The Power of a Transitional Justice Approach to Education

Post-conflict Education Reconstruction and Transitional Justice

Lynn Davies
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Transitional Justice, Education, and Peacebuilding Project

This research project examines the relationship between transitional justice and education in peacebuilding contexts. It considers how transitional justice can shape the reform of education systems by ensuring programs are sensitive to the legacies of the past, how it can facilitate the reintegration of children and youth into society, and how education can engage younger generations in the work of transitional justice. The final products of this project include an edited volume entitled *Transitional Justice and Education: Learning Peace* (SSRC, 2017) and a summary report. For more details on this project, visit www.ictj.org/our-work/research/education-peacebuilding

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1. Peacebuilding, Transitional Justice, and Education

This paper explores the power of a transitional justice approach to education reconstruction in post-conflict settings. Its central question is how the aims of transitional justice can guide educational reform processes after conflict or periods of massive human rights violations, with the final goal of helping to promote guarantees of nonrepetition. How does a transitional justice approach specifically contribute to peacebuilding through education?

Transitional justice approaches in education are distinctive, potent, and impactful, and, while tremendously challenging, they can shift education from being part of the problem to being part of the transition to a more peaceful society.

In the massive literature on the topic of peacebuilding (and peacebuilding education), definitions vary, but usually, following John Galtung’s work, a fundamental difference is drawn between “negative peace,” or the absence of war or violence, and “positive peace,” or the removal of the root causes of violence and the pursuit of structural changes that address social injustice as a means to achieve sustainable peace. Clearly, the notion of “building” implies a process, not an end. Peace is not something to be achieved but a dynamic situation with elements that contribute to making violent conflict less likely, both now and in the future.

Within this context, transitional justice underlines the dimension of redress. Transitional justice, understood as “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation,” presupposes that in order to build a lasting peace, violations of human rights must be first recognized and redressed. Such redress would, for many, include trying to compensate for past injustices related to exclusion from social and political goods, including exclusion from education and the right to learn.

The distinctiveness of transitional justice within a peacebuilding process can be highlighted in several dimensions, each with key educational implications. First is the question of the large scale of past human rights violations in such contexts. Transitional justice initiatives do not necessarily relate to criminal offences committed by individuals or small groups but to systemic, sustained violence that adversely affects the rights of large groups of people and harms their lives. These actions include violence carried out (or permitted) by the state, which should otherwise be responsible for the protection of its citizens. Achieving justice in such circumstances goes beyond the “normal” mechanisms of criminal law, extending its definition to include war crimes and crimes against humanity. The legacies of past state-sponsored human rights abuses are complex and multidimensional; addressing them has expanded the notion of justice from “regular” trials to include other mechanisms, such as truth commissions and memory initiatives, reparations programs, and the reform of the judiciary, army, and police. Accordingly, transitional justice processes involve novel institutions with complex
mandates, rules, and procedures, which may make them technically difficult to understand in many societies in which they operate. For these processes to be legitimatized and lead to their intended effects, they may require some form of public education programs. Formal education institutions can also play a fundamental role in helping learners to understand transitional justice mechanisms and why they are, or were, necessary.

The second distinctiveness is the term transitional itself. Coined in the mid 1980s, the term transitional justice refers to the processes by which regimes attempt to move—or transition—from conflict, authoritarianism or oppression characterized by systematic violations of norms to more well-established democratic legal regimes, which can protect against such occurrences in the future. But the effort carries huge costs and dangers to the existing regime. As Pablo de Greiff has claimed, “There is no transitional country that can legitimately claim great successes in the field.” No country has undergone a transition that has prosecuted every perpetrator or has, through truth telling or other means, disclosed the fate of every victim or thoroughly identified the structures that made the violations possible. Yet de Greiff highlights the crucial function that transitional justice processes play in helping to draw a line between a past in which rights were not respected and a future in which rights matter, a challenge and a function that the ordinary justice system does not face. Transitional, then, does not qualify the word justice but really means “justice in times of transition.”

Transitional justice is, therefore, a stage in the search for justice, and education should be seen as very much part of this dynamic search.

A third—and central—distinctiveness of transitional justice is that it is constantly past- and forward-looking. Indeed, a basic presupposition of transitional justice is that addressing the past is a way of building a future that is recognizably better. As Clara Ramírez-Barat points out, transitional justice measures play a key symbolic role: establishing a break with the past by (re)affirming that certain norms and values that support them matter. The other option—to do nothing—does not create a space where victims, perpetrators, and bystanders can learn to live together. This form of “corrective” justice is seen as different from justice meted out in response to specific infractions of the law and to some other forms of justice, like distributive justice (although this can indeed form part of a future social contract). The aim is the forging of a rights-based culture, which requires wide knowledge of rights and their implications. It means interrupting cycles of revenge and violence and understanding how hatred amplifies.

This leads to the fourth distinctiveness of transitional justice: the importance of its truth-seeking, or acknowledgment, component. Truth is the first victim of any repressive regime. As David Guinn argues, under repressive systems, “Reality is distorted, as moral norms are turned upside down and replaced by the corrupted vision of the culture of the regime.” It could be said that education is in part always a search for truth and the acknowledgment of the implications of such truth; although, of course, whose version of “truth” prevails should always be in question. In terms of acknowledgment, truth seeking includes the necessary identification of real people in the conflict—that is, the victims and the perpetrators as well as the bystanders. This recognition is also intergenerational, as children learn from their parents and grandparents. Admittedly, there are issues involved for education in such attempts at identification and public naming of violations and perpetrators, particularly with regard to individuals and families. But identification also extends to governments. It relates to what is constituted as a war crime or a crime against humanity and who is responsible for it. In the identification of responsibility for harm committed we start to see important but controversial issues for educators.

The final distinctiveness, linked to the first, is the fundamental public dimension of transitional justice: the idea of a new social contract. The implications of justice processes for civil society stretch forward into the “democratic regeneration of the social web” itself, which conflict and its enduring legacies have affected. New narratives emerge from the media, educational institutions, and cultural activities and agents as well as from civil society organizations. Ramírez-Barat holds that transitional justice processes are usually accompanied by an eruption of creative activities. But strengthening the public space requires the population’s capacity to assess
accurate information as well as platforms to exercise freedom of expression and association under conditions of equality and inclusiveness. Education is deeply implicated in the achievement of these requirements and skills.

A summary model of what has been discussed so far would be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE SPHERES OF ACTIVITY</th>
<th>EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION</th>
<th>COMPONENT OF PEACEBUILDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redress and reparations for victims</td>
<td>Providing access to schooling and higher education; recognizing culture and language in curriculum</td>
<td>Lessening grievances related to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth seeking about the state’s role in violence or oppression</td>
<td>Understanding the complex causes of conflict and continuing legacies; realizing that the state must accept responsibility for the past</td>
<td>Challenging the continuation of injustice and harm; improving civic trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorialization and outreach projects</td>
<td>Disseminating knowledge</td>
<td>Supporting freedom of speech, pluralistic debate, and the fulfilment of the right to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of rights abuses</td>
<td>Understanding rights and their violations; understanding the rule of law in protecting rights</td>
<td>Respecting others’ rights; fostering a rights-based culture and respect for rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders</td>
<td>Recognizing responsibility and how people become perpetrators</td>
<td>Resisting power abuses and amplification of group hatreds in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional reform for democracy</td>
<td>Reforming educational institutions to become more democratic; understanding and practicing democracy</td>
<td>Supporting active citizens in the public space; strengthening civil society institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice</td>
<td>Understanding formal processes of accountability and who is responsible; learning compromise and exchange</td>
<td>Breaking cycles of revenge by individuals and groups; supporting a culture of moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemning violence</td>
<td>Challenging violence and the use of revenge in schools and communities</td>
<td>Using nonviolent approaches to solve problems</td>
</tr>
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</table>

It must be stated from the outset that these outcomes are not guaranteed. Change does not happen in a linear fashion, and many factors intervene to prevent educational experiences from being translated into future peaceable or democratic orientations. Conversely, the accomplishment of democracy requires far more than the implementation of transitional justice measures. Yet the argument of this paper is that without such measures the restoration of civic trust and the promotion of democracy may be only partial or threatened.

