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# **The Role of Higher Education in Peacebuilding – An Interplay of Global Education Norms and Local Contexts**

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## **Declaration**

I, Iulia Beleuta, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree

**Signature**.....

**Date**.....





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## **Abstract**

Education and peacebuilding are two research fields that have been mainly intersecting paths in the last two decades. Policies, international agendas, initiatives, programmes, did not completely caught up with the demand for interaction between education and peacebuilding, but within primary and secondary education, some advances have been registered. Notwithstanding, higher education is barely present in this discussions and it is the aim here to demonstrates that it deserves more attention.

This thesis investigates therefore the potential role higher education can play in peacebuilding architecture and interventions, while at the same time, it seeks to inspire towards further research. Drawing upon sociological institutionalism insights in International Relations, the thesis places a particular emphasis on the way global education norms influence higher education in peacebuilding. Exploring both the effects global norms have on higher education in fragile context, and identifying what characterizes local contexts during peacebuilding interventions, the research found a discrepancy between the realities of implementing education initiatives in fragile contexts, and the necessities of peacebuilding approaches, but also uncovered the potential in designing programmes that combine the two.

This thesis presents the results of qualitative research, where the primary data, defined by three case studies, is combined with in-depth literature review and theoretical insights, with the aim of creating a map of a complex and dynamic, yet under-researched field. Exploring India as a historical case, Sierra Leone as a country where peacebuilding is largely considered a success, and Afghanistan, as a case where peacebuilding interventions have not reached their goals, the thesis attempts to contribute to the yet limited academic debate on the role of higher education in peacebuilding.



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## **List of Abbreviations**

AUAF	American University of Afghanistan
BCL	Basic Competency Learning
BTS	Back-to-School
CREPS	Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools
DDR	Demobilization Disarmament and Reintegration
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EFA	Education for All
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EU	European Union
G7	The Group of 7
GCPEA	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institution
IDP	Internally Displaced People
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IO	International Organizations
IR	International Relations
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MGIEP	Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Education of Peace and Sustainable Development
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PBC	Peace Building Commission
SCI	Save the Children International
SEA II	Strengthening Education in Afghanistan II
TE	Teacher Education
TET	Teacher Eligibility Test
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone



UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



# 1. Introduction

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

*Nelson Mandela*

The world, as we experience it today, is the result of centuries of transformation and evolution. From inter-state relationship, to battles over territories, to spheres of influence and balance of power, to climate challenge, population displacement, economic inequality, and cultural and religious belonging, the international system is complex and faces a myriad of challenges. The academic literature even coined a generic name for the frame which encompasses all these challenges - globalisation. Scholars present many arguments in its favour, with Baylis, Smith and Owens for example, naming economic transformation and development, communication development, and awareness for global risks as some of them (Baylis et al. 2014). Scholars also translate the positive effects of globalisation into a variety of elements, like interdependent economies, trade and financing expanding; easiness to communicate and witness events that take place in opposite corners of the globe; common efforts to combat global risks, like pollution, climate change, epidemics; an emerging global polity, with an increased interaction state-international bodies (Baylis et al. 2014: 11). There are also, of course, negatives sides to globalisation: unevenness of its effects, difficulty to distinguish between good and bad globalised forces, the paradox of the “Western triumph” (Baylis et al. 2014: 10-12), but these are not subjects of discussion here.

Education, on the other hand, is both a main topic for this thesis, and an area affected by globalisation. Long-time confined between national borders, a ‘domestic’ activity unconnected to the international system, education has slowly, but surely, fallen under the influence of globalisation. Today, curricula are more and more standardised, education policies bear the mark of international organisations, and institutions are built and structured on similar organizational models. Through Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948<sup>1</sup>, education found itself recognised as a basic human right, thus securing the status of ‘global’ topic. After almost six decades of international recognition as one of the basic human rights, education should, therefore, not face any challenges in playing a central role on the international stage.

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<sup>1</sup> UN, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education did become a global issue, to a certain extent<sup>2</sup>. In other words, education is now present as a topic in international fora, conferences, summits, where world leaders, policy makers, and education programmers work together towards reaching global education goals. Nevertheless, even when the UN, and other organisations, such as UNESCO and UNICEF, recognize and endorse its importance, education is still widely denied to citizens in many regions of the world.

It is common knowledge that war-torn countries, poor regions, post-conflict zones, population displacement processes, areas rammed by natural disasters, all struggle with meeting the demands and needs for education. Scholars, international organizations, and world leaders admit that education is important, as it can be a tool to mitigate conflicts, help economic and social development, and reduce social disparities (UNICEF 2011). By signing agendas like Education 2030, Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which aim to ensure universal education and lifelong learning opportunities, and mandating organisations like UNESCO, UNICEF (responsible for implementing them), the UN oversees these education goals are met and world governments admit that education has a fundamental role for present and future generations (UNICEF 2011).

Policymakers and scholars alike assume that education can help the process of rebuilding nations and can be a valuable peacebuilding tool (Smith et al. 2011, UN 2010). For instance, an online article published by NORAD in 2011 (updated in 2016) notes: “(...) rebuilding and stabilization has a serious problem if a whole generation of adolescents and young adults lack basic knowledge, vocational training and higher education.” (NORAD 2016). David E. Bloom (in Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard 2004, ch. 3) underlines the importance of education in the developing and globalized world, by showing that education has a central role in “promoting good health, environmental protection, and sustainable development. Much progress has been made in implementing these international commitments” (in Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard 2004, 56-57). In a sense, peacebuilding through education has been employed as a tool for decades, to different degrees of success (Smith et al. 2011), although the value of higher education has never been properly explored.

Despite these facts, education in general, and higher education in special, are still only considered, at best, soft politics. Some direct consequences are that funding and human resources allocated are never enough, programme development is not given priority, or, as it is

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO 2000, Education for All, Education 2030, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/>

shown later in the thesis, education is not specifically considered in security and peacebuilding architecture. So why is education not higher up on global political agendas?

Generally speaking, international headlines focus on issues like war on terror, security and economic partnerships, peace deals, balance of power. For example, most part of national budgets and international organisations' budgets (IO) go to military expenditures and only a small percentage are dedicated to education (World Bank s.a.). Undoubtedly, when countries like the US are setting financial agendas and give priority to the military sector, it sets examples in the international community. The fact that important leadership summits, like the G7<sup>3</sup>, do not put emphasis on education issues, is again a marker for how the subject is marginalized in the global political processes. Generally, where indeed education is considered, it seems the international focus is relatively restricted, for example only to restoring access to basic education. Indeed, main efforts are not focused on higher education. A World Bank report published in 2005 underlines this aspect: "Much of the energy and resources of the international community have been directed at basic education, while education authorities have been left to their own resources to deal with the needs of the other subsectors." (Buckland 2005: 63). The report finds some implications and reasons for this, such as the fact that "Delays in reconstruction of basic education will have long and lasting impacts on the system as a whole" and that "It is also considerably easier to draw on community initiatives and resources in the reconstruction of primary education than in other subsectors" (Buckland 2005: 63).

The fact that higher education in peacebuilding does not feature more prominently in either academic literature, nor in programme implementation, shows how little higher education is considered. This is a matter of concern, as the potential one can draw from looking at how higher education can help conflicted or post-conflict societies, is huge. Lynn Davies underlines very well the unused potential of higher education in crisis explaining that "is uncomfortable for policymakers and curriculum makers (...)" and "it is safer to focus on literacy and numeracy, on the number of desks and achievements of measurable targets" (Davies, 2004: 7). Some attention is indeed given to how conflict and post-conflict can affect education (including higher education)<sup>4</sup>, but not enough to show how higher education can be employed in these circumstances.

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<sup>3</sup> The Group of 7 (G7) is a summit consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, and the United States, with participation of the European Union.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, Education under Attack 2007/2010/2014

It is largely acknowledged that ‘education and conflict’ (generically called education in emergencies) has emerged as a field of study in the past two decades<sup>5</sup>. While with the launch of modern international developmental aid, some attention and funding have been given to education in disfavoured areas, it is really only more recently that education in emergencies has been accepted and instituted as a field of its own (Burde, Kapit, Wahl, Given and Skarpeteig, 2016). Employed in any types of crises, from natural disasters to man-provoked ones, education can be an efficient tool for rebuilding nations, societies, and peace. While the academic research and literature is slowly covering gaps in the field of education in emergencies, the connection between higher education and peacebuilding is largely absent.

