refugee programmes do not/cannot create curriculum. Indeed, according to the definitions of curriculum explored earlier, curriculum must be created through the process of understanding the varied needs of refugee learners and how those goals differ from those of their brethren and hosts. In order for an updated understanding of curriculum to become useful in the practice of refugee education research and programme development, an understanding of refugee learning must be developed from within the theoretical traditions of experiential theories and liberatory practice.

There is an attractive correlation in the stereotype of impoverished borderless citizenshipless people trying to (re)build lives in a social space

which is neither part of the nation-state system nor fully outside of it, and Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner's contention that the basic function of education is to "increase the survival prospects of the group" (1976: 195). Postman and Weingartner propose that in rapidly changing situations, the human learning need becomes unlearning knowledge which is no longer relevant or useful to the situation, identifying new learning goals, and engaging in them for survival (1976: 195-6). Education for survival and the unlearning of newly irrelevant behaviours/ knowledge is supported by the work of Ivan Illich and his call to deschool society replacing traditional classroom learning methods with cooperatively initiated learning webs (1970). Much in what these thinkers suggest resonates with existing praxis in which non-formal learning environments help families cope with sudden change and acculturate them to their new state of borderlessness while remaining in touch with curriculum of the culture left behind.

Structuring a Curriculum of Survival

How to structure a curriculum of survival within the context of a non-peaceful situation is the question at the centre of my own work towards curriculum theory-building for refugee education. The solution may be rooted not in the praxis of survival alone, but in the tradition of a Freirean liberatory education, which is already at use in the practical work of constructing refugee learning environments of both a non-formal and formal nature.

Learning as liberatory praxis draws on the work of Paolo Freire (1970, 1985). Freire's theory is represented in a group of practices including designing picture and primer materials based on learner's experiences, teaching/facilitating using discussion and experience sharing, and encouraging grassroots action for liberation from identified oppression(s) in literacy learning programmes (Archer and Cottingham 1996: 11-13; Huiskamp 2002; Fregeau and Leir 2002). The goal of Frierean liberatory praxis is to encourage awareness of oppression in the other and to facilitate the process of seeking ways to emancipate the other from his/her marginalised position. Others, including Archer and Cottingham's Reflect Method (1996), have extended liberatory theory and practice by encouraging participatory curriculum development by learners through the use of everyday objects, rather than culturally specific pictures, as learning materials. In Reflect more

so than in Freirean discourse, liberation is sought from community-identified oppression(s) rather than from those identified by the curriculum developer — be that a teacher or field-based curriculum specialist. Although Freire wrote in the context of non-formal adult education in less developed but non-emergency contexts, Giroux's similarly liberatory work on radical teaching in American schools (1992: 10-18) and Archer and Cottingham's adaptation of the Reflect Method to children (1996: 246-251) suggest that Freirean-based methods are appropriate outside of the field of adult education. A liberatory praxis for refugee education allows learners and teachers to make decisions about learning goals and to include their discrete experiences as a basis for learning (Lovink n.d.); moreover, simultaneous efforts at community (re)building post-trauma can be included in the learning process within the schooling environment integrated with the process occurring in the refugee camp.

The challenge of this discourse, however, lies in the word "liberatory" and the notion of "liberation" itself in the refugee environment. While many refugee camps offer freedom of movement both in and out of the camps or villages, the residents of these communities are generally governed by different sets of laws and practices — both international and host country national — than they had in their pre-migration situation. For many, be they nomads, agriculturalists, or urban professionals in pre-migration, life in the refugee camp represents an esoteric and real loss of freedom in exchange for dependency on power-holding groups. Some political and legal theorists might rightly argue that liberation from oppression through an educational method is inappropriate for an isolated, "temporary" space. On the contrary, the case study of education for Afghan refugees in Pakistan presents evidence that education in these isolated villages as a package, rather than a method, spawned moments of liberation from some layers of pre-migration and migration phase social oppressions which might not otherwise have been possible outside of the refugee scenario.