It can be seen from this model that what I term a justice-sensitive approach to education is a highly political one. Not only is there to be political learning in terms of education about democracy, rights, and the rule of law, but this is to be underpinned by a critical pedagogy that may challenge power and authority—whether of government or religious leaders. The central distinctiveness and the power of such a justice-sensitive approach in education is precisely this overtly political lens. It is possible to teach conflict resolution and reconciliation from an interpersonal perspective, looking at, for example, family relationships or small-group encounters in the hope that young people will be less likely to use or condone violence and hatred in their lives in the future. Yet an approach to peace education that includes justice considerations takes a much wider approach, locating violence and conflict in a broader set of contexts and histories. Ideally, this method would not ignore the
personal and interpersonal but would seek to understand how violence becomes normalized in a society, how hatred is built, or how existing divisions can be further manipulated into aggression. It would also touch on how educational institutions may have been involved (as will be discussed below).

However, transitional justice’s backward gaze has to include education itself and how it may have been implicated in conflict and violence. A justice-sensitive approach, therefore, goes further than some conflict-sensitive approaches to education and helps answer some of the critiques of the latter in terms of whether it can help peacebuilding.

Conflict sensitivity refers to the ability of an organization working in situations of conflict to understand the context in which it is operating and to act upon that understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on the conflict. This is sometimes seen as synonymous with peacebuilding, whereas the “do no harm” principles enshrined in conflict sensitivity do not necessarily address what to do in the future to create change. The two-way gaze of justice-sensitive education, in contrast, uses deep understanding of society’s past to promote a realistic new future.
2. The Past Role of Education in Conflict

Education can play an important role in fueling conflict and injustice. This is important from a transitional justice perspective, as it allows practitioners and policymakers to identify specific legacies of previous episodes of massive violence directly related to education. First, the education sector may have been directly involved in fueling the conflict. In Rwanda, for example, identities between Hutu and Tutsi were manipulated and amplified for decades, leading to differential access to education or the application of quotas. After the reconstruction of the country following the 1994 genocide, Hutu and Tutsi now share classes and study a new shared history book. However, the teachers in charge of delivering this curriculum may have been victims or perpetrators of the genocide. Moreover, some of these teachers and school administrators were active in spreading the ideology of hatred, organizing the population and killing with their own hands. This is a difficult legacy to deal with.

More widespread across many conflict contexts is the legacy of educational segregation. This refers to ways in which access to schooling is differentiated among the population, either in terms of the length or the quality of educational experience, or in terms of the reinforcement of ethnic, class, or religious divides—or both. Grievances around this situation can fuel conflict. South Africa’s apartheid system had huge discrepancies in resources between schools for whites, blacks, and coloreds. In spite of educational reform during the transitional phase, historical disadvantage is still pervasive, and patterns of power and privilege are reinforced through differential funding of schools and the ability of new and old elites to access better quality education. In Northern Ireland, after the peace agreements, segregation continues between Protestant and Catholic schools, not so much with differential resources but nonetheless offering little opportunity for cultural/religious intermixing; neighborhoods are also divided, often with physical divisions such as the notorious “peace walls.” Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be characterized by ethnonationalist divides, with the preservation of different “languages” and nationalistic literature, music, and poetry representing artificial “nations.” As with Northern Ireland, initiatives in integrated schools have not met with much success. In Sri Lanka, schools and higher education institutions continue to be divided by a mix of ethnicity, religion, and language, between Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim students. While initiatives on integration and exchange programs exist, most Sinhalese and Tamil students do not mix. This is still highly relevant, considering that part of the Tamil grievance was about fewer government resources going to Tamil areas, including schools.

Elsewhere, the divides have been socioeconomic, between rich and poor schools—or no school at all for the marginalized. In Sierra Leone, for example, education was not directly implicated as a cause of the rebel movement that initiated the civil war in 1991, but there is no doubt that poverty and grievances resulting from the lack of opportunities spurred recruitment by armed groups. Current disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs in the country may act to reduce violence, but they may also continue to fuel these grievances if some groups are given opportunities and others are not, or if jobs are not available for graduates once they
finish their studies. In Peru, social inequities were and are based on ethnicity/language linked to deep economic divides. Education has been widely identified as a factor that contributed to a violent conflict that lasted 20 years, between the Shining Path and the Peruvian armed forces. This friction fed on long-standing inequalities and exclusion that led the country to be described as being made up of “many Perus.” The rural, poor, Andean, and jungle areas and urban slums suffered most violently during the conflict. In Guatemala, state institutions became increasingly exclusionary and antidemocratic up to the 1980s, with discrimination against those less well off in society, notably the indigenous groups who made up the bulk of the armed opposition in the civil war and were also the majority of victims of the genocide. Currently the indigenous population is still not well cared for. A significant proportion of the population has no access to school, which is particularly problematic for adolescents who ought to be developing crucial skills and broadening horizons.

Multiple legacies of conflict that impact education include differential access to quality schooling for identifiable groups resulting in visibly different access to employment and positions of power; lack of mixing, leading to perpetuation of stereotypes, mistrust, and even hatred among different groups; and lack of recognition of culture or language of minority groups causing resentment. All of these situations overlap. The ending of conflict and attempts at integration or compensatory education can only scratch the surface of such deep-seated historical legacies. Such legacies also appear in curriculum and teaching, where the official and unofficial curriculum can be used to instill hatred in students or impose a single narrative, as in the case of a dictatorship. The following figure shows the different ways in which conflict was taught in school, marked along two axes—active and passive, negative and positive.11

![Diagram of conflict teaching methods](image)

At worst, as in the top-left quadrant, schools can actively and negatively teach animosity through a deliberately biased curriculum that denigrates subordinate groups; they can engage in military training and the defense curriculum, which depicts the enemy as a constant threat; and they can consciously or unconsciously teach stereotypes through textbooks across a range of subjects. This approach moves down into the still negative but more passive approach in the bottom-left quadrant, where schools do nothing to challenge the notion that violence is normal or they simply omit discussions of conflicts that occurred in their own country. History books cover a succession of wars, with the implication that this state is inevitable; civics and citizenship are taught as duties, not as the government’s role to protect its citizens and the rights of all.

On the right side, schools begin to promote positive conflict. More passively, as in the bottom-right quadrant,
they teach inner peace and tolerance of diversity or engage in personal-conflict resolution. More actively, in
the top-right quadrant, they provide critical learning about political conflict in their own country and enable
students to engage with others and with difference, through dialogue, and learn how positive conflict works in
a democracy. Finally, these schools give students the skills, orientations, and practice in citizenship and civic
action to challenge violence and war. Naturally, schools can do all of these things simultaneously, but a transi-
tional justice approach would prioritize a focus on the approaches in the top-right quadrant.

It could be argued that the passive approach to conflict is just as dangerous as the active and open one. As Tony
Gallagher points out, the Holocaust was possible “because those who wanted to impose death actively pursued
their goal, and those who might ordinarily be expected to oppose such a measure, often did little or nothing.
If the Holocaust could be explained in terms of a particular national group or cultural history then it would be
easy to avoid in the future. If it is explained by indifference, or something akin to indifference, it could all too
easily happen again.”

For transitional justice goals (especially nonrecurrence), we cannot afford to keep either enmity or indiffer-
ence alive. The treatment of conflict and peace in the official curriculum is, of course, overlaid and compounded
by the hidden curriculum of roles and relationships. This can be linked to segregation, as seen above; it is also
overlaid by the culture of the school, which may be violent and/or condoning of the use of revenge through
its own vengeful or humiliating punishment regime. Victims of violence more easily become perpetrators, and
students who have kept their heads down at school can more easily become bystanders.

A justice-sensitive approach in education should first include consideration of whether negative aspects of edu-
cational contribution to conflict can be changed and what the best entry points are in a specific context. It is not
always possible to completely overhaul the structures of education (as seen in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka),
and compromises must be—and have been—found. What is promising in one context is dangerous in another.
The recognition of cultural identities and language that may work in Guatemala may lead in Bosnia and Her-
zegovina to hazardous fragmentation and manipulation by different “nationalists” who exaggerate difference.
Therefore, the future-looking orientation may not directly map to the negative aspects of the past, although
these must always be in the frame. The point about making a passive versus active distinction is that it will not
be enough to simply remove some aspect of harmful contribution (such as a biased curriculum) without find-
ing levers of positive change (such as shifting a school culture to reparative discipline and a more rights-based
and democratic ethos) to pull.

