11. Teacher migration and education in conflict and post-conflict countries: Experience from Somalia

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Abstract

Teacher migration in conflict and post-crises countries such as Somalia has increased in the past four years. Qualified teachers are vulnerable to migration to other countries for reasons of safety and to seek out 'greener pastures', and the trend is for non-professional and immigrant teachers from neighbouring countries to fill labour gaps in countries in crises. Due to the prolonged conflict, Somalia is losing qualified workers in the field of teaching. While addressing issues of teacher migration in emergencies and difficult circumstances is important to balance education systems development, there is lack of policy on teacher migration. This paper provides a discussion on teacher migration and education in conflict and post-conflict countries, focusing on the migration of Somali teachers to other countries in search of greener pastures and the recruitment of immigrant teachers from other countries to fill the gaps. Three aspects of teacher migration are discussed: teachers' motivations for leaving Somalia, teacher qualifications, and teacher compensation. The paper also discusses some challenges facing teacher management in crisis situations. The paper concludes by calling for further discussion to contribute to a greater understanding of planning and management of teacher migration in conflict and post conflict countries.

Key words
Teacher Migration, Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations, Qualifications, Motivation and Retention, Management, Compensation

11.1 Introduction[1]

Education in conflict and post-conflict emergencies and early reconstruction is an emerging discipline at the heart of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) programmes. Although infrastructure and material support are necessary in the context of emergencies, they do not satisfy every condition for ensuring quality of education or schooling in emergencies. The teacher is a critical factor in the provision of conditions that determine the quality of education in emergencies. The importance of capable and qualified teachers is more apparent in environments of conflict and other difficult circumstances. In situations of emergency and post-conflict recovery or reconstruction, teachers are not only facilitators of learning, but represent one of the only consistent sources of reassurance and normalcy for children and their communities who have undergone traumatic experiences.

In emergency situations, teachers play a vital role in providing protection and psychosocial support that complements what pupils and students get from their parents or communities. Teacher *qualification*, *development*, *motivation*, *retention*, *acknowledgement* and *support* have crucial short-, medium- and long-term implications for improvement in any education system in emergencies, post-conflict and recovery situations.

The professional development and management of teachers becomes imperative in emergencies, conflict and post-conflict situations because of their critical tasks in helping to restore a sense of stability and confidence among affected populations. However, since most teachers are drawn from the same affected communities, they are equally vulnerable

to instability and deprivation. This poses a serious challenge to building and maintaining a cadre of qualified teachers in emergencies, conflict and post-conflict situations. Thus, the issue of teacher management and motivation in terms of compensation is crucial and real in these contexts. If not paid appropriately, teachers leave the education system, seeking other 'greener pastures' to support themselves and their families. This is a real case in Somalia, where the many qualified and trained teachers are taken mostly by UN agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private companies, with many even venturing to the Middle East, East Africa and South Africa.

A survey conducted by UNICEF Somalia (2007) shows that out of a total of 13,966 teachers in primary school, only 13 per cent had a teacher training diploma, while 6 per cent had a university degree, 48 per cent had a secondary education certificate and 27 per cent had a primary education certificate. Out of the 3,000 strong secondary teaching force in Somalia (UNESCO-PEER, 2008), only 38 per cent considered themselves qualified, with no formal opportunity for them to be trained. Many of the remaining teachers in both primary and secondary schools did not choose to become teachers, but were asked and recruited by their communities and regional administrations because of their relatively good level of education. Once chosen, however, they expressed their willingness to serve their communities in the capacity of volunteer teachers. One teacher was asked and said, 'I am really a trained teacher, but I could not teach in Somalia because there is no money … I am going abroad or to get employed with an NGO to use my professional value for money … [T]he situation is not good for me and my children'. The teacher further said that teachers were paid 'incentives' – not salaries – of less than US$90 a month.

