BRITISH COUNCIL

Teaching for peace

Education in conflict and recovery

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Contents

Syrian schoolchildren attend catch-up learning classes in Lebanon.

Foreword

Over the past decade many countries have been affected by an increase in conflict and violent extremism. In conjunction with an increasing number of fragile or failing states and disenchantment with the international institutions, these are very worrying developments.

Of course, violent political conflict has both direct and indirect victims. The people directly affected by conflict are probably obvious to most of us, but the indirect effects are less easy to imagine. Not only does conflict impact the families of victims, but it also plays out in the lost ideals, lowered aspirations and indeed psychosocial damage to whole generations. Conflict in one country frequently ripples out to destabilise neighbouring states and regions, and the impact is inevitably transgenerational.

Countries left fragile by conflict experience setbacks to their development. This represents a significant barrier to the promise of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to 'leave no one behind'. Indeed, I have often said that unless the violence and conflict identified in SDG 16 are addressed, none of the other SDGs can be successfully delivered.

But ripples of progress towards peace and stability are also potentially far-reaching and they are fundamental prerequisites for prosperity, not to mention any prospect of post-conflict reconciliation. Through its work on the UN Security Council and as a generous international development donor, the UK is a leading player in international efforts to address the causes of conflict and build stability around the world.

Substantial proportions of the UK's aid budget are directed at improving education systems in conflict-affected countries, because we recognise that education – at both school and university level – plays a vital role in helping countries to emerge from fragility. Improving the experience of education for citizens of all ages can significantly increase trust in the state by providing them with better life chances. A national education system can also play a critical part in building what is known as 'positive peace' if it helps people appreciate the perspectives and culture of those with whom they have differed in the past, sometimes to the point of violence. Changing attitudes is at least as necessary as changing structures and institutions if post-conflict societies are to be enabled to manage real change and move towards peace, stability and reconciliation.

I warmly welcome the British Council's commitment to increasing understanding of how education can contribute to UK efforts to promote international security and stability – whether by addressing the factors that lead to violent extremism or by working to improve stability and good governance in strategically important countries.

Drawing on our country's own direct experience of addressing conflict in Northern Ireland, this work offers valuable insights for the British Council and other international education providers.

In the struggle to build peaceful and prosperous societies for the future, the most important battlegrounds may be not only the classroom and the lecture hall, but also the virtual spaces of social media and cyberspace, where we have the possibilities of good messaging and positive learning if we implement reports like this one with imagination and creativity.

Professor, the Lord Alderdice, Officer, British Council All Party Parliamentary Group

Executive summary

This report highlights the findings of new research on the role of education in supporting peace and security. Commissioned by the British Council, the study *Education in conflict-affected areas*[1] was carried out by the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University Belfast. In this report the British Council considers the main implications of the research for the fields of cultural relations, education and peacebuilding.

The Mitchell Institute's review of the academic evidence concludes that education has a complex but crucial interaction with conflict and fragility. As a public institution education plays a fundamental role in establishing social norms and collective identity, resolving inequality and progressing human development. During conflict, it has benefits for resilience, while in its aftermath it can help rebuild human and social capital in a way which supports peace. However, education cannot guarantee improvements in peace and security when taken in isolation, and can exacerbate conflict conditions, for example, by increasing divisions and marginalising the language, history and culture of minority groups.

The research concludes that there is no definitive answer to the question of which educational approaches best address peace and security issues. Yet, it is clear that education can and often does make a positive difference in conflict-affected contexts. Programmes demonstrating the greatest impact are those which are delivered alongside a range of social and economic measures, and which are designed in a conflict-sensitive manner rooted in the local context.

In particular, dialogue-based educational approaches have shown promising signs of success. They foster critical thinking, civic values and openness to difference. They are preferable to other approaches because they connect individuals and the education system to their wider social context, and avoid concentrating on a narrow group deemed to be 'at risk'. Models built on this approach are highly relevant for international education organisations seeking to increase the peace and security benefits of their programmes.

The research concludes that education development in conflict-affected areas should be pursued with care, for it is not the mere presence of students in classes that leads to positive outcomes, but rather what they are taught, how they are taught and how this might change the local dynamics. Without proper planning there is a significant risk that apparently positive programmes could in fact exacerbate problems. International education organisations should also be aware that their activities can be strategically compromised by the need to adapt to complex physical circumstances. In divided communities, shared education activities can encourage more favourable cross-group attitudes if they are structured and sustained over the long term.

The British Council has drawn the following recommendations from the research in the belief that they can support itself and other international education organisations seeking to maximise the security and stability outcomes of their programmes:

- Put conflict analysis at the heart of programme design – all interventions should adopt a locally sensitive and iterative approach which mitigates the risk of inadvertently exacerbating conflict and identifies the opportunities for peace.
- Build a strategic framework and adhere to it. International programmes should be situated within a thought-through strategic framework to reduce the risk of a shift away from intended objectives during local adaption and delivery.
- Integrate evaluation within the relevant strategic framework. A rigorous evaluation model can be created if a solid conflict analysis and coherent strategic framework are in place.
- Align with national government strategies where possible. Education interventions should be seen as part of a wider package of measures, rather than in isolation. Impact can be increased if aligned with national strategies on peace and security.

Greater collaboration should take place between academics, practitioners and policymakers across the fields of education, security, peacebuilding and development to provide clearer evidence of 'what works'. International education organisations should consider integrating peace and security outcomes into their programmes in these areas.

For their part, policymakers in governments and international institutions should seek to integrate education into a 'whole of society' approach to promote sustainable peace and security.

In summary, education interventions can support security and stability outcomes if they are configured and implemented in the right way, reflecting the complex and interconnected relationship between education, its local context and the dynamics of conflict.

1. https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/global_education_security_and_stability_report_0319.pdf

Schoolchildren in
Colombia take part
in a national music
education programme.

Introduction

In efforts to promote peace worldwide, the role of education is often overlooked. Yet education has significant influence over the direction of every society's development, including those in states of conflict. It has intrinsic benefits for society, in terms of economic productivity and civic engagement.[2] It is seen as vital to people's life chances and economic prospects. As a key point of interaction between citizen and state, it also influences perceptions of the state's fairness. It shapes norms at a formative period in young people's lives, forging national identity and influencing the interaction between different groups in society. Ultimately, education can determine attitudes, values and behaviour across generations. These multiple dimensions have two key implications for policymakers – first, that education is critical for all interventions that seek to tackle the underlying causes of radicalisation and conflict; and second, that education is never a neutral actor – but can have significant negative consequences for society.