Educating for Survival in Pakistan: The Afghan Refugee Case

A case study of the refugee education curriculum within the Afghan refugee villages in Balochistan, Pakistan suggests one example of the multiple ways in which education for survival leads to both individual empowerment and collective sense of belonging in an otherwise

marginalised extremely complex and longer term emergency which couples both human-made and natural disaster (Sinclair 2001; Rugh 1998, 2000; Pont 2001)[2]. After a brief description of the state of Afghan education in the late 1990s, I will examine the ways in which the refugee education programme in Balochistan was both individually and collectively liberatory while providing the seeds for developing group cohesiveness.

Education for Afghans During the Taliban: Challenges and Opportunities

As Andrea Rugh notes (1998: 7-9), Afghan education in the late 1990s represented a system in extreme crisis facing limited government capacity, politicised curricula, funding challenges, a large internally and externally displaced population, and a disparate but committed group of nongovernmental and other assistance agencies implementing formal and non-formal primary education on community based models used in other contexts. Limited scope secondary, tertiary and literacy programmes as well as other specialised programmes were in existence, but given the depth of need in the community, education was largely considered in crisis. The politicisation of curricula at the primary and secondary levels and the lack of central governing authority were additionally problematic (Rugh 1998: 28) resulting in Afghan children learning different competencies at different stages. A number of initiatives were undertaken over the years of conflict and war to bring coherence and coordination to curricula by the refugee assistance community (Sinclair 2001; and personal experience) including: materials development, agency cooperation strategies, and competencies development. However, updating classroom praxis beyond materials-based training programmes remained a continual challenge. The crisis of Afghan education after twenty-five years of war, drought, and resource challenges does not on the surface lend itself to discussions of liberatory praxis or empowerment, but to survival in the most basic sense. In spite of the Afghan education scene closely resembling the UNESCO description of an education system in crisis which started this paper, a deeper look at the Balochistan programme shows that learning for survival and the (re)building of a sense of

2. My exploration of the Afghan case herein reflects my personal experience and analysis of that experience rather than reflecting the opinion of the organizations for which I worked during this time.

community was evolving in meaningful and useful ways at both the individual and communal levels.

In spite of the challenges, the education system in the refugee villages of Balochistan during the Taliban era in Afghanistan enjoyed what might be described as a renaissance. In the mid-1990s, following the downsizing of refugee assistance programmes in the province after the Mujahideen came to power in Kabul, the UNHCR chose a new implementing agency for Balochistan's education programme in the form of the Save the Children Federation (SC/US). The total population of refugees living in the RVs was placed at 150,000 by the UNHCR in the early 2000s (SC/US 2000b: 1). In 1995 when SC/US began implementing the programme, 6,000 children were enrolled in the primary schools, of which only 600 were girls (SC/US 2000b: 10). These figures represented a very small percentage of the total population of children in the refugee villages (RVs). Following considerable changes to the programme, including better monitoring, expanding opportunities for girls and women's access, establishing middle/high school grades 7-10, and improving community involvement, enrolment rose to 18,000 children and youth of which 6,000 were female in 2001 (personal experience). The programme ultimately included a variety of educational opportunities for a variety of learners: non-formal literacy and life skills education for adult women, secondary school for adolescents, and primary school for all children including increasing the possibilities for girls living in purdah/seclusion, and male and female education committees to help motivate the RV community to enrol and maintain their children in schools, to spread information about changes being made, to maintain the buildings and to help new teachers to settle into the RV life.

Critical Learning Opportunities for Females

Non-Formal Education for Women

The evolving status of females in Afghan society, both before and during the emergency, and the economic, political, and social challenges they face has been well documented by a number of anthropologists and social scientists (Pont 2001; Delloye 2003; Ellis 2000; Daoud 2002). Anna Pont in particular provides insight into the lives of poor rural women living in the refugee villages of Balochistan and neighbouring

provinces in Afghanistan, perhaps the most conservative part of the country, and concludes: "The fact that Afghan women are not militant and now face many restrictions on their visibility and mobility does not mean they are passively doing nothing or would not like to do more to change their lives" (2001: 99). Indeed, Pont shows that the women in her study came to develop a curiosity about the world outside of the walls of their homes in part because of their migrations and access to education, health clinics, and other services in the refugee villages (2001: 71-73).