Given the significant historical contribution that education has made to injustice, it is initially puzzling why
transitional justice measures, including truth commissions and tribunals, do not always strongly enter the field
of mandating educational reform or the production of materials for the young. There can be recommendations
about curriculum, as in Peru and Chile, but in Peru none have been implemented. Karen Murphy points out
that few examples of comprehensive educational reforms are well integrated into a wider transitional justice
framework. What seems to happen is that after conflict policy makers can be reluctant to accept that educa-
tion can be anything other than beneficial. Most significant is the lack of political will to address the past.
Because of its gatekeeping role in terms of differential opportunity, education is a sensitive issue, and reforms
require wide consensus, normally lacking in post-conflict societies. Conversely, one could argue that rad-
cal education reform could be a sign of how committed a government is to dealing with the past. For future
peacebuilding it is clear that we cannot afford not to analyze and, if necessary, challenge what happens within
the educational sphere before, during, or after conflict or a period of repression.
3. Mechanisms of a Justice-Sensitive Approach to Education

Structural Reforms

Where broad, embedded structures of division like ethnic/religious segregation of schooling were implicated in a conflict, measures are needed to break down the more harmful aspects of this divide.\textsuperscript{14} For example, after more than 40 years of apartheid, South Africa had to repeal old legislation on separate, unequal schools based on color, opening up formerly white schools to students of other backgrounds. As Murphy holds, however, South Africa's reforms are rare in comparison to other divided and transitioning countries.\textsuperscript{15}

Yet as Murphy also points out, if a society continues to be divided and hostile after a transition, efforts to integrate schools will have little impact. In the absence of a broader commitment to dealing with the past, there will also be a lack of commitment to reforming the education sector under such a lens. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland, for example, the way that the conflict “ended” profoundly shaped and informed their respective transitions. Both conflicts ended by negotiated settlements, the Dayton Accords (1995) for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Belfast Agreement (1998) for Northern Ireland. In both contexts, not only were educational reforms after the peace agreements largely neglected but key factors, such as interpretations of the past or the connections between political/cultural power and identity, were ignored.\textsuperscript{16} In a reversal of intentions, the agreements themselves legitimated segregation based on the honoring of a complex cultural, linguistic, religious, and political identity. Indeed, fear of a group's identity being threatened or subsumed by another permeates both agreements.

A related question when considering structural reform in the education sector in the aftermath of conflict is whether language issues are used as a further means of marginalization or attempted assimilation. Debates and dilemmas abound generally around the encouragement of the use of minority languages in education. Pedagogically, mother tongue teaching can be beneficial in the early years, but in transitional justice terms the question would be whether the lack of acceptance of minority language and cultures was part of the conflict itself. As well as curriculum change, structural reforms will have to include allocation of teachers and resources to different language communities and recognition of language in different political spheres.

In Sri Lanka, structural integration is much more difficult than it would be in Northern Ireland or even Bosnia and Herzegovina because of such language divides. The promotion of a second national language is more than just a curriculum area: If successful, it represents a reform toward genuine bilingualism in education and governance. But acceptance of a second national language would need to be accompanied by an equally genuine equity in education resourcing, in Sri Lanka, for example, for Tamil and Sinhalese (and Muslim) schooling, as well as opportunities for postschooling. Further, equity in power and resourcing more generally must be considered.
The roots of conflict were not that people could not really communicate; they were related to the living conditions of the different linguistic/ethnic groups and demands for autonomy.

Structural reforms under a transitional justice approach, therefore, should be constantly mindful of such roots, but of course they should also remain realistic. In Northern Ireland, the lack of progress on the creation of fully integrated schools has generated an interesting initiative called the “Shared Education Program” (SEP), a collaborative network across Catholic and Protestant schools. Under SEP, students travel and share classes for certain core curricular areas. Evaluations show that early fears that this arrangement would lead to greater sectarian violence have been unfounded. Students enjoyed the activities and meeting students from other areas. This refinement of “contact theory” is more complex than simply bringing people together. There was experimentation, learning from mistakes, a bottom-up venture. Many pupils considered religion as less important than shared interests when they were making friends. From this philosophy of shared classes emerges the central idea of leaving boundaries where they are but making them less important.17

As we have seen, each national context is distinct in terms of whether to focus reforms on “difference.” When inequality is mapped onto ethnic divides, it will be important to attempt to redistribute resources among groups, give cultural recognition, or widen access to education—in the process of prioritizing difference. But when attempts at integration lead to further and stronger “nationalism” (as in Bosnia and Herzegovina) or are unpopular with parents who fear assimilation (as in Northern Ireland) or draw attention away from the real problems (as in Sri Lanka), then it may be better to accept the boundaries between groups and find ways to reduce the impact of difference—or the manipulation of it.

Curriculum Change

Curriculum change can refer to two things: First, it may require purging the old curriculum of offensive material. But, second, it also can mean an open realization that the events of the past were not inevitable but the product of decisions made by individuals and groups.18 A curriculum sensitive to the legacies of past injustices should incorporate new narratives of history as well as education in human rights and democratic citizenship. These changes are, however, not without contestations.

History

The treatment of history is the most visible part of a transitional justice educational strategy within the area of curriculum change. For Elizabeth Cole, for example, just as history education can potentially contribute to the goals of transitional justice, it can also undermine them if reform of this sector is left unaddressed.19 Considering the role of history education in the aftermath of conflict, there is widespread agreement that nationally accepted historical narratives should not whitewash acts that inflicted major suffering nor exclude the experiences of nonvictors, including women, the economically marginalized, and, in the case of international conflicts, citizens of other states who were victims of historical violence perpetrated by the in-group’s state.20 In this vein, Elazar Barkan talks of the shift from a largely factual (and largely uninspiring) “victor’s history” to one of contrasting perspectives.21 History education has to reconstruct the historical context with all of its complexity and nuances, using a variety of sources. Mario Carretero and Marcelo Borrelli, for example, recommend explaining historic transformations and conflicts not only in terms of the intentions and objectives of human agents but also through analysis of the social structure underpinning them, linking human acts with social conditions as well as avoiding simple reductionism (good vs. bad, innocent victims vs. villains).22

Yet, Cole also raises the question of how a truth and reconciliation commission process should be addressed in history teaching. While a truth commission helps to establish a narrative of coercion and abuses of power, historians cannot limit themselves to portraying a counternarrative about the past; they should create a narrative that allows for contending voices to exist, revealing the aspirations of all actors. Deliberative democracy,
debate, and dialogue in a history classroom are essential precursors to a democratic political culture. The way that history is taught might be argued to take priority over textbook reform. The South African history curriculum developed by Facing History and Ourselves, for example, asks students to explore the violent past—and the human behavior that animated it—through the lens of human rights. South African students have to study the transition itself and some of the transitional justice efforts done in the country, like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. More than 15 years after Dayton, Bosnia and Herzegovina now has Guidelines for Textbook Writing and Evaluation of History Textbooks, which have been adopted by all Ministries of Education, while the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is implementing a project titled History for the Future, which aims at reconciliation through education.

Secondary school history curriculum revision can reflect and embody the state’s commitment to institutionalizing transitional justice processes, like official gestures of acknowledgment and repair. Germany is often compared favorably to Japan in this regard, with changes in German textbooks since the end of World War II and the recognition of the Holocaust well documented. But as well as key divergences with regard to nationalism, one interesting contrast between the German and Japanese responses to their own past is the question of resistance. The role of resisters is nowadays part of most Holocaust education curriculum, but wartime Japan offers virtually no tradition of resistance to authoritarianism that could be invoked as a positive example to teach. Accounts of resistance, solidarity, and rescue, however, have been underrepresented in truth commissions’ narratives, although they are included as part of a proposed Bosnian truth commission that has not been held. In Bosnia, a group of authors compiled an inspiring book, titled Good People in an Evil Time: Portraits of Complicity and Resistance in the Bosnian War, based on oral histories from all three major ethnic groups in the country. Another example is Joachim Fest’s book, Not Me: A German Childhood, which portrays a family resistant to Nazism and the consequences of such integrity. These accounts are important because they can contribute to making children understand how some people are able to resist while others are coopted into hatred or enmity.