In addition to the push factor of insecurity, the financial incentive (as demonstrated above) is a significant pull factor causing qualified and professional teachers to leave countries in conflict. The demand for teachers by the community and other actors leads to recruitment of qualified teachers from neighbouring countries through unregulated processes, causing massive inefficiencies in teacher management. If teachers are not able to earn their living, they will leave for another form of employment. This loss of qualified and newly trained teachers in countries in emergencies and conflict is a significant and difficult loss to regain. In many cases, and especially in Somalia, this has led to a tragic cycle of constantly training unqualified teachers by UNESCO, UNICEF and NGOs to address the teaching gap in schools. The teacher conditions in the context of education in emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction, however, indicate that the challenges go beyond salaries or teacher incentives/compensation. There are critical issues around the conditions in which the teachers work, including security, teaching load and their work environments. The factors shaping the situation are varied and complex, and there is an urgent need to understand them (INEE, 2009*a*). Policy-makers, education practitioners and researchers are required to determine and influence guidelines and policy for teacher compensation in emergencies, conflict and post-conflict reconstruction as the situation dictates.

11.2 Teacher migration (context-specific) and its implications

Within the region, it has been the case that the international recruitment of skilled personnel including teachers negatively affects the development of countries, as it can reduce the pool of human capital required for development. Teachers are a particularly interesting case, especially in situations of conflict, because their departure not only deprives the education system but also the children – the future generation of the country. Teachers are highly valued members of the community and occupy a wide range of roles. If teachers leave for better opportunities, the sending country community and other stakeholders may feel short-changed or aggrieved, as they see the investment and funds used for training teachers lost.

There is significant evidence that the loss of qualified teachers in emergencies and conflict-affected countries creates space that untrained teachers and community members may fill. The key issue here is the impact on the educational system in the conflict-affected communities. The migration of qualified teachers has led countries such as Somalia to

recruit teachers from other countries, by using private and international actors in consultation with the local administration and communities. However, there is a lack of reliable data on this, which makes it difficult to determine the exact number of migrant teachers in any of the three administrative regions of Somalia – Central South Somalia, Puntland State of Somalia and Somaliland State.

In time, Central South Somalia, Puntland State and Somaliland's immigration departments could be of help in collecting data. The most difficult situation is that the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia is not in control of the number of teachers recruited by private or umbrella schools from neighbouring countries. This is due to limited administrative capacity and a lack of robust, strong policies regulating private schools. Recruitment is also in principle decentralised, with Central South Somalia, Puntland State and Somaliland each having their own mechanisms. This is further complicated by the political quest by Somaliland to be an independent state. However, it is clear that substantial numbers of teachers are being recruited from Kenya and Uganda to teach in secondary schools and teacher training institutions. Teachers from Sudan, Egypt and other Arab World countries as well are recruited to teach in private and international schools, which may have different standards from those of public schools. However, no data are available on the differences.

The recruitment of teachers on short-term or medium-term contracts is not a bad solution to the ongoing emergency and conflict situation in Somalia (UNESCO-PEER, 2008). Many overseas teachers recruited through private schools are only part of the story, as some are paid between US$200 and US$300 per month with free food and accommodation. This compares to the between US$90 and US$110 per month 'top-up incentives' – as opposed to salary – paid to an average recruited Somali teacher and head teacher (AET, 2009). With the prevailing situation in Somalia, this approach is trickier and unsustainable as there is no policy regulating it. Not much is known of the teachers working in tertiary institutions.

Responding to address the gap created by Somali qualified teachers leaving the education sector for greener pastures, in 2007 UNESCO supported the Government of Somalia by training primary school teachers through the use of information and communications technology (ICT) support for teacher education. An in-service teacher training programme enrolled 170 teachers; 142 (83 per cent) completed the programme and were awarded a Diploma in Teacher Education. Other agencies, such as the European Union and other international organisations, have invested in teacher training through the 'Strengthening the Capacity of Teacher Training in Primary and Secondary Education programme' (SCOTTPS). This is being implemented by a consortium of national and international NGOs through local universities, in collaboration with the respective ministries of education of South Central Somalia, Puntland State and Somaliland.