So how is higher education, in the context presented above, relevant for the field of International Relations (IR)? Martha Finnemore has a clear explanation towards this: education is the “arena in which states create citizens” (1996: 335), and national education systems are structured by common ideological order (shared cultural and normative understandings) (1996: 336-337). From an IR perspective, the connection between higher education and peacebuilding should be found in the interaction of global norms and local contexts. Education, as embedded within a global normative system, and peacebuilding, strongly anchored in local practices and norms, do not represent the most compatible concepts to analyse together. Notwithstanding, both are important concepts for the field of IR, the connection between the two is hardly researched, and as such, is identified in this thesis as a gap in the academic literature, therefore an interesting IR topic.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

By analysing how higher education and peacebuilding are connected in three case studies, this thesis attempts to bridge a gap between the fields of higher education and peacebuilding. The academic research and literature on this topic is scarce and due to practical challenges, empirical data is often not available. As a result, there is little information on how higher education is part of peacebuilding processes and whether this represents an advantage or not. A report commissioned by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE 2010: 5) underlines the existence of a complexity of factors, which can influence the outcomes of education programming: “social conditions associated with conflict and fragility further affect the delivery of education services in nuanced ways”.

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<sup>5</sup> While education was a topic on humanitarian aid agendas already in the second half of the 20th century, the field of education in emergencies emerged in 1990s (Sinclair 2007).

Global norms and ideas became embedded in education as the field evolved through the years to be more and more similar around the world (Meyer, Ramirez, Frank and Schofer 2008). This isomorphism is detailed in the theoretical chapter, but it can be already noted here that for their vast majority, higher education institutions are based increasingly on ‘Western’ models. Education programmes are developed based on liberal arts models, administrative structures resemble across the countries, literacy programmes follow similar curricula, to mention just some examples of how the field is morphing into one global institution. Peacebuilding interventions, on the other hand, are programmed around local contexts and might come therefore in conflict with the ‘globalised’ education policies. For example, while teacher-training programmes are widely recommended in fragile contexts, to ensure reestablishment of education systems and fulfil global literacy goals, in practice, as it will be shown in the Afghanistan case study, they do not always bypass local cultural norms - lack of female professors leads to lack of female teachers, and in turn, to lack of education for girls. Two of the research questions inform these issues, by taking into account global norms embedded into higher education and keeping in mind the importance of local contexts in developing educational infrastructure in fragile contexts.

The way education is perceived also has important effects on the relationship between providers of education in emergencies and its recipients. The INEE report speaks to this when it resumes scholarly work: “(...) education systems have the symbolic value of (re)establishing state legitimacy in the eyes of the population (...) education can alter or entrench structural patterns (...)” (2010: 9). Scholars like Milton and Barakat also identify the gap in the field, namely that how higher education can be employed in post-war recovery has not been exploited in the past, compared to the attention which has been given to modalities of protecting or rebuilding higher education systems affected by conflicts (2016: 403-404). Based on such scholarly approaches, in-depth literature review, empirical examples, and in order to delineate the gap in the field, and determine a clear scope for this thesis, the following research questions were devised:

- *What is the role of higher education in peacebuilding?*
- *What global norms characterise higher education systems in peacebuilding context?*
- *How are local contexts considered in the (re)construction of higher education institutions, within a peacebuilding approach?*

In answering the above-mentioned questions, this thesis aims at bringing to light two aspects. The complexity of the field on one hand, and the potential benefits policy makers and/or program implementers could extract from it, by considering it an important topic on

international agendas, on the other hand. As the thesis examines in particular how, and if, higher education is used in planning and implementation of peacebuilding, the empirics will benefit from a three-country case study. The first country, India, represents a historical view, the second country, Sierra Leone, represents an example of fulfilled peacebuilding process, while the third case study, Afghanistan, represents ongoing peacebuilding process. Of course, the concepts of higher education, education in crisis and the concept of peacebuilding are complex terms, and this makes it more difficult to generalise any findings in the thesis. The intricate nature of the terms is detailed in the relevant chapter, as the concepts are encountered throughout the thesis. Nevertheless, the research questions serve as guide and springboards for the data collection and analysis, and for discussing the findings, and as such, they inform the rest of the thesis.

## **1.2 Relevance of the Research Topic**

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on education and peacebuilding and analyse why the field of higher education is not sufficiently studied, researched and represented in the peacebuilding discussions. The fact that throughout the history of humanity, both conflicts and education have been a constant (granted, to different extents, but nonetheless permanent features of chronicles), and that higher education is an omnipresent feature in most modern-day societies, underline all the more how important it is to consider the effects these two fields have on each other. Conflict and state fragility present a combination of economic, governance, and social factors, which directly influence education (INEE 2010: 5-6). Nevertheless, researching this influence from the opposite direction can prove beneficial for fragile and conflicted states.

Scholars researching the field of education in emergencies agree that education can also work as a stabilizing factor, a potential source for conflict mitigation, for state-building, societal reconstruction etc., all the while with a main focus on primary and secondary education (Sinclair 2007). It is therefore even more important that a link between higher education and peacebuilding is discovered and established.

The thesis is relevant in that it helps clarify the role higher education plays in societies directly or indirectly affected by conflicts, and analyses how higher education is employed in peacebuilding processes. Its importance to IR is reflected in the potential role it can play in conflict mitigation, state-building, empowerment, and, as the title states, in peacebuilding. It is therefore fair to state that international players and power holders should confer the field of higher education and peacebuilding a more solid role and use.



### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

This thesis bases its findings on a qualitative research design, and this characteristic is detailed in the methodology chapter. It draws on data obtained from various sources, such as policy papers, country reports, and official databases, from three case studies and empirical research, as well as from in-depth literature review. Furthermore, due to the lack of sufficient academic literature and research, I used grey literature to a certain extent, in the form of NGO reports and reviews, while keeping in mind that grey literature is often partial and is commissioned with a particular agenda in mind.

Overall, as stated in the sections above, the study focuses on the role higher education plays in the recovery of conflict-affected nations, where peacebuilding is involved. At the same time, the thesis argues that higher education's role is under-researched. A stronger focus on higher education and peacebuilding could shed light on how rebuilding institutional capacity in fragile contexts, helping social development and sustaining social cohesion, boosting economic development and possibly contributing to instituting the rule of law, can help to make the effects of peacebuilding strategies longer lasting and more positive.

The thesis does not intend to be a comprehensive study about the field of higher education and peacebuilding. As such, the case studies are chosen to underline its diversity and complexity. Given the scarcity of empirical data, and the difficulty to conduct research in the field, the thesis will take a slight historical approach, also with the scope to bring to light the limitations and the insufficiency of the academic research in this context. As such, the thesis is looks at how higher education and peacebuilding are intertwined, if at all, and what outcomes this relationship might have in practice.

### **1.4 Thesis Outline**

The thesis is divided into six main chapters. The Introduction placed the issue of higher education and peacebuilding on a general framework and presented the research questions, together with the relevance of the topic. The second chapter (Theoretical and Conceptual Framework) sets the structure for the thesis, and marks a starting point for analysis. The chapter makes the case on why a neo-institutionalist approach (more specifically, sociology's institutionalism) is employed in the thesis, but also points towards the weaknesses of this theoretical approach. This also speaks on the fragility and novelty of the field, with the lack of research, valid and reliable data and lack of a solid theoretical base that comes with it. In the thesis, the importance of norms and their conceptualisation form the ground on which the

research questions are anchored, and also delineates the differences between programme implementation in higher education and peacebuilding. Also peacebuilding, education, and higher education are analysed and conceptualised in chapter two. The third chapter (Methodology) highlights the research plan, the process of data collection, its analysis and the limitations. Chapter four introduces the case studies, which, as mentioned before, are selected not to confer a generalisation and a comprehensive view of higher education and peacebuilding, but for the purpose of highlighting the complexity and also limitations of the field. For every one of the country studies, three sections are devised: introducing them, placing them into a global framework and then looking at the local implementation of higher education and peacebuilding. The fifth chapter (Findings and Discussions) addresses the concrete research problem of this thesis and looks at what is actually, on a deeper level, the connection between higher education and peacebuilding. The discussion section also examines why higher education should matter and raise questions on why it is not more often talked about and employed in peacebuilding strategies. At last, chapter six summarizes the main findings and makes the case that a link between higher education and peacebuilding has not been fully established yet, nor adopted in academic and research circles, by neither programme developers or programme implementers. This gap between the two fields should be bridged if modern society is to harvest long-lasting effects of its peacebuilding approach.