Two fundamental aspects of history curriculum reform are: first, who writes the new versions and, second, how learners interpret them. One recent important edited collection is History Education and Post-Conflict Reconciliation, which explores joint history textbook writing. This is significant, for as Rosalie Metro points out in her study of post-conflict history, curriculum revision—which she calls an “Intergroup encounter”—can either worsen or ameliorate conflict in post-conflict settings. Her research focused on Burmese migrant and refugee communities in Thailand, where history curricula have been controversial in their vastly divergent accounts of history, depending on whether they are Burma-centric or ethnonationalist, portraying Burmese as oppressors. Many factors impeded agreement about revisions among the different stakeholders, including language and class, but also participants’ fear that if students were taught critically about history and identity they would no longer respect their elders.

Finally, Michele Bellino makes the important point that history education remains reliant on the connections that learners make to their own lives. She asks, “What should educators teach young learners about the world when contemporary crime overshadows recent genocide, and when memories of violence are sometimes perceived as threats to peace?” In Guatemala, a number of projects are precisely based on local experiences: Students produced a play and later a video called There Is Nothing Hidden That Will Not Be Revealed about the 1982 massacre in their community and the villagers’ flight to Mexico. The play continues to be produced by successive generations of high school students who tour the country performing in schools and municipal salons.

**Human Rights and Citizenship Education**

Human rights and citizenship education seem an obvious and crucial area to consider within curriculum reform in a transitional justice context. However, like the teaching of history, it raises a number of questions. To-
day, much human rights education in schools centers on issues such as antiracism, antisexism, and respect for diversity, usually in reference to the current context of students. In contrast, the distinctiveness of a transitional justice approach is the forging of an understanding of rights in terms of how these rights have been violated in the past and what needs to be done to uphold them in the future. How did “derightsification” occur? How was it possible that some people were cast as inhuman and not worthy of rights?

Exploring past rights abuses is, however, a difficult area for teachers to cover. To avoid some of these complexities, some educators prefer to talk about “human values” when trying to tackle past dehumanization. Such an approach can be vague nevertheless and unable to solve some difficulties when it comes to consider “whose” values prevail. In order to avoid these difficulties, the international set of rights recognized in several conventions provides a solid starting point. Using these, many international organizations, such as UNICEF and Save the Children, promote human rights and children’s rights as ways to generate child-friendly and nonviolent schools. The international human rights framework also cuts across religious considerations so that rights provide a secular but commonly acceptable framework to discuss values and make decisions on what is and is not tolerable.

Pedagogically, however, only the reality of each particular context will determine whether the entry point when talking about rights is the individual student and his or her family or violations of rights at the national and international levels. Human rights education manuals written by international organizations have to be used with care. In some countries and religious contexts, human rights might be a sensitive topic in itself, but children’s rights may be easier to use. Strategizing is important, because when playing with these different frameworks there may be different ways to get in. In Afghanistan, for example, it was possible to persuade families that girls’ education was important after they were shown an illustrated booklet prepared for them depicting representations of human rights in the Quran.

Yet, from a transitional justice perspective the focus on past abuses is not just to create sympathy for previous suffering. A rights-based approach such as the one transitional justice proposes means that victims are not just recognized for having been intentionally harmed but that they should be granted “moral standing as individual human beings.” It is recognition of victims as equal rights-bearers and citizens. For education, this means a deep understanding both of rights and of citizenship needs to be promoted, and what, as a citizen, it means to have rights protected by the law. This approach is crucial for future diversity, as it implies that people do not have to love or even like someone or some group to know that they have the same rights and that these rights must be respected. This is why a transitional justice approach in an educational context can sometimes be more powerful than those that stop at encounters with “others” or try to instill empathy or friendship among students. In a transitional justice framework, the universal, indivisible nature of rights is the common humanity. In this respect, transitional justice is distinctive in its treatment of “difference.” It moves on from bland forms of multiculturalism that rely on student exchanges, cultural festivals, and “bridge-building,” which are widely adopted in peace-education programs. As Peter Woodrow and Diana Chigas point out in their discussion of such activities with displaced returnees, these experiences, as often crafted, do not necessarily address the dividers and connectors in those communities, nor do they address the driving factors of the conflict and continuing grievances. New ways have to be found for people to relate to each other, to surface and manage dissent.

An illustration of this point can be traced back to Guatemala in the 1980s, where, after years of violence, the language of human rights helped create a political space for victims’ movements to emerge. Such space made it possible to see individuals who had suffered violations not just as victims of rights abuses but as actors with identities and as members of organizations involved in social change. With this idea in mind, the Commission for Historical Clarification (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, CEH) developed what was called the “100 illustrative cases,” which show in greater detail the characteristics of the violence as they describe different victimhood experiences. These five- to ten-page cases can be used as educational material in schools. They encapsulate the horror and violence of the time but also give insight into the life of the person or community and the context in which they lived. For example, one kidnapped Coca-Cola worker gives the
background to the labor movement or a story on massacres in the highland shows the history of land struggles that the communities faced and how they organized themselves. Part of the strength of these pieces is that they reconstruct local histories, making concrete the experience of rights and making connections between history and the present. One vital perspective, therefore, when considering human rights education from a transitional justice perspective is not to portray the message about past abuses as one just of horror and crime but also to look to a positive future, stressing shared values and commonalities in rights. There is a need to work with what Robert Fullinwider called a “usable past,” a past in which students can find values and projects to take as their legacies, seeing that not all was dark. If a positive national identity is sought, then some past is needed to justify, illustrate, or celebrate this.

Directly related to this is the area of citizenship or civic education. Indeed, because of the amount of time usually required to agree and establish a sensitive history curriculum after conflict, it is sometimes quicker to adapt or introduce civic education curriculum instead (which is actually what happened in Argentina and Chile in the late 1980s and early 1990s). However, civic education without an acknowledgment of the wrong deeds of the past can be abstract. For example, in the case of Guatemala, Elizabeth Oglesby notes that the recent conflict is attributed in the curriculum texts to an unspecified “culture of violence,” a tautological and vague cause that diminishes and obscures, rather than clarifies, the conflict. There is similarly always the danger that citizenship education is directly used for nationalistic and patriotic purposes (learning to be a “good and dutiful citizen”) rather than a critical examination of who has had citizenship denied in the past. Such critiques may include work on whether women are really constituted as citizens.

Similar arguments posit that the bland forms of peace education that emerge after conflict may be counterproductive in tackling real responsibility for past and future integration. Gustavo Palma comments on the notion of peace in the Guatemala reform document as a total harmony, a “must be” lacking in any imperfections, as clearly unrealistic. In most post-conflict education work done to date the use of conflict-resolution skills, however important and useful, may remain abstract, through “role-playing” or the teaching of skills may stay at the personal level—mediating conflict between two students, for example. The INEE module on reconciliation in their new peace education program could be thus critiqued as being apolitical; it appears to be all about recognizing emotions that prevent reconciliation and “understanding that reconciliation is a win-win situation.” The module states: “Pride and hurt are two very common emotions that prevent us from reconciling after a conflict situation. These have very little to do with justice although justice is often cited.” The module acknowledges that this is interpersonal, but even so, it would have doubtful wider penetration. Questions about asking for forgiveness and having “internal peace” are presented as unproblematic. Transitional justice approaches do need to be sensationalized if they are not just to support the status quo. Children who have experienced war know the reality, which normative ideals do not match. Michele Bellino talks of how young people learn about Guatemala’s experiences with social and political violence more often through silences, evasions, and contestations than coherent narratives.