The UK is a global leader in education and development. It has committed to delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to spending at least half of its aid budget in conflict-affected and fragile states, where an increasing proportion of the world's poor are now concentrated. In its recent education strategy *Get Children Learning*[3] the UK's Department for International Development committed to investing in quality teaching and targeting support for education towards the most marginalised in developing and conflict-affected countries. The UK government has also highlighted the importance of education in creating more peaceful societies in its Building Stability Framework.[4]

The British Council has been working in international education programmes for over 80 years. Some countries over that period have faced conflict. Despite those circumstances, the British Council has continued to provide support to ministries, universities and schools, as well as to organise international exchanges and capability-building programmes. The British Council plays a central role in the UK's effort to support education in fragile societies. The organisation therefore sees it as critical that it draws on its experience for insight on the key issues facing internationally focused education support, and takes further measures to develop conflict-prevention and peacebuilding activities through UK expertise.

There is significant potential for British Council education programmes to make a greater contribution to security and stability. The majority of previous programmes have not been designed or evaluated with these goals in mind. There is thus a need for research to help the organisation develop its understanding of how to design education interventions to address the causes of conflict and barriers to peace.

The British Council commissioned a team of experts at the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University Belfast, led by Professor Tony Gallagher, to explore the academic evidence on the contribution that education can make to security and stability, and to draw lessons for future programmes from practical case studies. These included a range of programmes implemented by the British Council and other international education providers in a range of contexts, including Colombia, Northern Ireland, Ukraine, Lebanon and Gaza. The research focused on formal education systems, primarily at the primary and secondary level.

This report sets out the British Council's own reflections on this research, focusing on the lessons for policymakers and international education organisations. The findings will inform the British Council's own development of education initiatives which can better support security and stability outcomes.

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2. OECD (2013) *What are the social benefits of education?* Paris: OECD.

3. DFID (2019) *DFID Education Policy: Get Children Learning,* London: DFID.

4. Lenzen, M (2016) *Building Stability Framework*. London: DFID.

Report outline

The publication opens with a review of the key findings of the Mitchell Institute's review of the academic literature. It begins with the academic evidence on education's potential benefits for security and stability.

Next, the report reflects on on the Mitchell Institute team's findings on **the potential of education to exacerbate conflict,** and outlines ways in which international education organisations can mitigate the risk of inadvertently causing negative outcomes by integrating conflict sensitivity into policy and programmes.

Conflict, in turn, can have a significant negative impact on education. A case study from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) illustrates **the impact of conflict on the capacity of education systems**. It also shows how communities adapt in order to maintain provision of education to their children, as well as the potential of education to increase the resilience of communities experiencing armed conflict.

The publication then considers a number of specific security and stability issues where education has been used as part of the policy response. It looks at **violent extremism** and the academic evidence for the role that education has played in government counter-extremism strategies.

The report also looks at the role of education in the **post-conflict recovery process**, in providing young people with the skills needed to rebuild a country and in resetting relations between social groups and between the citizen and the state on a more inclusive and trusting basis. Case studies from Lebanon and Northern Ireland provide a look at two promising areas of peacebuilding education, critical thinking in the context of history teaching, and the use of 'contact activities' between schools to build trust between different communities.

Key lessons for programme policy are laid out in the following section, along with **potential models for future programmes** identified by the Mitchell Institute team. The publication ends with a set of **conclusions and recommendations** for strategic decision makers in government, the international security sector and academia.

Education can determine attitudes, values and behaviour across generations.

Potential benefits for peace and security

Education systems both shape and are shaped by the social and economic conditions of the countries in which they are located. They are an important point of interaction between citizen and state, as well as between different social groups. And the inequalities within a society which drive conflict may well be reproduced within its education system. Education therefore does not provide automatic benefit to security and stability outcomes – its impact is highly dependent on context and on how it interacts with a range of other social and economic measures.[5] Equally, education policies can be designed to help address these inequalities, and this can have a significant impact across society, given the role of schools as a vital point in both preparing young people for future careers, and in establishing social norms and a sense of collective identity.

In a context of conflict or fragility, education policy and programming interact with the drivers of conflict in multiple and complex ways. Education cannot guarantee improvements in peace and security when taken in isolation, and indeed can exacerbate conflict conditions. However, it has the potential to be part of the solution when considered alongside a wider range of social and economic measures. In their review of the academic literature the Mitchell Institute team highlighted two main areas of potential benefit – human development and human security values.[6]

Human development

Education is considered an essential element of human development. Literacy and schooling is central to the expansion of human capability, as recognised in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Education plays a vital role in a young person's transition to an independent and fulfilling adulthood and can directly improve the chances of finding employment and improving their social status. It can contribute to reduced job insecurity (a key conflict driver) and improved incomes. As a result, education features prominently in the 'greed or grievance' debate on the link between poverty and conflict. This research suggests that low-income countries with high youth populations are at greater risk of civil conflict,[7] but that, as enrolment in secondary education increases, the risk of conflict decreases.[8] The theory is that increased education levels lead to increased incomes, which make joining violent groups a less attractive option because the 'economic opportunity cost' is much higher.

The Mitchell Institute's research also found that education can make people more aware of their legal rights and better empowered to formulate their ideas and claims. This enables personal development and can reduce the chances of social unrest by giving young people the skills to solve problems peacefully through the established channels. It is particularly important for the promotion of gender quality.[9] At the macro-level, these benefits increase a society's resilience, providing it with the mechanisms to adapt to change, and to increase economic productivity competitiveness.

There's also a psychological dimension – participating in education and skills training can improve not only a young person's chances of employment, but also their sense of direction, hope and dignity.[10] Research from some of the British Council's own programmes in the Middle East and North Africa suggests that young people with higher levels of positive emotion in these areas have greater resilience and are less vulnerable to the pressures of conflict, such as recruitment into violent groups.[11]

5. Gallagher, T, Robinson, G, Hughes, J and Connolly, D (2018a) *Education in Conflict Affected Areas.* Belfast: Queen's University Belfast Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice.