Although the majority of the women interviewed by Pont proclaimed the importance of education for their daughters, a number of them were also involved in a non-formal education project for women (2001: 76-77). This project focused on using a Freirean-modeled set of literacy materials which included picture cards around which the topic of the day could be discussed to bring out vocabulary and attention to the topic before the women read a passage in their books together and did some writing exercises based on what they read. Although some lessons included discussion around male and female social roles, the goal of much of the material was not liberatory political action; rather it aimed at increasing women's awareness about issues of importance to their lives in the refugee villages including health and the role of health clinics, pregnancy, child rearing in the early years, the disposal of waste, and basic religious practices. Much of the project was aimed at providing women with organised time to socialise and share problems with other women without openly attempting to organise their political action. In this way, the overt curriculum was often very practical while the hidden curriculum was aimed at giving women an opportunity to strengthen their participation in the community outside of the family circle. Several of the younger women who finished this curriculum went on to teach in some of the early home-based girls schools which taught a more structured primary education curriculum and suggests that there was some success in being able to build enough trust and opportunity for individual women within these environments to excel in other areas within the village life.

Home-Based Girls' Schools

Of the various learning environments within the Afghan refugee system, some of the most successful at providing space for learning, empowerment, and developing a sense of belonging are the Home-

Based Girls' Schools (HBGS) in Balochistan — a group of primary schools for girls living in purdah/seclusion which meet the community's expectations of female cultural space by bringing the school to the teachers' homes (SC/US 2000a; Rugh 2000). The schools engaged largely undereducated women and supported them through training to use learner-centred methods of delivering a traditional Afghan primary level curriculum developed by the German agency GTZ and supplemented in some upper grade subjects by more traditional texts created by the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) project (SC/US 2000a; Rugh 2000). The alternative nature of the schools allowed them to foster an atmosphere which is relevant to the cultural space of the teachers and students and to reflect women's space in particular. Of it, Andrea Rugh observes: "Overall the atmosphere in HBGS with their small classes and homelike environments is much more pleasant than any formal school could possibly be. […] Teachers seem comfortable sitting on the floor with students. […] Overall however the simplicity of the classroom environment is a plus for learning" (Rugh 2000: 41). Student achievement in these schools continuously surpassed Afghan students attending other more formal schools in the same community during 1999-2001.

The students looked forward to possibly becoming teachers in the HBGS or non-formal education systems upon completion, thereby envisioning a practicality in their learning, opening opportunities for individual young females to increase their participation within the women's community, and to raise their individual and collective status within the community as a whole, while all the time building knowledge, literacy, and numeracy skills in rural Afghan females. Viewing Afghan refugee girls as a group in requiring learning opportunities structured from within community cultural praxis has developed opportunities for a group who may be considered to be additionally challenged — or othered — within their social space based on the tribal law codes, which govern male and female interaction. Rather than insist that the refugees conform to a Western norm of coeducational schools serving an entire neighbourhood or to impose Western cultural notions of community and gender roles in the refugee villages, the idea behind these schools was to bring education to the othered and to stimulate change from within existing social spaces.