Therefore, sustained political education is key. As a number of writers have pointed out, democracy is not an intuitive practice. It has to be learned with both the acquisition of conceptual knowledge and the skills and behaviors to put it in practice—whether in schools or in teacher education colleges. Unless learners and teacher trainees themselves learn in democratic ways, there is little likelihood that they will teach in other-than-authoritarian forms. In both teacher education institutions and schools, there need to be structures for participation—such as student councils, representation on governing bodies, curriculum committees, and peer-mediation systems that represent democratic procedures. Scherto Gill and Ulrike Niens, however, point out how political participation in schools as a pedagogical strategy of active citizenship may not always be possible. Participation can challenge existing power relations and institutional cultures. Empowering approaches to citizenship education require teachers to model a democratic climate, which poses further challenges to teachers who have usually been trained in a prescriptive curriculum. This difficulty is amplified in societies overcoming political conflict. Research in Lebanese schools, for example, found that during civic lessons students are given
knowledge about democratic practice and critical dialogue; yet in their day-to-day reality, they have no chances to experience a democratic environment in which to mirror that learning.47

A similar problem is related to teaching and learning about another key concept for transitional justice: the rule of law. Erika George points out that the rule of law as a concept and system in place has often been uprooted or may never have taken root in conflict societies.48 Building or rebuilding the rule of law needs the creation of a widely shared public commitment to human rights and a preference for relying on the law and the political process rather than resorting to violence to resolve conflict. This fact underscores the issue of timing: Is there any point in teaching the rule of law in schools when it is not in daily evidence outside, or is the only way to create a commitment to the law to use educational processes? If schools do not begin the process of understanding rights, democracy, and the law, who will?

Teaching Approaches

Side by side with curriculum change are the teaching approaches needed in justice-sensitive reform, including skills in encouraging critical thinking and a democratic, participatory pedagogy, with students reflecting on their learning. A transitional justice perspective requires openness—to alternative versions of history and alternatives to authoritarianism and violence. Dialogue and questioning become an everyday habit. Such questioning of the status quo should be linked to a practice in skills for active citizenship, so that young people can engage in future concrete and positive work for civic agency. Without critical appraisal and exposure to alternative truths, as discussed above, simply learning about past injustices could consolidate hatred and the desire for revenge. In transitional justice terms, the relevant competences include “the capacity to discuss and dissent with other people or about interpretations of the past and their implications for the present, without resorting to violence.”49

Historical material can be captured in a variety of media formats, allowing students to “hear” witnesses and testimony. Holocaust education, for example, has established the practice of inviting survivors to talk directly to children in classrooms. This activity is also done very successfully in Cambodia by a nonprofit organization called Youth for Peace.50 In Northern Ireland, militants from both sides of the conflict talk to classrooms of students of different ages about their histories. This very powerful medium is not risk free, however, especially in terms of opposition by parents or communities.

Social media and new technologies that promote interactive methodologies provide a basis for critical thinking and the engagement of students. Students can, for example, conduct their own research online, and students increasingly make their own films and documentaries on conflict and extremism. Teachers can also access web-based curricula, such as on the genocide in Darfur or other difficult topics.51 Such materials take some of the stress from teachers in thinking about how to deal with difficult issues.

At a national level, social media can also be used for creating a shared identity to mobilize people to forge a viable future. In Kosovo, the government is using “digital diplomacy” in the aftermath of violent conflict to help build a positive national identity, one premised on interfaith dialogue and reconciliation.52 The scars of the 1999 war between Serbs and Albanians are the target of such digital reconciliation efforts. The aim is to use social media to create a positive interreligious dialogue—one that includes members of different ethnicities (Albanian and Serb) and religions (Islam, Serbian Orthodox, Catholic, etc.). However, the interreligious and interethnic cooperation comes slowly in a context where the social memory of bloodshed is still fresh. Nonetheless, any such dialogue in school or community has to help the transitional justice goal of enhancing capacities in freedom of expression to ensure transparency in the future. The new democracy of tweeting and retweeting requires critical skills in assessing veracity. This reminds us of Michael Ignatieff’s words: “The need to reduce the number of lies that can be circulated unchallenged in public discourse”53 is one of the most important goals of truth commissions—and education.
School Culture

A critical pedagogy must be embedded in a school culture that lives out democracy and nonviolence on a daily basis. In some contexts, children will have seen violence replicated in schools with the use of corporal punishment and other forms of teacher violence or with peer violence and sexual harassment. In these ways violence becomes normalized. A transitional justice approach to education reform insists on moving toward a culture of nonviolence in schools, not just providing teachers with alternatives to physical punishment but shifting away from an ethos of punishment altogether toward more restorative, respectful, and negotiable ways of achieving fairness in school life. Of course, this outcome is not easily achieved. Frances Hunt, for example, discusses the educational policy introduced in post-apartheid South Africa that tried to reframe the authoritarian relations of the past around equality of rights and mutual responsibilities. Student identities were to be reconstructed around the notion of the student as a citizen, where each has rights and a voice within the democratic structure of post-apartheid schools. But teachers felt that the policy, which gave students a legal basis to claim entitlements within schools, had at the same time reduced teachers’ rights, threatening their traditional identities. Rights were in competition. There was particular opposition to banning corporal punishment, as teachers saw it as a breakdown in discipline. Deep-rooted historical tensions between students and teachers were being reinvented around a rejection of post-apartheid policy on student rights. These complexities, however, did not seem to have been considered by the policy makers.

In contrast, Nepal has had some success with the designation of Schools as Zones of Peace. This initiative arose from schools being used by both the army and the Maoists as barracks, and the Maoists attempting to change the curriculum to remove all references to the monarchy. As a consequence of such interference, schools were frequently targeted for strikes and closures, becoming battlegrounds for the armed conflict, with teachers and children killed and maimed in the crossfire. After an initial full-scale Schools as Zones of Peace campaign was launched, it became clear that advocacy alone could not protect schools and children. UNICEF and Save the Children then developed a Schools as Zones of Peace module, which was part of the Quality Education Resource Package. The project had five components: 1) a model for negotiating and developing school codes of conduct in which community facilitators convened negotiations with the Maoists, army, civil society, and other stakeholder groups to cease targeting schools; 2) mobilization of civil society coalitions to keep conflict out of the schools, including use of local media, which monitored threats to schools through the educational journalists association; 3) provision of psychosocial support for students; 4) provision of support and coping skills for teachers; and 5) teaching of landmine awareness and protection.

The Schools as Zones of Peace process built on community support structures, including children’s clubs, parent-teacher associations, and child protection committees. These groups helped draw up and monitor the school codes of conduct. Notice boards outside the school were used to turn away weapon holders, political groups seeking donations, and people wanting to hold political meetings or write political slogans. Importantly, the implementing partners and school communities widened the initiative’s criteria to include localized issues, such as banning alcohol, smoking, and cattle grazing on school premises—appearing then to be politically neutral. The focus became about protecting children from all disturbances to learning and about ending all violence and discrimination in schools. The importance of this example for a transitional justice approach to educational reform would be the centrality of the involvement of the community and the skills learned in negotiation. As outlined above, one of the goals of transitional justice processes is precisely the strengthening of civil society so that manipulation and marginalization become less likely.

Creating safe schools and, more broadly, safe spaces for students and teachers in post-conflict contexts may include initiatives aimed toward the healing of trauma, which would be directly linked to the justice goal of providing redress to victims. Programs in “hearing and healing,” for example, are used in both adult literacy circles and refugee school contexts. These programs use role-play, stories, and drawing to engender deep listening among groups that participate in the session. The underlying idea of these programs is that surfacing deep
In a group context, trauma can be therapeutic for all. Another example is psychosocial care and counseling work supported by the German Development Cooperation agency in Sri Lanka as part of a broader Education for Social Cohesion program implemented by the Ministry of Education, which aims to address the trauma of the conflict both at the school and the family level. The program encourages young people to discuss experiences of abuse or violence in their homes or community and provides them with strategies to build resilience to such violence. Overall, the program helps challenge the normalization of violence in the community and encourages students to think about how to include marginalized or excluded peers. However, in Sierra Leone, concerns remain that the impact of psychosocial programs that have been implemented after the conflict is not clear. The impression is that such programs are reproduced as part of a standard response without sufficient commitment to adaptation to specific contexts. Jo Boyden and Paul Ryder, for example, argue that teachers often undergo their own psychological distress and that it is not their role to run these programs. While benefits of these programs can be found at the individual level, their role in broader peacebuilding efforts is far from evidenced.