6. Gallagher et al. (2018a) *op. cit.,* 2.

7. Rice, SE, Graff, C and Lewis, J (2006) *Poverty and Civil War: What Policymakers Need to Know.*

8. Collier, P and Hoeffer, A (2004) *Greed and Grievance in Civil War.* Oxford Economic Papers 56.

9. Gallagher et al. (2018a) *op. cit.,* 2.

10. Flint-Taylor, J and Stewart, S (2019) *Can education protect against violent extremism by building resilience?* London: British Council.

11. British Council (2018) *SDG 16: A Cultural Relations Contribution to Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions,* 92.

Human security values

Education also has a significant influence over the ability of different individuals and groups within a society to trust and work with each other. Sociologists and political scientists argue that this ability to co-operate depends upon the creation of 'social capital', meaning the links, shared values and understandings that hold a society together. Education plays an important role here because it is key to preserving human security values, [12] including democracy, justice, tolerance and freedom of expression. Some argue that it is the most fundamental factor in promoting human security, as 'it reinforces all the methods and strategies for improving socio-economic conditions and brings more and better possibilities to improving human rights and security'. [13]

Schools are one of the most important platforms for building social capital. They establish models of behaviour, values, beliefs and attitudes that can guide individuals to act in a way that creates a peaceful and positive environment.

The Mitchell Institute's research highlights how Europe's mass education systems were developed in the 19th century as part of the nation-building process, with the aim of providing individuals with a sense of common identity. [14] Over time, education systems have adapted to provide recognition of the more diverse cultural identities within modern society. The different approaches they adopt establish basic principles for interaction between the majority and minority in wider society. The narratives which children are taught in school about the 'other', and the language skills they acquire, will determine the way in which they integrate into society in later life.

Education is not just an important mediator between citizens, but also between citizen and state. The provision of education is regarded as a fundamental role of the state. A community is more likely to trust the government and regard it as legitimate if it is satisfied with the education that it provides. The World Bank–UN report *Pathways for Peace* underlines this point, adding that, when citizens regard the state as effective in protecting their rights and delivering services, they will see themselves as a part of public life and promote a sense of common well-being. [15] Countries and communities are more stable when they are governed by legitimate public authorities whose power is widely accepted and which meet people's priorities.

Ensuring equitable access to education and the protection of minority rights within the system can be particularly important in contexts where certain groups perceive that they are being marginalised. [16] This can help reduce grievances of injustice and fears of threatened cultural identity, which can erode trust in the state and fuel violence.

Key findings and implications

Education interventions can support security and stability outcomes if they are implemented in a way which reflects the complex and interconnected relationship between education, its local context and the dynamics of conflict. Policymakers seeking to promote security and stability in a given context should therefore seek to better understand its role and impact, and consider integrating it as an element of their planned interventions.

The education system is one of the most important platforms for building the norms and collective identity that hold a society together. Education has a role in mitigating conflict potential through long-term trust building, developing tolerance and support for human rights, and establishing individual and community resilience.

12. The UNDP introduced the concept of human security in 1994, shifting the term 'security' from its meaning of 'security of state territory from external aggression' towards human security, including 'safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression as well as protection from as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, jobs or communities'.

13. Lee, SW (2004) *Promoting Human Security: Ethical, Normative and Educational Frameworks in East Asia.* Korean National Commission for UNESCO.

14. Gallagher et al. (2018a) *op. cit.,* 4.

15. UN–World Bank Group (2018) *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.* UN–World Bank Group, 198.

16. Smith, A and Vaux, T (2003) *Education, Conflict and International Development.* London: DFID.
    Available online at: http://gsdrc.org/document-library/education-conflict-and-international-development/

Potential risks to peace and security

Education's fundamental role in human development has meant that it has often been misconceived as intrinsically benign. As the previous chapter outlined, education can indeed play an important role in the development of peaceful and stable societies. However, the academic literature review by the Mitchell Institute also demonstrated that education is not an unambiguous good, but can result in significant harm. As an institution of the state, the education system reflects the political and social context in which it operates, while at the same time playing an active role in shaping that context. In 2000 a landmark UNICEF study demonstrated 'the two faces of education', describing how certain education systems can entrench prejudice, politicise historical narratives and deepen existing divides within society.[17] This thinking has since become an established view within policy and academic communities.

Education has often played a role in inciting hatred, division and conflict. It can be used as a tool to foment divisions and tensions along religious, political, social and ethnic lines. Examples include the institutionalised discrimination of apartheid South Africa; legally enforced segregation in the southern states of the USA; the widespread advocacy of eugenics or 'race science' in the period before the Second World War; or in curriculums which go beyond the evocation of national pride and politicise history or combine it with the vilification of enemies, internal or external.[18] For example, if one ethnic or ideological group takes control of government, it can modify history curriculums to create a narrative in which its group takes a dominant role and in which other groups' roles are diminished. It can also seek to remove events or ideas that counter this narrative or are regarded as subversive.[19]

Schools have an important role in reproducing group identity and culture in the next generation – thus, in conflict situations, they can become a significant point of contestation between the state and minority groups. Policies which limit the use of minority language, traditions, religions and cultural values in schools can be perceived as threats to the continued existence of the group's distinct cultural identity. This has the potential to mobilise opposition and fuel violence.[20] The review cites several examples of education creating tensions which contributed to conflict. These include the 1976 uprising in South Africa which originated in peaceful protests against the introduction of Afrikaans as a compulsory medium of instruction; the Arabisation of missionary schools in southern Sudan after independence in 1964; and the Serbian government's restrictions on Albanian language education in Kosovo and Metohija in the 1990s.

17. Bush, K and Saltarelli, D (2000) *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education.* UNICEF.
18. Gallagher, T, Connolly, D, Hughes, J and Robinson, G (2018b) *Education and conflict literature review.* Queen's University Belfast Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Social Justice.
19. Brown, SG (1994) *The Role of the Curriculum in Education Rights For Minorities.* Minority Rights International–UNICEF.
20. Bush and Saltarelli, *op. cit.*

University staff take part in the British Council's Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development programme.