Despite this highly positive view of the HBGS and non-formal education for women, these projects, like other educational projects

aimed at girls and women in the region, included ongoing local frictions which required careful negotiation and the suppression, at the RV level, of the girls' academic success (Rugh 2000; Pont 2001: 77; personal experience). On the whole, however, the HBGS suggest that moving beyond limited policy expectations of curriculum and engaging learners and those who support them in a participatory experiential praxis can result in a meaningful educational process for survival from within an alternative framework without the expectation of overt or radical political action or confrontation and yet achieving a stronger sense of belonging and place within an othered community. Indeed, as the projects aimed at women and girls progressed, there seemed to be an increased sense of the importance of having an educated wife or daughters and men would seek wives who had been educated in the programme. Moreover, families and in-laws would ensure that women with the ability could have the time to work as teachers or facilitators in these projects, thus changing both women's status and the status of education in the minds of these particular groups of rural Afghans.

Critical Learning Opportunities for Males

The "Semi"-Formal RV Schools

The refugee education programme in Balochistan also included opportunities for male children and youths in the form of a semi-formal primary and middle school programme. While some girls also attended these schools in gender-segregated classrooms, particularly in the earlier years, it was here that the majority of educational opportunities for boys were to be found (Rugh 2000). The education received in these schools seemed quite formal in terms of style of teaching expectations, class size, routine, and buildings. In fact they were perhaps more semi-formal in that, being within the refugee system and in a wider political system in which education other than traditional madrassa learning was all but paralysed, they were not formally monitored or accredited by a government ministry of education. Nevertheless, these schools were providing their enrolled students with opportunities in learning, which the majority of them would never have had in the rural villages of Afghanistan (Pont 2001: 71).

Although the majority of the materials used in the schools were Afghan materials, the higher grades also taught Urdu and English as

second and foreign languages thereby meeting the UNHCR's policy expectation that supplemental subjects useful for survival skills in the refugee environment be included (Sinclair 2001; UNHCR 2002). With the exception of Save the Children, UK's child-focused health education curriculum, the GTZ and UNO text materials being used focused on basic academic subjects such as literacy, mathematics, history, language, geography, religious knowledge, and science. As such, the learning of more practical survival and technical skills was more likely to be present in the hidden curriculum of the classrooms and the wider community itself wherein it was not unusual for boys to drop out in order to enter into traditional trade apprenticeships. However, during the time of my involvement with these schools, no attempt was made to examine the hidden learning curiculum of the students. It would be too simplistic, however, to conclude that the academic focus of these schools did not meet the survival expectations of the learners or their community. On the contrary, most of the feedback related to the semi-formal schools given by the community was positive and supportive of the programme. This may have been a function of traditional views of schooling and the role schools played in Afghanistan prior to 1979, but it is difficult to tell without conducting further research in the region.

In 2001, the schools were able to increase the social stature of the boys who finished grade 10 by providing some of the more capable with teaching opportunities in the primary school system. As with the educational opportunities focused on women and girls only, the semi-formal schools were beginning to show signs of empowering youths with status, skills, and power in the community which they could in turn use to help build a stronger sense of belonging for other children as well as for themselves in a situation which largely had many young men, boys, and male adults leaving the refugee villages for long periods of time in search of employment (SC/US 2000b: 13-14). Moreover, those boys and youths who chose to leave the community in search of employment would at least take with them the learning, identity and cultural transfer developed through their participation in school.

Strengthening the Roles of Adults in the RVs: Teachers and Committees

The ways in which Afghan adults were involved in the education programme represented the final level on which a community oriented education programme could (re)build strength and confidence in the

group. The teachers in all of the projects were Afghans who had either been educated pre-migration within the Afghan system or post-migration within the RV system. While many of them had not worked as teachers pre-migration, the job was one of the few in the RVs which gave them an opportunity to share ideas and work in non "blue collar" labour; hence, much status was accorded to the teachers and school heads.

Voluntary male and female education committees were also encouraged to help promote the importance of education among the community and to liaise between the schools and other parents. The status attached to sitting on the committee was embodied in a statement I heard a water committee member make to a visitor who asked him if keeping records was difficult: "I sit on the education committee, too" he said. It was as if membership on the education committee automatically lent itself to an association with being "educated" or "literate".