**Teacher Education**

Significantly, no truth commission has thus far proposed training and professional development for teachers to enable them to better understand and teach about conflict. This lack could be seen as a grave omission. In post-conflict societies, especially those in which the conflict is very recent, practicing teachers will most likely have experienced violent confrontation from the perspective of one of the parties (either as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses), and, accordingly, they will likely have suffered the consequences of such experience. They may themselves have experienced trauma and need to heal. And this will affect their capacity to teach about the past, regardless of the study program and teaching materials they have. Ultimately it is the educator who mediates between the system and its beneficiaries, the students. To make things even more complicated it is also possible that in such difficult contexts, the school system itself may be reluctant to deal with conflictive or controversial issues: Its traditional position has been to transmit certainties and avoid intellectual or social conflicts. Indeed, teacher education colleges are often the most conservative of all higher education institutions because of this remit to socialize the younger generations into the accepted ways of society.

Yet, we can see how fundamental teacher-training capacity is for all the areas of reform outlined above—especially curriculum and pedagogy—hence, making the reform of the way that teachers are themselves taught to be of paramount importance. Moreover, working with teachers and teacher educators to shift the way that they teach can be quicker than creating, approving, producing, and distributing new textbooks. An important issue to look into, therefore, will be how teachers learn: Are teacher-training colleges democratic, and do they show respect for human rights? Do teachers learn in critical ways? Do they have knowledge of the recent past and alternative past narratives? Research in South African teacher-education institutions, for example, has uncovered training cultures that include features ranging from authoritarian lecturing to sexual harassment among trainees or between lecturers and students. If the teacher-training experience replicates the cultural conditions surrounding a conflict, then it is unlikely that teachers will know how to teach in participative ways or understand the implications of rights.

As happens with debates on multicultural education, another question is teachers’ willingness and capacity to adopt new content and methods of teaching. For example, should old, biased textbooks be sanitized or should they be sensitized? Should they be used creatively to uncover with students how the world used to be presented? Whatever is done requires acceptance by teachers. To teach about the past in a critical manner, teachers will need good materials designed for that purpose as well as incentives to use them. They also need incentives to change the way they relate to students and, as just mentioned, alternatives to humiliating punishment, such as restorative or positive discipline approaches.
In South Africa, a group of authors described the power of a participatory action research project conducted with community-based organizations that was designed to create new, situated, and empowered citizen identities and actions, based on understandings of the right to basic education as well as the citizen’s right and responsibility to be aware and engaged. The organizations were encouraged to pursue education rights through interaction with school governing bodies, principals, and teacher unions. The principle guiding the project was that so-called rights-based policies, which are just granting top-down access to institutions, are limited. Feeling and claiming rights, however, was seen as much more powerful and transformatory. This approach has crucial implications for teacher education, in that teachers should learn research skills and have experience in action research in their communities, so that they can work with their students to engage in similar community work. Teachers who are themselves active in social movements can act as models to their students, as seen in some Latin American contexts. Yet, this is a big demand on teachers in countries where teacher political activity is still frowned on by government or where the community itself is “toxic,” perhaps full of racism or hatred. It would be important for teachers to learn advocacy and community mobilization skills in the relatively safe space of teacher-education colleges before engaging in such action when teaching.
4. Challenges of a Transitional Approach to Education

The Wider Context Within Which Education Operates

Independent of how a conflict ends, in reality it is never possible to make a clean break with the past. An education policy can try to break down segregation, for example, but power and economic differentials will persist, so that the capacity of parents to choose a school for their children or the economic resources of different schools, for example, will never be equally distributed. Even in the so-called integrated schools in some countries, divisions are still apparent—with different floors for different “nationalities” in Bosnia and Herzegovina or different language sections in Sri Lanka. It should also be noted that rights-based approaches to education reform, which are the bedrock of confronting past atrocities, inevitably generate contestations: The right to one’s own language- or faith-based school can mean a continuation of segregation and intolerance. Integration may be viewed as a return to the past and/or assimilation into a larger, dominant group, where group rights are privileged over a common citizenship. Whether continued inequalities and differences threaten peacebuilding depends on a large extent on the legitimacy of government. The transitional justice aim of “restoring civic trust” links to perceptions of political will as well as actual political determination to reform. If the government was responsible for the conflict or is still being accused of human rights abuses, should education be promoting trust in institutions? When there have been massive violations of basic norms across communities how can it be shown that these norms are now in place?

Another sensitive area is that of international intervention in the field of education, both in programming and in regard to economic support, especially considering what a politically delicate area of reform transitional justice is. The US government, for example, has been directly accused of linking its education-assistance programming in Afghanistan and Iraq to the country’s national interest, as has the Soros Foundation for its involvement in history textbook reform in Russia. Analyzing USAID’s peace education work in Guatemala, Oglesby discusses how international institutions are more broadly emerging as the key brokers in creating a “culture of peace,” with educational projects billed as efforts to disseminate the findings of the truth commission. She critiques such peace education initiatives, however, as promoting a particular version of historical memory that reifies the violence, repackages the conflict in terms more amenable to a contemporary project of “governance,” and expunges a deeper discussion of social and political history. A sixth-grade textbook explains why the “culture of peace” should be practiced in Guatemala: “This violence occurred because during 36 years of civil war many people practised a culture of violence.” As Oglesby points out, it can be argued that contemporary Guatemala does have a violence culture, but to posit this as the cause of conflict ignores central issues such as how and why the armed movement began and how repressive practices evolved. The culture of peace materials preclude discussion of the broad social forces aligned on both sides and the deep social
and political cleavages. The shifting agendas of national and international agents in reform initiatives need constant scrutiny.

Finally, as Felisa Tibbitts points out, another area of conflict and competition refers to the different goals that, after conflict, education reform efforts may try to achieve but may not be possible to resolve. An ongoing important tension exists between a utilitarian view of education as supporting economic development and employability and a humanitarian approach that places social goals like social cohesion at the forefront. In transitional justice contexts, often with very limited resources, these tensions will surface. A difficult task for transitional justice advocates, therefore, is to demonstrate clearly that a lack of social cohesion is a barrier to economic development and that it is worth taking a risk on a robust education for justice, which will in turn help security.

Willingness to Confront the Past

In post-conflict societies there can be little acceptance of the importance of acknowledging the injustices of the past. This can be for a variety of reasons, including blunt denial of culpability but also a strategic view and ideological preference for a “clean slate” and for moving on, which may pose a significant challenge for any attempt to use education as a means to confront the past. There can be government bans on talking about genocide—as happened in Rwanda—or on admissions of responsibility. The language of past crimes presents a problem—Turkey, for instance, refuses to see its treatment of the Armenians as a “genocide” at all. In Japan, peace education is used to deny any sort of culpability during World War II, while reframing who the victims were. In order to avoid these debates, both South Africa and El Salvador suspended their history curriculum immediately after the conflict (South Africa for quite a short period), creating what Ana María Rodino refers to as the “null curriculum”—everything that is not named or discussed. This null curriculum also needs analyzing, as intentional “absence” is also part of an educative system of a country.

Problems become even more complex in relation to the notion of reconciliation, which implies a return to some previous harmonious situation. However, such harmony, not to say relations of equality among people, may never have been there. In this respect, Cole draws attention to how in some contexts reconciliation may have been set against justice, in the sense that for some, reconciliation after violence refers to the “Christian-tinged” pursuit of harmony, apology, forgiveness, forgetting, and sometimes truth—but not so much truth as to disrupt the utopian ideal of harmony. Also, those in power who are associated with earlier perpetrator regimes have sometimes promoted or legislated reconciliation as a means of public amnesia or in pursuit of a legal amnesty. But can one seek reconciliation without justice?

However, educators belong to different spectrums of society. Hence, while not all educators necessarily believe in the importance of confronting the past, others may lack the skills or confidence to engage in this practice in the classroom. There will be inevitable teacher reluctance to admit their own involvement in a conflict or their own bias. Or there can be frustration at being made responsible for “reconciliation”—especially when the dominant ethos of the country is not dedicated to facing the past and sharing the future. As Murphy notes, “Asking students to take risks that adults around them refuse to take will result in failure and frustration, as will reforms that isolate teachers, classrooms, schools, and the education system as a whole from wide support.” Teachers in Northern Ireland, for example, have been shown to be uncomfortable in the role of leading agents for social change and doubt that anything they teach can counter what students learn at home. In some countries, like Guatemala, teachers may even receive physical threats.