Developing a conflict-sensitive approach to education policy

The recognition of education's potential to play a negative role in fragile or conflict-affected states has led education practitioners to look for ways in which to mitigate against this. Developing a conflict-sensitive approach is a fundamental first step for international organisations to take when designing any education intervention in these contexts. The Mitchell Institute's research lays out some key principles for education practitioners operating in conflict-affected areas.

Conflict sensitivity is a set of processes that help recognise the unintended (positive and negative) contribution of all programmes and projects to conflict and peace. Conflict sensitivity involves systematically understanding the conflict through a conflict analysis, assessing how programming interacts with the conflict and the opportunities for peace, and revising programming based on this knowledge.[21] Conflict analysis is the foundation of conflict-sensitive practice. It involves identifying key elements of the conflict – its profile, causes, actors and dynamics – as well as the relationships between them. It is the first step in the conflict-sensitive approach to programming, laid out in guiding principles developed by the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (see box, right).[22]

Summary of INEE Guiding Principles on Conflict Sensitivity

1. Conduct an education and conflict analysis or assessment.
2. Do no harm.
3. Prioritise prevention.
4. Promote equity and the holistic development of the child as a citizen.
5. Stabilise, rebuild or build the education system.
6. Development partners should act fast, respond to change and stay engaged beyond short-term support.

Key findings and implications

The implication is therefore that education development should be pursued with care, for it is not the mere presence of teachers or schools, or students in classes, that leads to positive outcomes, but rather what students are taught, how they are taught, and how this might change the local dynamics, which is also of crucial significance.

Without proper planning there is a significant risk that apparently positive programmes will in fact exacerbate problems. Conflict-sensitive planning according to the INEE guiding principles should be adopted at the early stages of programme planning. Conflict analysis is a crucial first step in programme design, and will require in-depth local knowledge to ensure that the risk of exacerbating conflict is mitigated as far as possible.

21. 'Conflict sensitivity' has varied roots, including the work of DFID, USAID and the World Bank.
22. INEE Guiding Principles on Integrating Conflict Sensitivity in Education Policy and Programming in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts.

Education provision during conflict and crisis

Education and conflict interact on various levels. Education not only affects conflict dynamics, but is significantly affected by them. Conflict can damage the capacity of an education system to function properly, affecting access to and equity of provision, and damaging both the quality of education and management of schools. The Mitchell Institute illustrated these effects by looking at a case study of the education system in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).[23] It provides a good base of evidence with which to shed light on the multiple ways in which conflict can affect education.

Violence in the second half of the 1990s affected access to education due to a range of factors, including the increased isolation of rural communities, disrupted livelihoods forcing families to move to new areas, the recruitment of boys as child soldiers, and the use of rape as a weapon of war. Conflict-related issues, such as reduced living standards that reduce the productivity of teachers and students, and the reduction of or non-payment of teachers' salaries, have a detrimental effect on the quality of education.[24] The capacity of the state to enact reform was also reduced.

The DRC experience also highlighted the various ways in which education systems cope and adapt in response to conflict. Schools run by Christian missions have maintained their longstanding position as the most important education provider in the DRC, filling the vacuum left by the state, while parents have also sought to maintain schools with their own financing as state provision deteriorates further.[25]

The decision of parents in the DRC to prioritise their child's schooling even in the midst of conflict highlights some interesting points about the role of education. Demand for it remains high because families see education as a key route out of poverty. People demonstrate high levels of resilience and resourcefulness during conflict situations and other emergencies, and so find ways to ensure that education continues in some form. In turn, evidence suggests that education helps build resilience during crisis, by giving communities a sense of hope, direction and normality which can help them cope with the current crisis.

Key findings and implications

Education systems reflect broader fragilities and vulnerabilities of a society in conflict. War can therefore have a severe and long-term impact on education provision across a number of dimensions, notably access, quality, equity and management. This in turn can have a long-term impact on a country's development and recovery prospects.

In vulnerable and conflict-affected states international organisations should be aware that their education activities can be strategically compromised by the need to adapt to complex physical circumstances, leading to a significant shortfall in outcomes despite completion of activities and generation of outputs.

Policymakers looking at ways to support communities in conflict should consider a greater role for education alongside traditional humanitarian responses, as an important way of strengthening resilience, and of minimising the damage to a country's human capital, which is vital for post-conflict recovery.

23. Gallagher et al. (2018b) *op. cit.*

24. Cordaid (2013) *Projet d'Appui au Renforcement du Systeme Educatif à Travers le Financement Base sur la Performance dans les Ecoles des Territoires de Walungu et Shabunda au Sud Kivu.*

25. Public Group on Governance (2009) *Study on Governance Challenges for Education in Fragile Situations.* Available online at: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/

Harnessing education for peace: what works?

The emerging evidence reviewed for this paper demonstrates that education has significant potential benefits for security and stability. In recent years, policymakers in national governments and international institutions have increasingly sought to harness education to achieve specific security and stability outcomes, either by itself or as part of a wider range of social, economic and security measures. However, there is as yet no definitive answer as to 'what works'. In their review of the academic literature the Mitchell Institute found that academic evidence of the causal effectiveness or ineffectiveness of education interventions in supporting security and stability is weak, as the area has been under-researched and under-evaluated. However, it is likely that education, either alone or in combination with other activities, achieves some level of influence.

The following sections look at findings from the Mitchell Institute research on the academic evidence for the use and success of such programmes in two areas: violent extremism and post-conflict recovery.

Violent extremism

International efforts to combat terrorism since 9/11 have involved policies that aim to prevent young people from adopting extremist viewpoints that could lead to violence. The field is problematic and complex, not least because fundamental issues, such as a commonly agreed definition of 'extremism', or a causal link between extreme ideas and violence, have not been established. But policymakers have still invested in strategies that seek to make extreme ideas appear less attractive to groups considered at risk of recruitment to violent groups. Education has often formed part of these strategies due to its influence on the formation of young people's ideas and values.