However, the newly trained teachers are not all retained in the teaching workforce. Where teachers have been trained at public expense and where their professionalism and expertise cannot easily be replaced, their loss represents a major setback to achievement of the internationally agreed goal of universal primary education. The consequences of the shortage of teachers due to 'brain drain' are particularly damaging, as low levels of education are inextricably linked to poverty, especially in emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations. Furthermore, because locally recruited teachers tend to be paid less than migrant teachers due to lack of policy guidance in situations of conflict and post conflict, teaching is not able to attract local people into the profession, continuing or exacerbating teacher shortages.

Nevertheless, migration has a number of positive aspects. For example, the recruitment of business experts from Somalia to countries like Kenya and South Sudan has benefited and stimulated economic growth in Somalia. Many of the Somalis in the diaspora maintain their strong link with their families back in Somalia and communities. They have often continued to contribute financially through their remittances, and also invest in constructing schools, hospitals and properties in their villages and communities. The remittances are particularly beneficial for local income levels, because they circulate in the

economy of the home country of the migrant worker. In most cases, remittances are used for family-oriented and collective purposes. They are used for basic consumption, food, health, education and community development (Cortina and de la Garza, 2004). Other benefits of the remittances made to Somalia include: enabling the country to purchase staple food; contributing to foreign exchange reserves; effectively assisting in wealth distribution; and possibly promoting private sector development efforts by enabling families to receive the necessary capital for housing and small business start-up (UNDP, 2005). Lindley (2005*a*) has emphasised the contribution that remittances make to the education sector in Somalia. Based on this assertion, it can be argued that the cost of education is alleviated when remittances are sent to families, because children are given the opportunity to go to school.

However, the reverse is also true: a high proportion of the workforce has left the country for greener pastures, but does not remit. Remittances are a complex area of research. It is difficult to know or identify which migrant sends remittances and which does not. The problem is that most remittances are sent through banks or money transfer agencies, with some funds still being hand-delivered. According to Lindley (2005*b*), factors affecting remittances are still little understood, as there is no firm research evidence on the incidence of remittance sending in the Somali diaspora or on comparative incidences of remitting among cohorts. The negative impact of this cannot be underestimated, as it may represent an enormous loss of investment in emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations.

11.3 Challenges

Although teacher migration is potentially a win-win game for both leaving and incoming teachers, countries in conflict have not been able to gain as much from their investment in education through migration as has been the case for non-emergency and non-conflict states. In emergency and post-conflict situations, there are many challenges affecting teachers. It is not possible to divorce the challenges of strengthening educational quality in emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations from the teachers who are charged with maintaining that quality of teaching.

However, teachers face unique situations that are inherently bound to particular difficulties. Many countries in conflict in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa are grappling with the issue of teacher compensation in refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) camps, with some being given food for work and top-up incentives as compensation for their labour, as opposed to a formal salary. Related to this is the lack of coherent co-ordination policies and the huge range of actors engaged in providing educational services. The World Bank (2006) identified several factors, summarised below, which affect teacher management and retention in emergencies and conflict situations.

a) **Insecurity**: Insecurity in all its contexts (emergencies, conflict and post conflict) is a condition that any education initiative will have to address. Teachers pay a heavy price in this situation, wherein they themselves are put at risk. This is further aggravated by a weak (or absent) state and inadequate governance leading to ambiguity in roles and responsibilities among stakeholders.

a) **Weak institutions**: In many cases, emergency situations render state structures powerless as there are many competing priorities for local authorities, forcing them to improvise with what is available and put in place arrangements that are sub-optimal in comparison to standards used in a development context or in normal times. However, this arguably may also apply to countries with strong institutions that do not allow refugee/migrant teachers to teach legally.

b) **Lack of long-term investments**: Emergencies elicit speedy responses from funding organisations. Nonetheless, such responses are often in the form of a large quantity of funding with short timeframes for spending, such as the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). While immediate relief is effectively addressed through such a funding regime, rehabilitation and reconstruction, including education, are long drawn-out processes

and do not receive adequate support beyond a limited timeframe. This is a factor that affects the creation of any long-term arrangement for teacher retention, management and compensation structures.