One final layer of adult participation in the learning process was the support given to the schools by the Field Education Supervisors, Resource Room Facilitators, and drivers of SC/US who, with the exception of a few drivers, were also Afghan refugees. With the exception of the Resource Room Facilitators, the rest did not reside full-time in the RVs, but nevertheless highlighted the commitment of educated Afghans towards the more impoverished rural population in the RVs. As such, the learning opportunities in the RVs could be described largely as "by Afghan refugees for Afghan refugees". Given the reputation of these particular RVs for having spurned the Taliban movement (Rashid, 2000) with its madrassa-only education policy, the obvious pride in which adults took in the schools and in supporting opportunities of their children to learn suggested that the hidden curriculum involved in having community oriented schooling was extremely important in building a meaningful sociocultural space for everyone.

The Need for Ethnographic and Narrative Research in Complex Emergencies

The view of Afghan refugee education in Balochistan presented here is incomplete in a number of ways. It does not explore individual narrative accounts of experience from within the refugee community. Instead it reconstructs the author's own experience of managing the

programme filtered through her experience and her reading of the few available secondary resources focused on this topic. If nothing else, the presentation of this case suggests the need for more rigorous academic research, particularly in the field of ethnographic and narrative accounts of the refugee voice itself. On the wider level of education in emergencies, particularly complex emergencies, the Afghan case suggests the potential for success in empowering both individuals and communities to (re)establish peaceful communal lifestyles within wider social spaces rooted in ongoing adversity and rapid change. With the political changes which have taken place inside Afghanistan since late 2001, there has been a considerable shift in the experience of life in the refugee villages buttressed by a renewed encouragement of repatriation. As one of the world's longest refugee situations, it would be a great disservice if academia were to lose the wealth of possibility by failing to give the Afghan case closer scrutiny.

Conclusion

This paper began with a UNESCO quotation which grimly describes a struggling educational system in a complex emergency. While UNESCO is right about the relative inadequacies of education in these systems under stress, reconstructing how we, as field practitioners and academics, view both education and what is happening gives us the scope to find ways to make education in complex emergencies work for the learners and communities involved. Moreover, the lack of teachers, training, funds, buildings, resources, and support for education during complex emergencies is often not helped by the pre-emergency cultural constraints relating to access, social class, and attitudes. As with the Afghans, emergencies may destroy systems and lend themselves to deepening systemic inadequacies, but within the destruction there may also be opportunities to make education more meaningful, more widely available to others, and more flexible in what and how it is delivered, thereby meeting a wider variety of social needs.

As part of the effort to develop and advocate for a deeper understanding of the context of learning in complex emergencies, certain theories of learning and curriculum were introduced in the first half of the article. The exploration of these theories suggested that a combination of pre-existing theoretical platforms may provide an essential springboard to further assist practitioners in understanding the

virtual environment of refugee village life. Given that the learners have often not had previous access to education, that the legal rights of the learners are somehow in limbo, and the rapidly changing politics of the situation they find themselves in, there is some indication that an appropriate lens through which to approach learning in complex emergencies draws on a combination of theories of liberatory practice, informed praxis, critical theory and both collective and individual needs for survival. The case study presented on Afghan refugee education in Balochistan during the Taliban era clearly shows that many theories worked together not so much to liberate, or emancipate, the refugees, but to bind them together in a community of virtual others and to empower their individual and collective survival, while also opening up new opportunities for some groups who might not otherwise have been able to participate in the same way.

Finally, this paper has outlined how my work in the subfield of refugee education relates to the field of CIE and case-study based curriculum theory building methodologies. As part of the wider area of complex emergency education, the study of refugee education represents an emerging field of research. Although the rapidly changing external environments of complex emergencies make research challenging, there is considerable possibility through the use of case studies, ethnography, participatory research, and critical theory for developing stronger curriculum praxis. By building on the traditions of individual learning, community development, and liberatory praxis simultaneously, refugee education can be thought of in eclectic paradigms which may enable a more complete understanding of education for survival and bring changes to the implementation of education in emergency environments in the longer term.

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