## **2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

To answer the research questions presented in the introduction chapter, this thesis makes use of sociological institutionalism. In IR, this is one of the few branches of theory that has explicitly dealt with the role of education in global politics. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to show how higher education makes its way into the international system, and ultimately in the planning and implementation of international peacebuilding efforts. Hence, the theoretical framework which best serves this purpose is embodied by sociological institutionalism. However, before I go on to present and analyse the theoretical approach, it is necessary to describe and explain the main concepts used in this thesis. The following section aims at defining peacebuilding, education, education in emergencies, and higher education and embed them within the theoretical discussion.

### **2.1 Conceptual Framework**

#### **2.1.1 Peacebuilding**

The concept of peacebuilding was unveiled in 1992, with Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *UN Agenda for Peace*. In the document, post-conflict peacebuilding is defined as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict" (UNSG 1992). Other authors define peacebuilding as a "complex historical process of socio-economic and political renewal involving global actors, as well as local dynamics" (Mathews and Ali cited in Coffie 2014).

Literature on peacebuilding and education has gained momentum with the increased focus that the UN places on *education and peacebuilding*. Several authors and organisations look at how the UN's peacebuilding apparatus evolved since the early 1990s (Benner and Rotmann 2008; UNICEF 2011; Coffie 2014). Important to note from Coffie's work is that peacebuilding is a process which can also begin while conflict is still ongoing, or "even before the civil war had begun in earnest" (Mathews and Ali in Coffie 2014: 115) and this has important implications for the case of Sierra Leone.

Lambourne and Herro analyse how peacebuilding developed at the UN, and what the implications for the non-UN interventions this development had (2008). For example, even if it applies UN frameworks on peacebuilding interventions, non-UN peacebuilding can run the risk of "national interests taking precedence over UN principles", which in turn can minimize the legitimacy and effectiveness of the interventions (Lambourne and Herro 2008: 276-277).

Lambourne and Herro also put emphasis on peacebuilding as being a process that needs “particular cultural and conflict context”, and “ownership (...) embedded in local communities” (2008: 279-280) and claim a lack of local focus can impact negatively on non-UN peacebuilding interventions. The authors follow the evolution of the peacebuilding concept, from the *Agenda for Peace* produced in 1992, towards more recent definitions of peacebuilding. In 2001, the UN Security Council (UNSC) recognized that: “peacebuilding is aimed at preventing outbreak, the recurrence or continuation of armed conflict and therefore encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights mechanism” (Lambourne and Herro 2008: 278). In other words, national interests driving non-UN interventions which disregard these aspects can end up distorting peacebuilding goals and priorities (Lambourne and Herro 2008: 288). Other approaches still, see peacebuilding as a “comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable peaceful relationship.” (Lederach 1997: 20).

The concept of peacebuilding is complex however, and the difficulty to define it stems from the fact that peace in itself is a term contested in academic literature. Michelle Gawerc points out that the fields of peacebuilding and peace-making are in need of multifaceted approaches, notion sustained by the complex conceptual frame and the fact that conflicts “do not end and are seldom solved” (Gawerc 2006: 435-439). Gawerc (2006) based her remarks of Johan Galtung's notions of positive and negative peace. By differentiating between positive peace as absence of structural or cultural violence, and negative peace as the absence of direct violence, Galtung led the way to differentiating the concepts of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding (Gawerc 2006: 238-239). Indeed, as the author himself remarks, peacebuilding has been the process least understood, has received least attention by researchers and has received least support because of the tendencies of focusing on challenges, at grassroots levels (Galtung cited in Gawerc 2006).

In the literature, peacebuilding is recognized as a dynamic field, capable of contributing to all phases of a conflict, and always adapting to the situation and stage (Gawerc 2006: 439). In essence, peacebuilding is, as Rasheed and Munoz (2016: 175) note, “a process of positive and sustainable change (...) also works to move beyond simply ending direct violence, but to address and resolve issues of structural violence while working on structural peace”.

Given the multitude of definitions and discussions around the concept of peacebuilding, this thesis will however employ the UN definition, as the organisation is the most influential in the field. As such, peacebuilding will be understood as the process that “involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, by strengthening

national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development” (UN s.a.).

### **2.1.2 Education**

A common understanding of education is that it represents a process of passing on knowledge and skills. The process of passing on knowledge can happen in a multitude of ways, from an individual to another, through oral traditions, or by taking place in an organised setting, such as schools. In this thesis, education is understood as schooling in an official setting. A study commissioned by UNICEF in 2011, *The Role of Education in Peacebuilding*, starts from the premises that “education is perhaps the most important tool for human development and the eradication of poverty.”. Furthermore, education as schooling is also seen as direct means of “creation of modern citizens and workers who can imagine themselves as members of a political and economic community” (Waters and LeBlanc, 2005: 129).

There are many aspects of cultural, economic, and social nature that are generally influenced by education, and especially in contexts of war, conflict, post-conflict, natural disaster, population displacement/integration/reintegration, the role of education is infinitely more important than in normally working societies and states. It is in this light that education is considered throughout this thesis, with the distinction that it is mainly analysed not from a primary or secondary stance, but from the perspective of higher education.

### **2.1.3 Education in Emergencies - A Bridge Between Two Fields**

As the subject of the thesis is higher education and peacebuilding, it is necessary to establish a connection between these two concepts. Such a connection can be found by looking at education in emergencies, as a field of study.

Peacebuilding efforts generally take place in immediate post-conflict contexts, sometimes even while conflicts are still ongoing (UN s.a.). Where state capacities are weakened or destroyed, where civil societies are struggling, where national capacities for managing and maintaining peace are not able to reduce the risks of lapsing or relapsing into conflicts, international communities, within well-established frames, deploy peacebuilding interventions (UN s.a.). Often, peacebuilding actions and humanitarian aid overlap, and education in emergencies is drawn into the discussion here as its scope and goals are compatible with the main theme of the thesis and also creates a logical step towards the field of higher education and peacebuilding.

The field of education in emergencies has been shaped for some decades now, as a result of evolving and expanding humanitarian actions in 1990s<sup>6</sup> (Burde, Kapit, Wahl, Guven, and Skarpeteig 2016). International aid workers saw the opportunity of employing education as an important element in humanitarian projects, and ‘education in emergencies programmes’ were created (Burde et al. 2016). Other authors, like Margaret Sinclair, put emphasis on education in emergencies by highlighting how education is a human right, which in turn enables access to other rights such as right to liberty and security, right to freedom of thought (Sinclair 2007: 52-53, UN 1948). Scholars have also pointed out that providing education in crisis situations contributes to creating a sense of normality, restore help, prepare professionally for facing crisis, and providing protection. (Sinclair 2007: 52-53).

Dana Burde defines education in emergencies according to three approaches: development, humanitarian and human rights (Burde 2005: 10-11). Accordingly, education is understood either as a long-term social investment, emphasizing educational content and “community participation and collaboration with government officials as soon as possible”; or as service and structure which “can be employed to provide immediate protection”, but without emphasising relationships with state institutions; or as human rights approach, which “emphasizes the importance of education as a human right and employs it as a key ingredient in peacebuilding strategies” (Burde 2005: 11). It is this last approach that underlines the connection between education, crises and peacebuilding efforts. In conceptualizing education by looking at how human rights are respected, one takes into account how education helps “cultivate citizenship, tolerance, and peace building at any stage of relief or development, or conflict-ridden countries alike” (Burde 2005: 10-11). According to the human rights approach that Burde presents, cultural contexts always influence educational content, but education as such is not defined by the differences in cultural, or social contexts (Burde 2005: 11). The fact that regardless of the context, the education system is largely unchanged, is one of the main points the theoretical framework here, brings forth. It is shown later in the chapter that sociological institutionalism puts emphasis on isomorphism, the feature referred to by Dana Burde.

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<sup>6</sup> It is generally accepted that while education was a topic on humanitarian aid agendas already in the second half of the 20th century, the field of education in emergencies emerged in 1990s.

#### **2.1.4 Higher Education**

It is apparent that education in crisis situations has been established as a distinct field of study, albeit a new one. While there are still gaps in academic literature, research and empirics, nonetheless the study of education in emergencies is much more developed than the field of higher education in emergencies. The latter is a much newer field, and as the thesis is interested in the relationship between higher education and peacebuilding, higher education in emergencies is briefly introduced, only inasmuch as it helps create the connection between peacebuilding and higher education.

Authors like Milton and Barakat (2016), Heleta (2015) analyse in their work the role higher education institutions play and could play in emergencies. While Milton and Barakat identify that higher education institutions have a role in “promoting messages of violence or peacebuilding, addressing inequalities and through identity politics” (2016: 413-415), Heleta builds the concept of post-conflict recovery on the term of ‘post-conflict peacebuilding’, following the path set by the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in *Agenda for Peace* from 1992 (2015: 4-6). The studies are not the subject here, but concluding remarks in the works of both Milton and Barakat, and Heleta match, in that higher education is not yet a priority in post-conflict recovery, directly affecting results of post-recovery interventions.