The papers reviewed for this study showed no simple link between education and extremism. A lack of educational opportunity can fuel resentment, but well-educated youth can still carry out violence. For example, research by Gambetta and Hertog concluded that almost half of the jihadis recruited within the Middle East and North Africa region had higher education of some sort.[26] Further studies demonstrate a particular risk of providing young people with education, but failing to link this to ample employment opportunities. This can risk raising young people's expectations of advancement, and then creating a grievance when the expected job opportunities fail to appear, as well as giving them the skills to mobilise wider opposition to authority.[27]

Another risk factor related to education is related to curricula and teaching styles. Traditional education systems that emphasise rote learning can produce students with limited critical-thinking abilities, who are unable to look at a situation from a variety of perspectives, or distinguish between true and false arguments. This can make them more vulnerable to radical ideology and false narratives.[28] Peer group relations have also been identified as an important factor in radicalisation, with new members often recruited through informal family and social networks, including, on occasion, schools and universities.[29]

26. Gambetta, D and Hertog, S (2007) *Engineers of Jihad*. Sociology Working Papers Paper Number 2007-10. Oxford.

27. Mercy Corps (2016) *Critical Choices: Assessing the Effects of Education and Civic Engagement on Somali Youths' Propensity Towards Violence*. Mercy Corps.

28. Rose, M (2015) *Immunising The Mind: How education reform can contribute to neutralising violent extremism*. British Council.

This prominence of education in the current understanding of violent extremism has implications for the debate over how to design the most effective interventions to prevent violent extremism. Education has played a role in government counter-terrorism efforts in several countries. In a review of papers on programmes aimed at tackling violent extremism, the Mitchell Institute found that governments often include some type of educational activity. However, this is often not a single or even major component, but rather is part of a package of measures aimed at preventing radicalisation or at deradicalisation. [30]

Their research identified two broad approaches:

– **A security-based approach** focuses on those individuals believed to present a potential threat. These include 'upstream' programmes that identify those at risk of radicalisation and engage them with activities that seek to prevent that, as well as 'downstream' deradicalisation programmes that deal with those who have joined extremist groups. These are aimed at changing the mindset of radical recruits, to prevent them from carrying out further acts of terrorism. The reviews do not present strong evidence of success for these programmes, but highlight a number of different methods. [31] A Norwegian scheme targeted at jihadist recruits had a strong emphasis on integration, teaching immigrants the principles of a democratic society, as well as targeting prejudice and discrimination towards migrants. In the examples cited in Norway, France and the UK, educational institutions and community youth workers were responsible for identifying potential signs of radicalisation, and were instructed in how to spot these, and to respond with the appropriate counter-measures available.

– **An intercultural approach** is more holistic and focuses on quality education which promotes civic values, critical thinking and dialogue among all students (rather than a subset deemed to be at risk). This approach is based on the provision of quality education that creates a 'culture of peace and mutual respect' through fostering diversity, openness and engagement, and thereby reduces the risk of radicalisation. [32] It implies that educational institutions should reform curricula and pay increasing attention to building social civic skills.

The intercultural approach has stronger evidence of success, and is being increasingly reflected in international policy documents, such as the Council of Europe's approach to radicalisation, and the UN's Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism, which was a milestone in the international recognition of quality education as an essential component in preventative strategy. One advantage of this approach is its situating of individuals and the education system within their wider social context.

The emerging evidence demonstrates that education has significant potential benefits for security and stability.

29. Macaluso, A (2016) *From Countering to Preventing Radicalization Through Education: Limits and Opportunities: Working Paper 18*. The Hague Institute for Global Justice, Netherlands.

30. Gallagher et al. (2018b) *op. cit.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Fountain, S (1999) *Peace Education in UNICEF*. Working Paper. New York: UNICEF.
    Fink, NC, VeenKamp, I, Alhassen, W, Barakat, R and Zeiger, S (2013) *The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism*. Centre on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation.

Post-conflict recovery

As a society makes the transition out of conflict, the focus moves from containing the violence to creating the necessary conditions for long-term peace and recovery. This process involves not only addressing the underlying causes of conflict, but also rebuilding society in a way that is conducive to peace. This can be highly challenging in contexts where education may have been disrupted or even 'weaponised' in conflict. However, as a key public institution which generates both social and human capital, recovery of the education system is central to the wider recovery and reconstruction process. It also provides an opportunity to 'build back better', carrying out reforms to improve the education system and address inequalities that have been driving the instability.[33] The heightened importance of education in the post-conflict period was highlighted in the Mitchell Institute research, which found that, while education is not seen as a top priority, it does appear to have significance in the process of forging peace deals and in securing peace in the longer term. Education features in half of the 31 intrastate peace agreements agreed between 1989 and 2015, listed on an international index of peace accords.[34]

The right education investments and reforms can support economic recovery and violence reduction by providing young people with the skills that the country needs to rebuild; provide a focus and sense of direction for former militants and other young men at risk of recruitment; and help redefine social relationships along more equitable and peaceful lines.[35] Civic education, both within formal and informal education settings, is another important dimension to consider in post-conflict recovery. It can support efforts to promote human rights, gender equality and other values and attitudes regarded as essential for building norms of inclusion and peace, as civic education programmes in Iraq and Sudan have shown.[36]

Equally, badly designed policies can risk exacerbating unresolved areas of conflict. Disagreements over the design and delivery of education can be an important source of tension between groups. The Mitchell Institute research suggests that if minorities perceive that they are being denied their rights to teach their children their history, language and culture, they might perceive this as a threat to their existence. But, if they are able to take ownership of the design and delivery of it, then this is less likely to be the case.[37] In the post-conflict period,

these findings suggest that the priority should be given to ensuring equitable access to education and quality education, as part of efforts to create a sustainable, just society.[38] Such policies can help build citizens' trust in the state and improve their sense of inclusion and belonging within the new order.

The Mitchell Institute research found that academic evidence for a clear cause-and-effect relationship between education and improved security and stability outcomes is mixed at best, and that the evidence base itself is small. Two areas where they found stronger evidence of positive results were critical thinking and contact theory, which are illustrated in the following case studies from Lebanon and Northern Ireland.