Finally, real and perceived dangers fill retrospective analysis of the roles of victims and perpetrators in a conflict. Depending on the context, both sides may have committed atrocities, or both sides may be simultaneously considered victims and perpetrators. Conflicts and abuses that are very recent mean that “perpetrators” are still alive, if not thriving. The danger of increasing feelings of the need for revenge rather than channeling them
into more productive avenues cannot be predicted. This turmoil may make it even harder to convince educators that they should take on the role of using transitional justice material as produced by truth commissions, trials, or reparations programs—especially considering their implications—in their work.

**Barriers to Critical Thinking**

As already argued, a justice-sensitive approach to peace education demands a break from authoritarian modes of teaching and learning, with a move toward more critical approaches. Yet, while new materials may be designed and provided for representing this new ethos, how and whether they are used will depend on principals and teachers and how these materials sit within the culture of the school. An examination culture, which demands passing tests according to preset criteria, has always been an obstacle to critical thinking, and the ability to deal with contentious issues such as alternative versions of the past is hard to fit into an examination framework. If transitional justice issues are not part of this assessment framework, teachers will spend less time on them, and they will decline in status.

Questions of how violence is discussed are also not easy to resolve. In some contexts, for example, violence may be sanctioned by religion or other cultural traditions. The Quran, for example, says violence is forbidden “except in revenge.” If young people are encouraged to question such important religious edicts, some may think they are also encouraged to question religion as a whole. In other contexts, sexual and gender violence, especially rape, may be difficult for teachers to talk about, especially if they themselves have suffered sexual or domestic violence. Research has shown that in times of conflict, men are more likely to be violent toward women in their home. Linking past and present here may become a very sensitive and personal concern, tied to existing power relations. With such barriers, the possibility is that curriculum reform associated with a transitional justice process falls into a trap of symbolic reference to the values of peace, human rights, and social justice. If these are not adequately grounded in pedagogy and critical reflection should they be promoted? Tibbitts makes the important point that, moved by good intentions, we may be underestimating the challenges of designing and implementing critical pedagogy and overestimating the interest of citizens (and teachers) in addressing these values and processes.

**Decision Making in Programming and Planning**

Education reform, as already pointed out, has not usually been included as part of broader transitional justice initiatives. That is partly because those planning transitional justice processes have not included educators in the process. However, as Cole has argued, engaging schools as part of a transitional justice process could expand the range of institutional and individual actors involved in such initiatives to include ministries of education, parent-teacher associations, curriculum experts, transitional justice institutions, principals, teachers, and students themselves. Including education actors in the process can be a strategic decision—to the extent that it widens legitimation and ownership of the process—but it can also have qualitative effects, if a result can be produced of better educational resources on the transitional justice process and its outcomes.

Thinking about the actors who should be involved relates to the perennial question of top-down or bottom-up starting points. At the “top” level, transitional justice initiatives may deploy people with high turnover, particularly the international community and national policy makers, as well as officials in the ministry of education. However, how to move on from the past is clearly context-specific, with a new democratic culture needing to be built on the history of the old one. Donor organizations cannot impose some global ideals of—and training in—democracy on every society in the same way. At the other end of the spectrum are educational nongovernmental organizations, teachers, parents’ associations, and students. Reflecting on this question, however, Rodino considers that the teaching of history and the memory of the recent past is not something that occurs spontaneously or as a result of the actions of a group of education experts or teachers. It occurs as a result of a social mandate. That is why it must be established as public policy and, ideally, as state policy, not just govern-
ment or party policy, and incorporated explicitly into the laws that govern the national education system.73 This is not to say that transitional justice cannot be started elsewhere and civil society organizations will embark on projects that relate to transitional justice goals; but for legitimacy and institutionalization, especially regarding education, eventually a legal framework will be needed. Various aspects of curriculum have to be made compulsory. Formal bodies in the administration at different levels are needed who are responsible for transitional justice work in education, its monitoring, and its dissemination.

As happens with any new initiative, planning the reform process presents the choice between piloting or proceeding with wholesale implementation. In this respect, it may be difficult to argue for transitional justice approaches as essential and yet posit them as experimental. Another dilemma, not unique to transitional justice, is whether preparation of materials precedes training of teachers, or the other way around. At one stage Sri Lanka prepared thousands of UNESCO manuals titled *Learning to Live Together*, which were distributed to all schools. However, the teachers had not been trained in how to use them, and many remained in the principal's office. On the other hand, any new curriculum will need to be in place at least in draft form before teachers can be initiated into using this. The ideal solution is to involve teachers in the preparation of materials, so that understanding them and using them go hand in hand. Consulting the whole teaching force is not usually feasible, but without full teacher understanding of a new history curriculum, or the reasons for a new school ethos, radical initiatives can be counterproductive. For example Save The Children found in South Sudan that materials designed to sensitize against corporal punishment were not fully understood by all teachers who, instead of stopping the practice altogether, simply switched to different forms of harsh discipline, such as making children kneel on sharp gravel or using other children to beat students.74

**Assessing the Impact of Transitional Justice Initiatives**

The final challenge to be considered is that of evaluation. Assessing the impact of a justice-sensitive approach to education programming is an extremely difficult task. Short-term measures of success are possible to identify—that teachers turn up for a workshop or that a curriculum has been reformed. Yet given education's only partial role in any future peace or conflict, long-term measurements are almost impossible to formulate. There are too many intervening variables that make it very difficult to determine causation (what has been called the “attribution gap”). Nonetheless, some impact evaluation must be attempted to see what the possibilities at least are.

Three stages can be distinguished. The first is whether recommendations for reform or innovation have been implemented. Second, if there are new policies by government, are these understood or used by teachers and others? Third, if the policies are fully or partially implemented, is there any evidence of them making a difference or achieving transitional justice goals? In South Africa, for example, Tibbitts has been able to assess the second of these, understanding and use. Key supports for transitional justice were developed in conjunction with the curriculum reform. A kit for the Values Education Curriculum was developed, although not distributed to all teachers, and some in-service teacher training was organized. It was felt, however, that this curriculum was insufficient, and it received a lower priority than teacher training in science, technology, and math. Finally, no student assessments were organized at the national level. The ambitious shift to an outcomes-based education limited attention to this area of work. Crucially, there was a failure to work from the “bottom up” in understanding the real needs of educators and their demands. For example, a funded program for teachers with the goal of receiving an all-expenses-paid, one-year certificate program in human rights education has resulted in fewer than 60 certificates being issued in nearly ten years, suggesting a low interest in this program.75

On the other hand, a civic education curriculum reform in Colombia was shown to promote interpersonal skills in conflict prevention and conflict transformation in order to reduce local levels of violence (with the prospect that these might affect society in general).76 It was found possible to organize a highly participatory consultation and dissemination effort. Yet the decentralized nature of the educational system in the country...
has made monitoring of how the curriculum is being implemented problematic. One difficulty in establishing impact is when something like human rights education has a transversal, cross-curriculum approach. Another is when peace education is abstract (as Oglesby pointed out with regard to “the culture of violence”). After exposure to apolitical peace education materials, one may well find students able to articulate peace language, but they would have fewer skills in understanding how political conflict has happened and, crucially, may happen in the future.

The above issues in evaluation relate to accountability: Who is responsible if reforms do not work? There may be buck-passing, with no one willing to admit mistakes. In the end it is learners or possibly teachers who are blamed for only partial success. It is important not to expect too much and be content with small, measurable changes—for example, a decline in the number of incidents of violence in a school or an increase in the number of students using a rights-based approach to solve problems in school or at home.
5. Conclusion

Is it possible for justice-sensitive education to contribute to consolidating peace? In spite of the challenges, such an approach has indeed greater power than some less political or politicized initiatives in the peacebuilding field. Its major and distinctive strength lies precisely in its constant "two-way gaze" approach. As Oglesby notes, the goal of truth commission accords is often to put a "final note" to discussions of the past with the production of a report that would close the book. But instead, such accords should be seen as points of departure.77

Justice-sensitive approaches to education reform require open acknowledgment of the role that education itself may have played in the previous conflict and patterns of abuse. Some attempt to address this in a manner that is different from more traditional peace education programs. Grievances that led to conflict may have included those about educational access or about cultural or linguistic exclusion. Attempting to redress these will open some space to the reduction of education's role in conflict, even if the major sources of grievance lie outside the education system. In any reconstruction, it is a question of helping to avoid some of the mistakes made in simply recreating education as it was.