Higher education is understood in this thesis as being the tertiary level of education, at universities or similar institutions, where the main goal is that of obtaining a degree. There are various views on what higher education represents and how it should be interpreted, as, for example, those presented by Meyer, Ramirez, Frank and Schofer (2008). The authors depart from the generalized way of analysing higher education as “a set of specific and local organizations, roles, interactions and economic transactions” and instead employ the alternative sociological institutionalist perspective, which will be further discussed in the theoretical framework section of the chapter. They emphasize that higher education is an arena “deeply affected by structure, whose nature and meaning have been institutionalized over many centuries and now apply throughout the world” (Meyer et al. 2008: 188). Essential elements in higher education, such as student, professor, university, graduate, or the academic fields keep a substantial “historical and global standing” in spite of receiving minor local influence. Higher education became a global institution, according to Meyer et al., throughout the centuries. In the ‘university’ form, higher education reached the point where models are similar around the globe: “Universities and colleges (...) are defined, measured, and instantiated in essentially every country in explicitly global terms, and are so reported to international institutions like

UNESCO. They are thus sharply attuned to transnational ratings and global standards (...).” (Meyer et al. 2008: 188). It is obvious that Meyer et al. (2008: 206-207) see it logical to consider higher education an institution, since this view brings into focus “attention to cultural scripts and organizational rules”, and support that “local higher-education arrangements are heavily dependent on broader institutions”. This approach is consistent with the theoretical framework of this thesis and is detailed in the theory section.

This thesis employs the premises that higher education has a role to play in peacebuilding, even if this role is still underestimated. Milton and Barakat (2016: 414) review that while primary education is formative, “higher education has the possibility to be transformative”. Sometimes higher education can also have negative connotations on the socialisation effects and on how reconciliation and conflict transformation is perceived, and this is slightly reviewed later on in the thesis. Nevertheless, for the most part, higher education is seen as having the potential to rebuild societies, stabilize conflict-affected and fragile states, mitigate conflict, contribute to societies that are more resilient, in other words make a positive contribution to peacebuilding (UNICEF 2011, Milton and Barakat 2016, Burde et al 2016, Rasheed and Munoz 2016).

Alan Smith makes a good case on why the relationship between education in conflict and peacebuilding (2010) is important and worth researching, when he notes that in addition to being a basic human right, a tool for human development and poverty eradication, education can also be employed to ‘conflict transformation’ and ‘peacebuilding’ (2010: 1). Smith concludes that peacebuilding can benefit from increased access to education, from reforms of the education sector that include conflict preventions and post-conflict transformation, and from an increased focus on education as means to contribute to broader social transformation (2010: 22-23) and the thesis seeks to establish if the affirmation finds ground in practice.

Throughout its content, this thesis analyses and presents findings based on the concepts as they were discussed in the paragraphs above. The key elements presented so far in this chapter were the concepts of peacebuilding, education, education in emergencies, and higher education.

Education in emergencies was introduced as a link between the field of education and the field of peacebuilding, as it is usually employed in situations that require both peacebuilding interventions and humanitarian aid perspectives. Higher education constitutes one of the main elements in the thesis, and therefore, aside a mere definition of the term, it was important to note the various scholarly understandings and interpretations of the concept.



The concept of peacebuilding is maybe the most complex discussed here. Starting with Galtung, who first introduced the term in the 1970s, and seeing how it was put into the spotlight through the *Agenda for Peace* in 1992, and over to the newest UN definition of the concept, peacebuilding is seen as a dynamic field, constituting of long-term projects, with the potential of stopping conflicts, removing threats of conflict and preventing relapse into conflict.

The length to which higher education and peacebuilding are connected is analysed in the findings and discussion chapter. Notwithstanding, the literature describing the main concepts, while it was helpful in giving an understanding of the topic of the thesis, has not sufficiently looked at the role of higher education from an IR perspective, allowing for a detailed account of sociological institutionalism.

Before the next section introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis, a few words on norms, global and local, are needed. The online Cambridge Dictionary defines norms as “accepted standard or a way of behaving or doing things that most people agree with”. There are of course other definitions, following more or less the same line of thought, but for the sake of the argument, here norms are understood in accordance with the Cambridge definition. Essentially, even when norms are behaviours accepted as standards, they can also display different characteristics from culture to culture, between nations, from a social group to the other. There is an obvious difference between global and local norms, apparent already in the terminology. While the first represent behaviours and standards globally accepted or implemented (the level of acceptance can also differ greatly), local norms are restricted to determined groups.

This thesis looks at how global education norms intertwine with local norms, in an attempt to successfully be influence peacebuilding architecture. The real challenge in developing norms that are globally valid and locally accepted lies therefore in the way they can establish themselves. As this thesis identifies a handful of actors that have the capacity to impose global norms, like the UN, UNICEF, UNESCO, it also considers the premises that over time, global education norms have been moulded within their framework. Global norms connected to human rights, of which education, the right to education, gender equality in education, form an important part, are widely spread and recognised. Setting international standards on education is generally mandated to IOs like UNICEF and UNESCO. World governments, in becoming signatories to accords and agreements like EFA, MDG, Education 2030, officially accept these international standards. The extent to which signing under on international treaties means the goals contained there become global norms with local implementation is, however, something to be seen throughout this thesis.

## **2.2 International Relations and (The Lack of) Higher Education**

Mainstream IR theories, like realism, liberalism, Marxism, and even some of the newer constructivist strands, do not consider education an important concept in world politics (Baylis et al. 2014: 5-7). In the mainstream theories, the usual ‘actors’ are the state, power of balance, norms, international regimes, materialism, human agency, and they play different roles, according to the theory they represent most. Education and its role in the international system is mainly non-existent in the theoretical landscape, and to place it into an IR framework, one needs to have a look at newer theories. Considering these aspects, the research questions guiding the thesis, and the series of concepts defined in the previous section, this thesis will make use of sociological institutionalism, as one of the few IR theories that engage with education and its role in the international system. It is necessary to note here that the term sociology's institutionalism will be used interchangeably with sociological institutionalism, neo-institutionalism, and new institutionalism. Before going in depth into the theoretical framework, a brief look at how sociological institutionalism has come to the light is necessary, and is presented in the next paragraph.

### **2.2.1 Sociological Institutionalism in IR**

Neo-institutionalism was born when a group of scholars at Stanford University challenged the views that organisations do not have place for culture in their forming and that organisations do not exist because of their efficiency, but because they are legitimized externally (Finnemore 1996; Meyer et al. 2008; Meyer et al. 2011). This represented the first step in introducing culture as an argument in IR and Finnemore further notes that while “approaches that treat states as actors have little to say about individuals”, institutionalists make clear claims on how individual rights matter (1996: 338), a good argument to assume that, seeing education through sociology’s institutionalism lenses, places it safely within IR.

### **2.2.2 When Soft Politics Take Centre Stage**

There are different directions one can take trying to place education in the realm of IR. Michael N. Bastedo for example, underlines the importance of politics in higher education and makes the point that “study of policy and politics is quickly becoming a central subfield in higher education” (Bastedo 2007: 295). The author sets a sociological framework on the study of education and notes that “concepts derived from the sociological study of organizations can be used profitably to analyse political behaviour and enhance our knowledge of the policy process”

(in Gumpert 2008: 295). The fact that mainstream IR theories, realism, liberalism, and even some newer strands of constructivism, do not conceptualize education as an important factor in world politics (Baylis et al. 2014), allows approaches like Bastedo's to gain terrain and more importantly, allow 'soft politics' issues like education a place in the international debates. Among terms like state, balance of power, international regimes,. education is otherwise not mentioned often enough, making approaches like Bastedo, Meyer or Martha Finnemore's more relevant.

As a constructivist, Martha Finnemore is one of the scholars who approach 'soft politics' in her research. Notwithstanding, in a paper on norms, culture and world politics, Finnemore states that "international relations scholars have become increasingly interested in norms of behaviour, intersubjective understandings, culture, identity, and other social features of political life" (1996, 325). In the article, Finnemore (1996) provides an overview of sociological institutionalism and the implications this theory has on the study of world politics. Finnemore sustains that the arguments sociologists have developed in their work, challenge realist and liberal theories, and therefore are successful contenders to forming part of a new theory in IR (1996: 325-326). Given that cultural norms and their effects cannot always be explained through mainstream theories, Finnemore proposes that IR scholars should be interested in sociological institutionalism all the more (1996: 326-328). Furthermore, in the author's opinion, sociological institutionalism borrows some constructivist arguments, which allow for the human agency to work, but also take analyses to a higher level, by introducing the element of research and formulating hypothesis based on empirical examples (1996: 327).