Case Study 1: critical thinking and history in Lebanon

Peacebuilding requires enabling citizens 'to think critically about the present and the past, so they can foresee and construct a better future', according to research papers reviewed by the Mitchell Institute.[39] In Lebanon, the teaching of history remains controversial following the civil war (1975–90) and is considered a challenge to social cohesion. Efforts to agree a unified national history curriculum have been met with frequent opposition since the end of the civil war. With this context in mind, the British Council launched the Teaching Divided Histories programme in Lebanon, a model developed by an educational organisation, the Nerve Centre, in and for Northern Ireland, but which has been adapted for other countries recovering from a period of violence. In Lebanon, the programme uses digital technologies to introduce novel curriculum-linked approaches for history education. It trained teachers in a range of creative and practical digital skills to use in the classroom with the aim of teaching young people to engage critically with issues of conflict and division. A review of the programme by the Mitchell Institute found that, by focusing on Northern Ireland and other international contexts, the programme was able to engage students with materials that '[weren't] directly personal or directly relatable to them,' making it easier to discuss conflict in the classroom.[40] Anecdotal evidence indicated improved critical thinking, problem solving and readiness to discuss the Lebanese conflict. There were also indications that the programme has supported the growth of a professional community willing to engage in the reform of history teaching.

33. www.ineesite.org/en/education-for-peacebuilding

34. Joshi, M and Wallensteen, P (2015) *Peace Accords Matrix Implementation Dataset*. The Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame.

35. Justino, P and Santos, R (2013) 'Employment and Household Welfare', in Mac Ginty, R (ed) *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*. Abingdon.

36. Levine, DH, Bishai, LS and United States Institute of Peace (2010) *Civic Education and Peacebuilding: Examples from Iraq and Sudan. Special Report 254*. United States Institute of Peace.

37. Gallagher et al. (2018b) *op. cit.*

38. Smith, A (2005) Education in the twenty-first century: Conflict, reconstruction and reconciliation. *Compare* 35/4: 373–391.

39. Ramírez-Barat, C and Duthie, R (eds) (2017) *Transitional Justice and Education: Learning Peace*. New York: Social Science Research Council.

40. Gallagher et al. (2018b) *op. cit.*

Case Study 2: contact theory and shared education in Northern Ireland

Contact theory asserts that positive contact between members of negatively stereotyped groups can lead to improved social attitudes towards the group as a whole, providing certain conditions are met, including equal status between the groups, the presence of common goals and a form of contact that facilitates potential friendships.[41] There is a strong evidence base to support contact theory – a meta-evaluation of more than 500 studies, involving over 250,000 participants, reported a consistent and definitive association between contact and reduction in prejudice towards the wider group.[42]

In Northern Ireland, a number of approaches have been adopted, with contact programmes and integrated schools seen as important components of peacebuilding. Contact interventions typically offer one-off and short-term opportunities for children from schools with predominantly Catholic or Protestant enrolments to come together for activity-based encounters and/or excursions. The 'shared education' approach goes further by aiming to promote more sustained and curriculum-based encounter via inter-school partnerships. Schools collaborate across denominational and sectoral (separate and integrated) lines to offer lessons or activities for mixed groups of students, with contact usually occurring at least weekly over a year or more.[43]

Short-term contact projects in Northern Ireland have been reported as sometimes potentially exacerbating stereotypes. By contrast, the regular and sustained encounter offered by integrated and shared education has been more effective. When compared with peers attending denominational schools, pupils in integrated schools have been found to have more positive attitudes towards the out group, more moderate positions on political and constitutional issues, and greater respect for the other group's culture and religion.[44]

Key findings and implications

Education has an important role to play in efforts to prevent radicalisation. However, it is unlikely to be effective in isolation, and must be considered as one element of a wider package of measures.

An intercultural approach connects individuals and the education system to their wider social context and promotes a culture of dialogue, openness and diversity of thought throughout an education institution. This is more likely to produce beneficial results than an information campaign targeted narrowly at one group of students deemed to be at risk.

The dynamics of radicalisation and violent extremism vary significantly between different cultures and contexts, and from individual to individual. The simple translation of a programme from one country to another is unlikely to be successful. Understanding the specific causes in each context is key to understanding the role that education programmes can play in the solution.

Education plays a vital part in post-conflict recovery, helping rebuild both human and social capital. However, programmes must be well designed to address the specific local conditions and to avoid exacerbating unresolved conflicts.

In contexts where divided communities operate separate schools, shared education activities can be effective in encouraging more favourable cross-group attitudes if they are sustained over the long term, and have a structured approach.

After civil conflict, inequalities in the provision of education between different groups should be addressed and minority rights recognised. Enabling these groups to take ownership of the design and delivery of their education can help advance a sense of inclusion and trust in the new system.

History teaching is a particularly contested area after civil conflict and should be approached with sensitivity. Schools should be supported to use an 'intercultural approach' based on critical thinking, dialogue and openness to recognise and engage with different narratives.

41. Allport, G (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice.* Basic Books. Pettigrew, TF (1998) Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology* 49.

42. Pettigrew, TF and Tropp, LR (2006) A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90/5: 751–783.

43. Gallagher, T (2016) *Shared education in Northern Ireland: school collaboration in divided societies. Oxford Review of Education* 42/3: 362–375.

44. Hayes, BC, McAllister, I and Dowds, L (2007) Integrated education, intergroup relations, and political identities in Northern Ireland. *Social Problems* 54/4.

Key lessons for international education organisations

International education programmes create a wide range of positive outcomes for individuals, communities and societies in fragile and conflict-affected states. However, many are not designed or implemented with the conscious intention of achieving outcomes understood to improve security and stability in those areas. This means that, at best, the outcomes for security and stability are unintended ones – and, at worst, that they risk unintentionally exacerbating particular causes of conflict.

The key purpose of this research was to help the British Council and other international education organisations understand how their programmes could be adapted to produce clear and appropriate outcomes for security and stability in these contexts. The British Council has drawn a number of key lessons from the research covering design, implementation and evaluation of programmes, and possible models which the British Council and other international education providers could use to support security and stability.

Lesson 1: putting conflict analysis at the heart of programme design

Before programme design begins, sufficient analysis of the conflict situation should be carried out. This should aim to understand the dynamics of the context within which it is proposed to develop an intervention, to estimate the potential consequences of the project at different stages, and to identify any unintended ways in which the project could do harm so that mitigation can be put in place. The UK Department for International Development and the INEE have produced helpful guidelines and toolkits for practitioners. The INEE's guidelines recommend a series of points for analysis:

- the broad conflict status or risk of conflict
- the historical links between education and conflict
- how conflict affects education
- how education might contribute to conflict
- how education can mitigate the conflict dynamics
- a mapping of the basic factors, actors, dynamics and developments of the conflict.[45]

Lesson 2: build a strategic framework – and keep to it

Creating a strategic framework can help programmes achieve desired security and stability goals or other strategic objectives. This is particularly important in a large international organisation such as the British Council where there can be a risk of disconnection between project teams and strategic management around objectives.