c) **Inadequate financial resources in countries in emergencies and conflict**: Some of the critical causes of conflict are problems related to stability and economic growth. Such countries face problems of poor revenue generation, which compromise future of plans for economic regeneration. Traditionally the financial commitment to education in these countries has been inadequate and future budgetary allocations are highly dependent on international communities and transitional plans for reconstruction. Teachers are left to bear an enormous burden, working in under-resourced settings, often without adequate or regular salaries, support or training. Furthermore, less qualified or poorly trained teachers are often hired in these instances, complicating structures for teacher compensation.

d) **Value placed on the educational profession**: Traditionally low salaries for educators make it difficult for teachers to keep up with the escalating real cost of living. This leads to questions about where the teaching profession stands in comparison to other professions. In setting policies and determining practice around compensation, non-state providers (e.g. NGOs, communities or religious groups) face difficult questions about whether they should opt for greater compensation for their teachers on equal terms with similar professions.

e) **High teacher turnover**: Teacher attrition is a real problem. Poor working conditions, high workloads, inadequate and inconsistent salary/incentive payments all contribute to teachers leaving their posts in conflict environments and too often abandoning the profession altogether. This is further aggravated by the presence of international organisations and the availability of better-paying work with NGOs and UN agencies. In Somalia, for example, the salaries of UN and NGO security guards are much higher than those of teachers in public schools.

11.4 Summing and conclusion

The key point made in this paper concerns the policy gap in facilitating teacher retention and compensation in emergencies. It is evident that compensation is part of the larger issue of teacher management in emergencies and conflict. Therefore, it needs to be seen holistically to include the issues of fund flows and fund management, and teacher accountability and performance. In the context of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, a number of players implementing education programmes need to consider the minimum standards of teacher management (INEE, 2009*b*). Among these players are UN agencies, religious groups, local and international NGOs and local administrations/governments, each of which currently has its own performance standards/guides and outcomes for the management of teachers.

Owing to the lack of policy tools/guides in the management of teachers in conflict and post-conflict countries, some actors have no efficient mechanism for assuring retention of teachers in host countries, with Somalia being one example. To begin with, the implementation of the principles of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2004), which sets out the rights and responsibilities of both recruiting and sourcing countries, would be a welcome step. For example, the protocol encourages countries to examine teachers' working conditions to determine if systems are contributing to the exodus of the trained teachers (which is evidently the case in emergencies). However, the implications of the protocol in the context of the management of teachers in emergencies need to be explored further. To maximise the investment in education, management and compensation of teachers in emergencies and conflict situations, policies and tools need to be developed to guide the process in affected countries to enable them to benefit from the principles of the protocol.

Although the factors discussed in this paper provide an insight into what should be considered in order to better plan and manage teacher migration in emergencies, the following questions still need to be answered:

a) How can the principles of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol be implemented in non-Commonwealth countries in emergencies, conflict and post-conflict situations (as is the case with Somalia)?

b) In an emergency situation, what are the bases upon which teacher compensation/salary is determined? What factors should be considered to influence this?

c) How can the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders – government/regional/emerging administration, humanitarian agencies, NGOs and private actors – be defined in ensuring acceptable teacher compensation?

d) Who should decide on teacher compensation structures in situations of crisis and afterwards?

e) Who is responsible for teacher compensation? How is teacher compensation managed? What is the role of donor and UN agencies in harmonising various practices?

f) Should there be special incentives for special conditions or qualifications (such as incentives for women teachers)?

Notes

1 The information for writing this paper was collected from various documents and reports. It was purely limited to a desk review. This was complemented by information collected from Education Sector Coordination meetings and discussions with UNESCO antenna office colleagues. The paper is written in a personal capacity and does not in any way represent or reflect the views of UNESCO, other UN agencies, any international organisation or the ministries of education in Central South Somalia, Puntland State of Somalia or Somaliland.

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