Finnemore's assessment is representative for institutionalist views on education, because it underlines how institutionalists not only argue that social structure matters, but also that "social structure is global and all-encompassing" (1996: 327). The argument goes beyond just advancing that social structures matter, also by showing that social structure "permeates all aspects of political and social life in all states" (Finnemore 1996: 327), which, in the present study, allows for education to be taken into consideration.

New institutionalism incorporates historical changes, and develops generalizations about historical change, specifically that states' goals are shaped by social norms of a given time in history (Finnemore 1996: 327-328). Maybe one of the most interesting arguments that Finnemore makes is that institutionalist research gives evidence of cultural homogenization, which in this study is of particular importance for education. As a process of spreading knowledge, education is sharing common traits around the globe. This is further translated into similarities in global education systems and how education institutions are built and organised.

However, considering education system as one homogenous body, does not correspond to the peacebuilding theory, where local context and cultural differences form the ground for successful interventions. And while Finnemore goes on to explain how education policy should become an issue for IR scholars, since education is the “arena in which states create citizens”, the fact that national education systems are structured by common ideological order (shared cultural and normative understandings) and exhibit traces of isomorphism (Finnemore 1996: 336-337), represents a weakness of the theoretical perspective.

Meyer and Rowan, in the introduction to their book, *The New Institutionalism in Education* (2006), show why the new institutionalism is a proper theoretical tool for analysing education. In the authors’ words, the new theory “signals the possibility of a unity in often fragmented disciplines, and it promises to provide researchers with a more universal language, to conceptualize and research problems that are common in other fields” (2006: 1-2). While the authors admit the field still needs recognition, “the new institutionalism has a unique contribution to make in analysing complex and contradictory patterns of institutional change” (2006: 11). Meyer and Rowan present new institutionalism and offer characteristics that are plausible in the field of education, such as viewing education institutions as institutionalised organizations, constrained by legitimacy, rather than efficiency (2006: 5). A closing note in Meyer and Rowan’s chapter is worth mentioning and weighting in the context of higher education and peacebuilding, namely that new institutionalisms’ maybe most important role is to analyse complex and contradictory patterns of institutional change, making thus a unique contribution to the educational arena (2006: 11). Higher education is analysed in general terms by Meyer et al. (in Gumpert 2008), but the sociological institutionalist perspective they apply views “higher education as deeply affected by structures whose nature and meaning have been institutionalized over many centuries and now apply throughout the world” (2008: 188). These approaches do not entirely correspond with the peacebuilding literature. Applied in this thesis, especially in post-conflict contexts, it is interesting to see how resorting to higher education within peacebuilding is not just about rejecting or adopting national profiles. But it is interesting to observe and assess the processes that are connected to implementing higher education in local contexts, and how the world culture reacts to modernization, institutionalization, standardization, in the different local contexts.

### **2.2.3 Higher Education as an Institution**

Meyer et al. (2008) view higher education as an institution in order to be able to explain its characteristics and effects on modern society. Sociological institutional theory emphasize the

idea that local organization develop and evolve independent of local circumstance, and this aspect is elucidated by three main ideas (Meyer et al. 2008). In the first place, a main theme of institutional theory, that the environments supply “the blueprints and building blocks of local structure”, is central in the institutionalization of “cultural assumptions and organizational rules that establish the framework of modern societies” (Meyer et al. 2008: 5). To exemplify by using education, it benefits one very little to have the knowledge and skills a university graduate has, without the proper certification from a proper higher education institution (Meyer et al. 2008: 6).

The second aspect on which Meyer et al. focus is that “institutionalised models reflect collective and cultural processes”. Again, translated to the higher education systems, the statement supports the views that “professionals imbued with authority from the knowledge system and the sciences play agenda-setting roles” and that through education, national and world models can be perpetuated in the modern system (Meyer et al. 2005: 7-8).

Finally, Meyer et al. present that institutionalised models are most probably disconnected from local realities and practices (2008: 190-192). In essence, this can mean that universities, respecting the isomorphism which characterizes sociological institutionalism, must observe global standards, even when they do not have the means to maintain them in practice. As examples, Meyer et al. (2008) refer to cases where universities have to commit to faculty research even if they do not have the financial means, or where high standards for admission are applied in ‘on paper’, but cannot be followed in practice. The three ideas that Meyer et al. advance, represent an obstacle in bridging the gap between higher education and peacebuilding, as the attitude promoted does not entirely match with peacebuilding processes. The reason is that for the latter, local aspects are highly important, and while equipping individuals with knowledge and skills is an important goal in achieving and maintaining peace, allowing local knowledge to be absorbed in the process is paramount for successful peacebuilding architecture.

For higher education to play a real role in peacebuilding, it is important that a solid ground exists. A sound base is necessary both for institutions that nourish identity and help rebuilding societies, as much as for institutions that can provide broken economies with the skilled people they lack. New institutionalism considers these aspects by claiming that “taken-for-granted cultural and organizational models contribute greatly to the apparatus of the national state, including the content and scope of citizenship” (Meyer et al. 2007: 191).

As presented above, institutional theories see local structures based on wider models, and this leads to the conclusion that institutional models are likely not to consider local realities.

This is a huge drawback when it comes to peacebuilding efforts, which give a lot of attention to local practices and local contexts. Harris and Lewer (2008: 127-128) look specifically at the fact that higher education in conflict zones needs to be anchored into the local context. This should happen so that building capacity, equipping people with necessary skills, and providing conflict and post-conflict societies with a safe educational space, have long-lasting results and fulfil the characteristics of peacebuilding.

Neo-institutionalism in education has had important effects on a mass of factors, such as the expansion of mass education, the organisational character of schooling, globalization and educational policymaking, gender equality in education, structuring of the schooling knowledge (Rowan 2006; Meyer et al. 2008; Gumport 2008). Scholars point out that new institutionalism influenced especially theories and concepts of education and society, through the process of political incorporation through mass education, viewing schools as institutional organizations or influencing societal outcomes. It is exactly these factors that play an important role in peacebuilding actions, as it was shown before, but the isomorphism which is encountered in the sociology's institutionalism represents a drawback in peacebuilding, where initiatives like people-to-people, grassroots approaches play an essential role for the success in building long-lasting recovery and peace (Gawerc 2006: 439-440).

#### **2.2.4 Challenging the Theory**

There are many reasons why education and higher education should matter both as a permanent topic in IR, but also within peacebuilding architecture. The literature identifies, as we have seen throughout the chapter, capacity building, development, innovation, progress, recovery, offering individuals necessary knowledge to analyse conflict causes, resolution and conflict transformation, creating a safe schooling structure etc. Again, many of these factors depend on local knowledge, history, and context and in general on “a number of different social practices that are not easily orchestrated” (Christie 2016: 434).

While sociological institutionalism introduces education as an important theme in IR, it cannot account for the lack of incorporating local contexts in how higher education is institutionalised, especially where peacebuilding is concerned. This is very well presented in an INEE report (2010: while “delivery of education plays a role in conflict and fragility” with access to different levels of education being critical, and delivery of education has a structural role in conflict-affected states and regions, education services are not a “black box for which the components and mechanics are unimportant” (INEE 2010: 8-9). The authors of the report make a case of explaining that the ‘who’, ‘how’, ‘what’, and ‘why’ of the educational services

delivered in fragile states are extremely important and can potentially diminish effects of educational programmes in conflict and post-conflict regions if certain factors are not properly considered (INEE 2010).

Another weakness of the theoretical approach is encountered in the isomorphism argument. Meyer et al. (in Gumpert 2008) maintain that since university is a “world institution” and historically evolved as a global institution, the isomorphism and isomorphic changes are perfectly well explained by institutional theories - since higher education structures reflect common traits, they also present similarities across diverse settings and over time. The authors show in their concluding remarks that higher education has always been informed by a broader cultural and civilizational mission (2008: 210-212), and that it presents signs of standardization around the world. However, Meyer et al. admit cases where standardization and isomorphism do not apply, and may represent an avenue for research, are situations in more isolated countries, less likely to experience development in the field (2008: 212).