The backward gaze provides a platform for a better understanding of how to build democracy and uphold rights, two of the goals of peacebuilding. Education for democracy would include analysis of what was undemocratic in the past, whether in processes of decision making, participation, representation, freedom of speech, transparency, or accountability. Citizenship education includes thinking about who is now a citizen and who was denied citizenship in the past, and, hence, what being a citizen means, legally and in everyday practice. Education in human rights would include exposure of rights violations in the past, which necessitates knowledge of what exactly constitutes a right (and what does not). All these areas involve discussion of power and who has the power to enable or block democracy, to accord or deny rights.

The backward glance also importantly enables understanding of cycles of revenge and escalation of violence. Cleaning up the school's act in this means tackling school-based violence and challenging the acceptance of aggressive behaviors as solutions to a problem. The lens on the past reveals how people have been manipulated into violence, whether by the state, rebel groups, or religious extremists, and what resilience is needed to overcome such situations. Ironically, history education appears to be only about the backward gaze but has profound implications for current and future perceptions. These include how "the other" is constituted, the narratives of conflict and its resolution, and who gets included in history. Transitional justice approaches will emphasize alternative narratives but also, linked to democracy and rights, the exploration of social movements for change. Questions of human responsibility for injustice are contentious and may take time to include, but eventually a history curriculum will not be shy of implicating recent states and governments as well as rebels and terrorists. Importantly, in terms of prevention, the crushing acknowledgment emerges that (unlike in many
bland peace education projects) not everyone wants peace. Daniel Bar-Tal points out, as in many intractable conflicts, powerful people would stand to lose financially and politically if the conflict were officially resolved.78

The backward and then current glance includes how justice has been addressed—in trials, truth and reconciliation commissions, and victim-reparation schemes. However imperfect, these mechanisms indicate a society that wants to learn from the mistakes of the past and show that some form of justice is possible. All this then facilitates the process of the forward glance, and, essentially, the vision of something different as feasible. The peacebuilding goal of new norms and values needs recognition of what the old norms and values were and how to shift these where appropriate.

But how feasible is such educational work? The following summary figure includes a crucial additional column: the preconditions for a justice-sensitive education to take hold. These preconditions include political will, specific curriculum change, or, very often, enhancement of teachers’ knowledge and skill in what can be controversial or difficult areas. Political will includes not just supporting changes, such as greater integration or inclusive curriculum, but being open to criticism and challenge by teachers and students. It is a truism, but still fundamental, to insist that this varies according to the context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOGNITION OF:</th>
<th>EDUCATION AND THE LEARNER AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE</th>
<th>PRECONDITIONS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE</th>
<th>THE FUTURE, GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How people were marginalized or excluded</td>
<td>More equitable access to learning; recognition of language and culture</td>
<td>Political will for structural and curriculum reform; monitoring of effects</td>
<td>Lessening of grievance; resistance to joining insurgent groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How rights were not upheld</td>
<td>Knowledge of human rights and children's rights</td>
<td>Inclusion of human rights education in curriculum; teacher knowledge</td>
<td>Support for a rights-based culture where all are entitled to the same rights and dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How violence was justified and normalized</td>
<td>Understanding of dehumanization; schools as nonviolent spaces</td>
<td>Government policy on corporal punishment; teacher skills in restorative discipline</td>
<td>Preferring nonviolent solutions to problems; challenging domestic and community violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failures of democracy and the political process</td>
<td>Knowledge of democracy; schools practicing democratic institutions; voter education</td>
<td>Government policy on institutional reform; citizenship education; teacher knowledge</td>
<td>Use of full range of political participation; resistance to political manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How there was secrecy, corruption, and abuses of power</td>
<td>Critical pedagogy; skills in open dialogue; use of social media for new networking</td>
<td>Educators able to criticize leaders; teacher skill in controversial issues and in social media</td>
<td>Freedom of expression and capacity to mount political or religious challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How truth commissions work (where relevant)</td>
<td>Understanding of workings of tribunals and concepts of justice and reconciliation</td>
<td>Materials for schools; teacher knowledge; government policy to use materials</td>
<td>Acceptance of some justice being attempted or achieved, of justice being kept alive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet, preconditions are not the same as barriers, and aspects of a justice-sensitive education are already being embedded in different transitional justice contexts. What is difficult to show in a table is complex cumulative effects: Any of the areas in the second column might have an effect on any of the areas in the final one, and
they do not necessarily go only horizontally. Continuing advocacy is needed to show how the combination of initiatives can have a powerful and unique effect to support the likelihood of nonrepetition of conflict.

As well as tools for understanding the past, a justice-sensitive approach to education reform provides tools and dispositions to nudge people and organizations into a slightly different future. These include the tools of dialogue and persuasion, nonviolent conflict resolution, networking for change, and participating in social movements. We know from research that students who have participated in volunteering or community service when at school are more likely to participate in the political process in the future, if only just to vote. We know that schools can create their own zones of peace and inject new ideas into the community.

The key power of transitional justice education is the positioning of learners as central. From the constant juxtaposition of past and future and the skill set they acquire, students can envision themselves in the middle of the transition. They are not just voyeurs, not just recipients of curriculum, but active learners using curriculum for social change as well as individual progress. Projects on transitional justice lay to rest the assumption that young people are not interested in the events of the recent past; it has been found, in contrast, that they speak passionately about events that took place before they were born. There is the awareness that people in the immediate past created both justice and injustice, that justice needs to be kept alive, and that they as learners and as citizens can be part of that struggle, however small their efforts. Transitional justice sounds very grim, in its catalogue of victims and horrors; but because it shows how justice might be achieved, it gives grounds for hope. It is a “usable past.” In active justice-sensitive education, the constant backward-forward gaze means students creating their own history and students creating their own future.
Notes


8. Ibid., 33.


14. Some structural reforms for the education sector can include reparations programs, in terms of providing education to victims of the conflict who had missed educational opportunities. See Cristián Correa, Lorena Escalona, and Teboho Moja’s case studies in *Transitional Justice and Education*. Some structural reforms are also proposed in the immediate aftermath of conflict, when many have been denied education and may be still vulnerable to being drawn into violent groups. The policies of “catch-up” education, or accelerated learning programs, attempt to compensate for past lack of schooling and provide redress; an economic interpretation of transitional justice may also propose shifts to more vocational education in order to make students employable and, in theory, boost the economy. Yet, as in Sierra Leone, these programs are not without problems and cannot be undertaken without analyses of the labor market for males and females and whether there are real opportunities postschooling.

15. Murphy, “Educational Reform through a Transitional Justice Lens.”
16. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, no organization, international or domestic, was given a clear mandate to ensure educational reform until 2002 when the Office of the High Representative admitted it was too late to consider this.


18. Murphy, “Educational Reform through a Transitional Justice Lens.”


23. Murphy, “Educational Reform through a Transitional Justice Lens.”

24. Ibid.

25. It should be noted especially that “Holocaust education” is a specific field and prime international endeavour now, with specific centers for this in many countries.


34. The same can be said about the teaching of history in regard to whether it is less sensitive or safer to teach and learn about conflict only in different countries (as in Rwanda, where it is sensitive to talk about the genocide) or whether such a strategy undermines the very philosophy of transitional justice to confront the past. It may be up to individual teachers to see how to approach this; some may prefer to discuss issues of conflict informally with the class if it does not appear in an official syllabus, perhaps using current events.


41. Palma, “History, Memory, and Education.”
46. Gill and Niens, “Education as Humanisation,” 16.
47. Ibid., 17.
50. See Youth for Peace at www.yfpcambodia.org
51. See, for example, the Teaching with the News project at Brown University, www.choices.edu/resources/current.php
52. See InterfaithKosovo, at http://www.interfaithkosovo.org
63. See, for example, Mieke Lopes Cardozo, *Future Teachers and Social Change in Bolivia* (Delft: Eburon, 2011).
66. Rodino, “Pedagogical Guidelines for Teaching about the Recent Past.”
68. Murphy, “Educational Reform through a Transitional Justice Lens.”
73. Rodino, “Pedagogical Guidelines for Teaching about the Recent Past.”
74. Save The Children, Breaking the Cycle of Crisis.
76. Ibid., 10–11.