Programmes need to adapt to the local context as well as to changes in intent or circumstances over the lifespan of a programme. If they are situated within a strategic framework then this will reduce the risk of a shift away from the intended objectives during the process of local adaption and delivery.

These objectives should be incorporated into the design of every level of the intervention. It should be made familiar to all those working on the programme, and they should understand their particular role in delivering it. Developing a robust logic model or theory of change can help identify the steps along the path from the conflict issues identified in the initial analysis, to programme response, expected outcomes, higher-level impact and the wider strategic objective. This process can help ensure detailed discussion on the nature and efficacy of these steps.

International education organisations could consider drawing on well-established strategic frameworks, such as the Tool for Democratic School Development and the 4Rs approach (see box and Figure 1 opposite).

45. INEE *Conflict Sensitive Education Guiding Principles*. Available online at: www.ineesite.org/en/conflict-sensitive-education

46. European Wergeland Centre (2016) *Democracy and Human Rights at School: A Baseline Study.* Oslo.

47. Gallagher et al. (2018b) *op. cit.*

48. Novelli, M, Lopes Cardozo, MTA and Smith, A (2017) The 4Rs Framework: Analyzing Education's Contribution to Sustainable Peacebuilding with Social Justice in Conflict-Affected Contexts. *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 3/1.
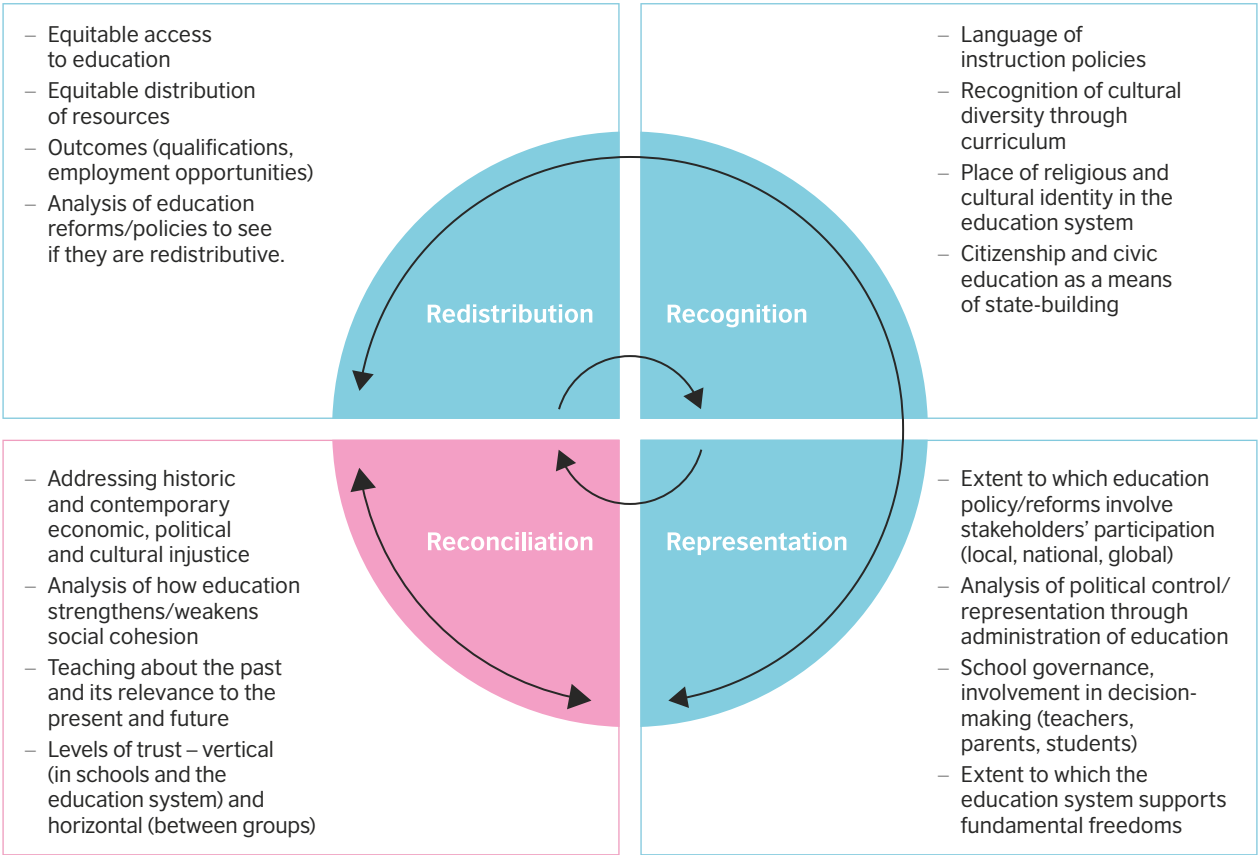
The Tool for Democratic School Development

The Tool for Democratic School Development provides a framework for project activity and evaluation, and aligns its strategic objectives with the principles set out in the 'Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education of the Council of Europe'.[46] The tool is focused on three main areas: governance, teaching and learning, and partnership with local communities. It sets out 28 specific quality standards for schools, with a large number of indicators which can be used to track progress. Insight on pedagogical approaches, case studies of good practice and examples of curriculum development in support of the charter are available in accompanying publications. The Mitchell Institute report presents a detailed case study of how this framework was used to implement democratic citizenship education in Ukrainian schools.[47]

The 4Rs approach

The 4Rs framework provides another possible model for linking education programmes to security and stability outcomes.[48] The Mitchell Institute research highlighted this model as providing a theoretical approach for education programmes in conflict areas to support peacebuilding and social justice objectives. Linked to the global citizenship tradition, it offers potential to tackle issues including employment, inequalities, diversity and the tackling of injustices past and present (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Sustainable peacebuilding in education: the 4RS analytical framework (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith)

- Equitable access to education
- Equitable distribution of resources
- Outcomes (qualifications, employment opportunities)
- Analysis of education reforms/policies to see if they are redistributive.