As a last point of critique to the sociology’s institutionalism framework is what Bastedo proposes in his work on new institutionalism in education, namely that higher education as an organisation is best considered an “open system” (2008: 299), so that one can acknowledge that organizations are embedded in multiple environments. An interesting element in Bastedo’s chapter (which he borrowed from Meyer and Rowan) is that within new institutionalism, the concept of strategic action is almost not credible (2008: 304), which in turn is essential in successful peacebuilding processes.

This chapter opened by introducing essential concepts for the thesis, and then placed sociology's institutionalism lenses on the analysis of higher education and peacebuilding. While the theoretical approach introduces and recognizes education as an important topic in IR, there are shortcomings which represent a serious gap between the theory on higher education and peacebuilding literature. Peacebuilding efforts are generally context specific in order to be successful, while the isomorphism encountered in sociological institutionalism represents an impediment in giving education the stabilizing and conflict-mitigating role and conflict-recovery role that is the object of analysis in this thesis. These aspects will be taken up again in the study case presentation, but before one can introduce the background data for the thesis, a short look at the methods for data collecting, interpreting and analysis is given in the next chapter.

### **3. Methodology**

This thesis represents an effort to show how higher education can contribute to peacebuilding architecture and intervention. There are two main scopes that guide the thesis, of creating an overview of how higher education and peacebuilding are intertwined and perceived, and introducing three case studies, in order to discuss how the theoretical concepts identified in the previous chapter can be applied in practice. With the use of the case studies, the thesis demonstrates how complex, broad and difficult it is to tackle the field of higher education and peacebuilding. The thesis does not seek to introduce new theories, but as it was explained earlier in the paper, to bring into attention the gap between higher education and peacebuilding. By identifying the gap between the fields, analysing the complexity of the case studies, and by identifying what role higher education can play in peacebuilding interventions, the thesis provides a broad perspective of the challenges this research field encounters in practice and further encourages research. The thesis aims at bridging the gap between the fields of higher education and peacebuilding by analysing how high education has the potential of shaping and developing individuals, and supplying them with the mind-sets and skillsets that ensure successful peacebuilding. As such, the findings here can inform further work on education programming and policy development, where peacebuilding interventions are planned.

The theoretical framework is identified already as being sociological institutionalism. In adopting a sociological view and applying it to the education institutions, the thesis starts from the premises that the concepts of education and higher education are socially produced, as opposed to being drawn from objective behaviour (Finnemore 1996). Sociologist arguments find ground in “an expanding and deepening Western world culture”, where the “world cultural norms also produce organizational and behavioural similarities across the globe” (Finnemore 1996: 325-326). In this way, education and higher education become part of global cultural norms and rules, in other words ‘institutions’ (Finnemore 1996: 326) within a ‘legitimate’ theoretical framework.

The way in which a researcher chooses to know and understand the world (epistemology) and the nature of being (ontology), together with the methodology which informs any academic work, represents a trio of elements that allow the theoretical lenses to guide the research (Bryman 2012). In this thesis, I present the view that social structures matter and are global, and that social norms shape institutional goals (Finnemore 1996). Notwithstanding the constructivist arguments, the sociological institutionalist lenses provide a more detailed framework, which allow the ontological assumptions of the thesis to reflect the



theoretical framework better. The ontological assumptions also point towards a conflict between the theoretical grounds of the two main concepts, higher education and peacebuilding.

Understanding the emphasis on global culture and the way in which education as an institution behaves in peacebuilding, and applying IR lenses on these assumptions, can justify adopting sociological institutionalist framework for the thesis. In other words, the research design is guided by the sociological institutionalist theory because it allows for the global level of norms to be analysed. Nevertheless, the contextual, local implementation of global norms is not very well accounted for by the theoretical approach, which in itself represents a weakness, as it has been shown in the theoretical chapter.

In essence, sociological institutionalism is engaged in the way in which institutions interact and affect society, and the way in which institutions create meanings. As such, the best way of providing answers for the research questions is by applying research methods suitable for qualitative research design. The methodology employed here provides the necessary tools to reflect the researcher's interest, and through specific qualitative research approach and methodological terms, it will comprise of analysing documents, literary sources and media discourses. Lynn Nygaard notes (2015: 111) that some of the most common methods for qualitative research are case studies, interviews, and observation. Given the nature of the thesis, the qualitative methods here resume to case studies and qualitative content analysis. Trying to establish a link between peacebuilding and higher education can benefit more, in the first phase, by introducing three different cases, as part of a 'desk study' and as such, data for the thesis was not collected through field research.

As a result of the context in which peacebuilding takes place, as well as the scarcity of data on the subject, the qualitative research design proved a better choice for this thesis. Bennet and Elman point out (2007) that qualitative research is better suited for the field of International Relations, due to the advantages it gives to studying complex situations and phenomena that are characteristics of the discipline. While the statement might be challenged in this thesis, the gap between higher education and peacebuilding, and the necessity to first establish a link between the two fields, provided the most appropriate context for qualitative research design.

In the following paragraphs, I present the reasons for choosing the specific case studies, the information the thesis is seeking to extract, and what type of data I focus on. The limitations of the thesis are also presented, together with ethical considerations, based on Berg and Lune's theory, that qualitative research comes with its own challenges and that in order to minimize the biases, one must reflect on limitations (Berg and Lune 2012).

### 3.1 Research Design

The research in any academic work should be guided by the theoretical lenses and this thesis is informed by sociological institutionalism. In essence, the research has to identify the way in which global education norms are adapted to a grand narrative, but at the same time need to meet the characteristics of peacebuilding strategies, driven by local context. Sociological institutionalism places emphasis on isomorphism, fundamentally the way in which systems become more and more similar. The education systems are marked by this kind of rationalisation, and the global norms that are reflected in these systems should take into account local norms. However, this is not always the case, and comes as a critique to the theoretical approach, as it was shown in the previous chapter.

The research design takes into consideration that cultural norms, embedded in national education systems, come often in conflict with global education norms. The fact that in Afghanistan girls should, at most, receive education from female teachers, clashes with the Education for All (EFA) goals, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)<sup>7</sup>, through which every child is ensured equal right to education, because of lack of female teachers. Another issue here is that cultural norms in present-day Afghanistan do not accept education for girls as a ‘taken for granted’ right, as it is shown in the case study, which again, presents challenges to implementing global education norms. India, on the other hand, with its cast system and countless official languages, is confronted by inconsistencies in an education system based on British model (where English is the language of instruction), and the need to allow education to all, regardless of background, and allow education in mother tongues. Again, these issues are detailed in the case studies chapter.

Sociological institutionalism implies that education for all is a real possibility, that higher education is becoming a global institutions, with traits more and more similar. In practice, local context proves more important than sociological institutionalists first assume, to the point where it becomes an impediment to reaching global goals, a weakness for the theoretical framework, but an essential characteristic for peacebuilding.

On a more technical note, an important aspect of any research design is the way in which the researcher selects the relevant cases. Given that the thesis employs qualitative research design, selecting the case studies reflects this method. Selecting the case studies should also reflect as clear as possible the research questions and offer correct, trustworthy and useful data,

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<sup>7</sup> Education for All and Millennium Development Goals are global initiatives, led by UNESCO and mandated by world governments, which are to implement and monitor learning needs of children and young adults around the Globe

according to the Berg and Lune (2012). Also Bryman (2012: 416) states that sampling should be reflected already in the research questions. Based on these criteria, the research was conducted in an informed manner when it came to choosing data sources, which according to Berg and Lune, is typical for purposive sampling (2012:52). Given the nature of the study, as it was detailed in the previous section, field research was not an option, and as such, one could argue that the method of choice for data collection was convenience (availability) sampling.

The reality of document sampling is that they often give access to an underlying reality, and not just reveal things about underlying reality (Bryman 2012: 554). Atkinson and Coffey (cited in Bryman 2012) maintain that documents should be examined in terms of the context in which they are produced and in terms of their readership. These principles have been respected especially when it comes to data sampled from grey literature, such as reports commissioned by NGOs, think-tanks, and other international organizations.

The fact that research on higher education and peacebuilding is not extensive, justifies the exploratory nature of this thesis. Since the subject of this study is comprehensive, the purpose was to “report multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketch the larger picture that emerges”, in this way create a “complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (Creswell 2007: 39-40).

The background cases are based mainly on data from academic works and books, articles from both journals and the media, and from grey literature. The latter, defined as “research that is either unpublished or has been published in non-commercial form” (University of New England s.a.) and presented in the form of government reports, policy statements, conference proceedings, preprints and postprints of articles, research reports etc., represents an important source of information for this thesis. Documents analysed under this category came from university charters and statements, governmental statistics, media, international reports, but also from national policy papers, IOs resolutions and annual reports.