Redistribution

- Language of instruction policies
- Recognition of cultural diversity through curriculum
- Place of religious and cultural identity in the education system
- Citizenship and civic education as a means of state-building

Recognition

- Addressing historic and contemporary economic, political and cultural injustice
- Analysis of how education strengthens/weakens social cohesion
- Teaching about the past and its relevance to the present and future
- Levels of trust – vertical (in schools and the education system) and horizontal (between groups)

Reconciliation

Representation

- Extent to which education policy/reforms involve stakeholders' participation (local, national, global)
- Analysis of political control/ representation through administration of education
- School governance, involvement in decision-making (teachers, parents, students)
- Extent to which the education system supports fundamental freedoms

Lesson 3: integrate evaluation within your strategic framework

Evaluation of programmes with peacebuilding or security and stability outcomes can be challenging. Conflicts are complex, dynamic and driven by a multiple range of factors, many of which are beyond the scope of an educational programme response. In addition, the understanding of what works is still limited.

However, a rigorous evaluation model for evaluating work in the field can be created if two building blocks are in place – a solid conflict analysis, which identifies the conflict drivers or mitigating factors that education has the ability to address; and a coherent strategic framework built on the principles outlined above. The British Council has developed a results and evidence framework which provides a central reference for developing evaluation indicators and planning future work.

Where possible, evaluation should occur at each stage of the intervention. Policymakers should also be ready to engage with experimental methods of evaluation.

Successful evaluation will also require a realistic assessment at the outset of what outcomes are possible given the particular situation of conflict and fragility in the programme area. In vulnerable and conflict-affected states, education activities can be strategically compromised by the need to adapt to complex physical circumstances, leading to a significant shortfall in outcomes despite completion of activities and generation of outputs.

Lesson 4: align with national government strategies where possible

National governments often have greater influence over shaping the conditions that are conducive to conflict or peace than external actors. International education organisations can therefore increase the impact of their activities if they seek to align them with national and local strategies that engender peace, security and stability. This may be through supporting policy dialogues on education for employment, bringing in relevant international expertise to build the capacity of teachers, or integrating citizenship education into mainstream school systems. Supporting national governments with teacher training for peacebuilding purposes is an area where international organisations can add value. Such programmes depend upon teachers who have been trained in effective classroom practice and skills development.

Key findings and implications

International education organisations seeking to maximise the potential benefits of their programmes for security and stability should consider a number of key lessons emerging from this research:

– put conflict analysis at the heart of programme design
– build a strategic framework – and keep to it
– integrate evaluation within your strategic framework
– align with national government strategies where possible.

These benefits can be further maximised by drawing on some well-established models for peace education, which can be adapted to the local context.

Working with national governments can produce impact at scale, and the British Council should take advantage of its trusted relationships with ministries in many countries to support them with education reforms that are beneficial for conflict mitigation and peacebuilding.

Conclusion and recommendations

As a public institution which shapes social norms and collective identity, education has a clear role to play in promoting security and stability. This research has demonstrated its potential benefits for ameliorating conflict risk, through long-term trust-building, and through encouraging the values of democratic citizenship, such as tolerance, respect for diversity, critical thinking and human rights. During conflict a student's participation in a regular cycle of education has benefits for community as well as individual resilience. Following the end of violence, the fragile redevelopment process requires strong and appropriately managed educational input. Well-designed interventions can help rebuild both human and social capital in a way which sets a country on the path to sustainable peace.

Programme design is critical. Education is not a 'silver bullet' or unqualified good, but can reinforce inequalities and exacerbate instability in certain circumstances. International education interventions are likely to provide most benefit when carried out with a conflict-sensitive approach that is rooted in an understanding of the local context, and when integrated into a broader strategic framework of measures that promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

There are no simple answers on the link between education and conflict, and the area requires much more research to build a solid evidence base on 'what works'. Yet, it is clear that education can and often does make a positive difference in conflict-affected contexts.

This research has identified a range of models that can be used to maximise education's potential for peace and security. International cultural relations organisations such as the British Council are in a particularly strong position to harness these models, given their education programming expertise and position of trust with governments and education institutions in many fragile and conflict-affected states. They should therefore consider integrating security and stability outcomes into their programmes in these areas. For their part, policymakers in national governments and international institutions should seek to integrate education into a 'whole of society' approach to promoting sustainable peace and security.

Recommendations

To international education providers
– All interventions should adopt a locally sensitive and iterative approach that recognises the constantly changing context in which education operates.
– Education interventions should be considered as part of a wider package of measures, rather than in isolation.
– International organisations should be aware that their education activities can be strategically compromised by the need to adapt to complex physical circumstances.
– International programmes should be situated within a strategic framework to reduce the risk of a shift away from intended objectives during local adaption and delivery.

To governments supporting international development
– Support more academic research into potential of education to mitigate conflict.
– Commit to longer-term funding cycles to enable programmes to address the root causes of conflict.
– Improve flexibility and innovation in monitoring and evaluation to provide greater recognition of programmes which produce more intangible benefits (e.g. changing of values, mindset and social trust).
– Explore intercultural approaches that promote a culture of dialogue, openness and diversity as a promising approach to the prevention of violent extremism.
– After civil conflict, ensure educational inequalities between different groups are addressed and minority rights recognised, in order to advance inclusion and trust in the system.

To national governments in fragile and conflict-affected states
– Policymakers seeking to promote security and stability in a given context should consider integrating education in their interventions.
– Governments should consider education reconstruction as early as possible, as a key platform for addressing root causes of conflict and driving recovery.
– Schools should be supported to use an 'intercultural approach' based on critical thinking, dialogue and openness to recognise and engage with different narratives.

To international NGOS
– Humanitarian organisations should consider a greater role for education alongside traditional humanitarian responses, to help strengthen the resilience of individuals and communities, and protect the human capital vital for post-conflict recovery.
– Further investment should be made in research collaboration between educationalists and conflict and security experts to address research gaps and provide clearer evidence as to 'what works'.

Young people stand
by a wall mural
commemorating
the *Titanic* in Belfast,
Northern Ireland.