The decision to present three case studies was informed by the complexity of the field and by the fact that being a new and under-researched research field, the data that is available does not offer a holistic account of the issues, challenges and expectations.

### **3.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

Selecting the countries for the case studies was based on the assumption that how higher education is perceived, where peacebuilding is employed, differs by context. Although higher education is a global concept, characterized by isomorphism, applying the context-dependent concept of peacebuilding means that cases are too diverse to draw any theory from them, in the

usual way one draws theories from qualitative research. Furthermore, because of data scarcity, the thesis aims at being a descriptive work, pointing towards the gap between higher education and peacebuilding and how to possibly relate it. For this purpose, three case studies have been chosen, based on pre-established criteria: a historical case, a case where higher education has been already employed in a peacebuilding process and a case where peacebuilding is still ongoing.

Higher education is approached in different ways where conflict, post-conflict or fragile contexts are present. As such, the criteria for selecting the country cases do not pretend to be representative for all situations where peacebuilding and higher education are connected, as it was noted above. To enhance the connection between peacebuilding and higher education, each case study was divided into three subsections: general introduction and historical timeline, global framework and local implementation. Within the global framework, the thesis aims to present what global norms, characteristics, and programmes have been implemented into national education systems. How are education policies influenced by global actors, like UNESCO and UNICEF? And what type of programmes are developed by the international community in the countries presented here, which directly influence their higher education systems? Giving examples of ‘international’ educational programmes, aims to provide answers to these questions. When it comes to local implementation, the goal is to identify and introduce examples of national educational initiatives that can speak for the connection between higher education and peacebuilding.

The reasoning behind structuring the case studies in a similar manner was to create the right starting point for the correct analysis and interpretation of data. The thesis does not aim to be a comparative study, but presenting the three case studies with the same layout also aims at easing the reading process.

Informed by the topic of the thesis, India was chosen as a case for its historical contribution towards how high education and peacebuilding can be related. In fact, the colonial past and the postcolonial realities, which characterise India as a country, do not entirely match a peacebuilding profile, in the sense peacebuilding was presented in the conceptual framework. However, one can look at colonialism as “a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy s.a.) and as such, in postcolonial period, one can identify the need to rebuild societies, institutions, or reinterpret norms. In an effort to stop conflicts and prevent a relapse into conflicts, peacebuilding implies institution building, political and economic transformation, and reviving civil society. A struggling education sector, marked by ‘imperialism and class privilege’ (Faust and Nagar

2001), where foreign influences (for example, imposed English-medium education) do not harmonise with local realities, is comparable with the those encountered by other states, in more recent history, after the apparition of the term peacebuilding. This understanding of how the education sector evolved in India constitutes an important reason as to why the country was selected for this thesis.

In India, efforts to meet global and national goals, with the help of the international community, and through organisations like UNESCO and UNICEF, parallels often peacebuilding architecture. Furthermore, higher education plays an important role in bridging the gap between communities, by, for example, education in local language, and this can also resemble actions taken within peacebuilding, with the purpose of lessening tensions and minimizing chances of conflict. However, the ‘imposed peacebuilding profile’, without the country being a recipient of peacebuilding interventions, represents a limitation for India as a case study. Its relevance is mainly supported by its value in having a higher education system that is confronted with similar struggles as in peacebuilding contexts, but not for being a ‘real’ peacebuilding receiver.

The second study case presents how society in Sierra Leone experienced the connection between higher education and peacebuilding. Largely considered a success story from a peacebuilding perspective, Sierra Leone benefited from education and peacebuilding programmes for a period of over a decade. While geographical disconnection and a socially uneven education system were important drivers of the conflict, education initiatives were largely marginalized within UN peacebuilding strategy in the country (as it will be detailed in the following chapter). An important finding in this case is therefore not directly related to the role of higher education and peacebuilding, but rather to the unused potential of higher education. Lastly, Afghanistan was included for considerations related to peacebuilding efforts still in process.

The local context played an important role in choosing the sample countries. As it was presented before, peacebuilding is often embedded in local context and successful processes take the local into consideration, unlike the case with the globalized higher education systems.

It is plain to see that the three cases are presenting completely different approaches to the topic of the thesis. As it was mentioned earlier, the case studies are not introduced for their comparative value. Rather, combining the three perspectives helps explore a diverse, complex and underestimated field of research. At the same time it emphasizes that using higher education in peacebuilding architecture has the potential to improve intervention results.

### **3.2.1. Data Collection**

The material presented and analysed in the thesis has mainly been gathered from April 2016 to January 2017, using both open source research tools, like internet and library search engines, but also academic databases. Some of the documents were gathered directly from international organizations' website, like UNESCO, USAID, UNICEF, the UN, while others have been collected through participation in conferences on higher education. Trying to create a relevant background for the thesis, an in depth desk research was conducted with focus on documenting existing data from the field. Data collection was carried out in different stages. During the first stage, I gathered background information about education and peacebuilding, and in particular about higher education and peacebuilding in the countries that were to represent the cases for the thesis. The background information was in particular useful for providing the context information of the study. The second stage was represented by the in-depth research on the country cases.

### **3.3 Challenges and Limitations**

Some of the challenges and limitations related to data sampling and collection have been described in the previous sections. Remaining aspects are detailed in the following paragraphs.

Given the nature of the research topic, it was decided early on that the main way of collecting the necessary data was through desk research and participation in relevant conferences on higher education. Peacebuilding represents in itself a demanding process, employed in fragile situations, and as such any field research was not possible. Furthermore, given the choice of two of the country cases, travelling to the zones in question was not an option. Lastly, given that the thesis seeks to first establish there is a gap between higher education and peacebuilding and then find possible links that can help close the gap, field research was not the most indicated tool. Thus, a serious limitation is represented by the fact that I had to rely on data already collected, without having the possibility of establishing own criteria of sampling. Also, because of the novelty of the field, data is scarce, as the field is under-researched, and this further represents a limitation here.

Maybe most challenging is the fact that the subject of study here is bound by social norms and while embedded in local conceptions, it is also a dynamic field. Understanding the local realities and context is therefore difficult and poses challenges to generalising social conventions and phenomenon. A last note on the limitations identifies the researcher as a potential weakness. Being explanatory that the researcher's position towards both data

sampling, collection, and analysis is subjective, it is important to bear in mind that this can influence the all the states of the research design, and as such presents yet one more limitation to this thesis.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

As for ethical aspects of the research, in the case of this thesis, they have been connected to moral guidelines which informed the entire process, from research design, to analysing the findings. These moral guidelines have also followed the central points that Atkinson and Coffey (cited in Bryman 2012) introduced on text analysis, specifically that “documents need to be recognized for what they are - namely texts, written with distinctive purpose in mind, and not as simply reflecting reality”. This means that documents analysed were supported with other type of data, like academic writings, to adhere to the ethical considerations noted above. Given the resources paucity, it was not content analysis that was employed here, but qualitative content analysis, which “comprises of searching underlying themes in the materials being analysed” (Bryman 2012: 556-557).

The present chapter discussed the methodological approach for this thesis, looking at how the case studies were chosen, at limitations, ethical considerations, data sampling, collection and analysis. The following chapter introduces now background information in the form of a brief literature review integrated with the case studies. The next chapter also engages in depth with the conceptual themes, namely higher education and peacebuilding, from the perspective of the country cases.

## 4. Case Studies

Education has long been considered a basic human right, but the extent to which it is taken into consideration into important global issues is still debatable, as it was discussed in the introduction. Furthermore, *higher education and peacebuilding* is a relatively new research field, and while its importance and relevance is the main topic in this thesis, relatively little research, academic literature, and theories developed so far. To best present and understand the realities of a new field of study, one needs therefore to make use of empirical examples. The next section introduces, one by one, three cases where education has been attributed (to a larger or smaller extent) a role in peacebuilding. It was explained before that the cases are chosen on the basis they represent the complexity of the field, but to enhance the connection between peacebuilding and higher education, each case study will be divided into three subsections: general introduction and historical timeline, global framework and local implementation.

The first case looks at how higher education has evolved in India, since the British colonial period, and how this marks higher education as it is offered today. The struggles caused by elitist, British-modelled universities, the imposed English-medium curricula, built up into unrest and dissatisfaction among social groups. Similar situations can be found in contexts that require peacebuilding interventions, and it is interesting to see how higher education is employed in India, to counteract these struggles.

I then move on to present the relation between higher education and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, despite of relatively few direct links between the two fields. Education in Sierra Leone has long been a focus for the international community, due to the large scale of child and youth enrolment in the war. However, peacebuilding interventions, considered successful, were not initially designed to include specific educational perspective. The turn of events and focus through which higher education was eventually employed as a peacebuilding element is further explored in this chapter, while the effects are analysed in the Findings and Discussions chapter.

Lastly, I present the case of Afghanistan, as a country where peace is in effect still far from being achieved and international efforts to build it are still ongoing. Education is a complex topic in the country, due to cultural norms, religious aspects and historical elements. The international community has been challenged in its quest to help restore the education system and the 'Westernised' higher education institutions in Kabul, such as the American University of Afghanistan, have come under fire for their affiliations to 'outside culture'. Peacebuilding interventions, unlike in Sierra Leone, are largely considered unsuccessful and the relation with higher education is investigated in the last section of this chapter.



## **4.1 India - A Tale of Colonial Inheritance**

A number of factors that have devastating effect on education sectors around the world, such as economic, governance, security, and social considerations, are typically associated with situations of conflict and fragility (INEE 2010). However, the first case study introduced here is not representative for this type of situations. Rather than analysing how higher education is employed in peacebuilding situations, in the sense peacebuilding was presented in the conceptual framework chapter, the first country case introduces a historical perspective on how higher education was established and used, before the concept of peacebuilding developed.

### **4.1.1 Indian Education on a Journey – From Colonial Past to Present Day**

India has a long colonial history, but the most noticeable influences nowadays are of British descent. The British Crown rule was established in India in 1858, after a century of control by the East India Company (Kaul 2011). By imposing British political, social and economic rule, the Empire influenced India in many aspects, of which the education sector is observed here. David Faust and Richa Nagar note in an article on political development in postcolonial India that “While education in English has been advocated as a unifying and modernising force, it is also seen as a marker of imperialism and class privilege and a terrain of struggle among elite groups” (Faust and Nagar 2001: 2878 ). The meaning behind this quote is an important reason why the country was selected for this thesis. Pronounced disparities between social classes, dissatisfaction with political leaders, cultural inequalities, and language barriers represent powerful drivers for social unrest, conflicts, and civil wars and they all apply to India. The country is marked by its colonial past and reminiscences of the British Empire can also be identified in an education system that was, in retrospect, little sensitive to cultural, social, linguistic, historical, and local contexts. As such, a weak and struggling education sector in India, fuelled by elite groups, ‘class privilege’ and ‘imperialism’, can be blamed on the period of British occupation (Faust and Nagar 2001).

A consensus within the academia accepts that the present higher education system in India evolved from the system established under British colonial regime in the middle of the 19th century (Jayaram 2004). The first three universities were founded in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, modelled after the University of London (Jayaram 2004: 85-86). Initially, there was little academic activity and the three universities functioned more like affiliated and examining bodies, rather than being the comprehensive institutions we associate with the term ‘university’ (Jayaram 2004). It is further acknowledged that all the universities established

afterwards were developed in an isomorphic way, with British legacy more than visible within the higher education, where the language of instruction was exclusively English (Jayaram 2004). Such characteristics are also visible in the organisational models, or the administrative structure of the universities, but also in an elitist educational system, presented in previous paragraphs. Drawing a historical timeline, only during the last three decades of British colonialism, some efforts to adapt the higher education system to local context were made, although almost no major initiatives were translated into important policies or university practices (Jayaram 2004: 86).

India's postcolonial educational reforms have been marked by attempts to straighten a 'crisis-ridden' system (Jayaram 2004), through various initiatives, like the successive five-year plans of development (Kattackal 1975, Planning Commission 2012), establishing an Education Commission to set the 'blueprints of the national system of education', or presenting policy perspectives (Jayaram 2004). In the *Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2012-2017)*, now in its closing phase, higher education only features in Vol. 3, the volume on social sector, with the main focus on the country's targets to become a competitive economic world player (Planning Commission 2013).

According to the Department of Higher Education at the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the "higher education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014" (MHRD 2016). And while the Government looks at the higher education sector in a positive light, scholars have recently noted that higher education is oftentimes viewed as 'Achilles' heel' of the education sector, as the last decades have not seen important increase in research, neither managed to sustain high-tech development (Altbach 2005).

In 2005, according to Altbach (in Tiwari 2005), India had a huge advantage over many other countries, with one of the largest higher education sectors in the world, behind only China and the United States. Furthermore, the main language of instruction in higher education was (and still is) English, and the infrastructure was prepared to host a large number of students. Notwithstanding, Altbach notes that "the weaknesses far outweigh the strengths" since the percentage of population enrolled in higher education barely reached 10% (NB. data representative for 2005), compared to other developed countries. Newer statistics show that in the period 2007-2012, under five per cent of the potential student population was enrolled in higher education institutions, "well below the world average of 26 per cent" (Planning Commission 2013). Further, it is acknowledged that the higher education system lacks a solid

top tier of universities, and most poignantly, Indian colleges and universities have become large bodies, under-funded, difficult to govern, with less than usual qualified academics (Altbach 2005). Suma Chitnis also underlines the weaknesses of the Indian higher education system, stemming from British rule era, noting “we have carried on with what we inherited from colonial times, without making the changes necessary to ensure that our universities are fit to serve an independent nation” (Chitnis 1997). So how did the authorities and the international community contribute to building up the higher education system in the postcolonial period? The next section looks precisely at how global framework has been applied on India’s higher education sector, after which it introduces a series of UNESCO and UNICEF initiatives designed to help boost the education sector.

#### **4.1.2 Global Education in a Peaceful Context?**

In the increasingly difficult global economic landscape, India has an important position to reach, from an educational perspective. Through the quinquennial plans, the country aims to enhance the quality of higher education and research, so that it is able to meet international demands. While India survived on the international arena with a less than optimal higher education system so far, in the globalised economy, it has become increasingly important that the higher education system meets global requirements (Planning Commission 2013: 98-104). This approach by the Indian government represents maybe a weakness for the higher education sector, as it seems to confer value only insofar it generates positive outcomes for the economic system, but does not speak of the global cultural and normative value the education systems usually carry. In some aspects, this can resemble struggles that take place in fragile context, where peacebuilding processes are introduced to help national systems answer the local and global requests.

Altbach (2005) maintains that in order to regain economic stability and international status, India needs to build a better higher education system. In the author’s view, this could be achieved through supporting national research and improving the quality of the existing curricula and, correspondingly, of the knowledge and technology (Altbach 2005). The Planning Commission (2013), responsible for the five-year plans, also underlines in the goals for the twelfth period, that higher education plays a paramount role in economic development, by providing skills that are relevant for the labour market<sup>8</sup>. There are signs however of global

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<sup>8</sup>The Planning Commission estimated in 2012 that developed economies and even China will face a shortage of about 40 million highly skilled workers by 2020, while India might see some surplus of

norms making their way increasingly in policy recommendation and development in India, as it is presented in the 12th quinquennial plan: “It prepares all to be responsible citizens who value a democratic and pluralistic society. (...) higher education is the principal site at which our national goals, developmental priorities and civic values can be examined and refined” (Planning Commission 2013: 89-90).

Comparing India with other countries in development shows however that the Western model implemented in the country allowed more room for “indigenous economic and academic infrastructure than is the case for most Third World countries” (Altbach 1993: 5). Nevertheless, from a global perspective, where education carries certain rights, values and norms, India still seems to lag behind. So how exactly does the international framework apply to the higher education in India, especially since there is no direct connection between the governmental structure and policies, conflicts and peacebuilding?

International organisations like UNICEF and UNESCO have been active in India for over seven decades, to various degrees<sup>9</sup>. Many of the country-specific programmes, such as enhancing girls education, supporting the teacher training education, supporting the national education system to reach international goals by 2030, have been initiated and implemented in India as well (UNESCO-c s.a.). Furthermore, India has been active in international educational policy framework development, as for example the “Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4”, signed in Korea in 2015.

As one of the countries to sit in the EFA steering Committee and the Drafting Group for the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which represented the base for “The Education 2030 Framework for Action”, adopted by 184 UNESCO Member States in November 2015 in Paris, India signalled interest and intentions to join the international, global trends of education, as well as to commit itself to implementing programmes that would develop the education sector within national borders (UNESCO 2015).

Essential in the Education 2030 agenda is the renewed attention to the relevance of education for human development, as it “understands education as inclusive and as crucial in promoting democracy and human rights and enhancing global citizenship, tolerance and civic engagement as well as sustainable development” (UNESCO 2015). India seems to display an increased interest in the relevance and importance of global norms for its higher education sector. This is visible by the country adhering to, for example, the Education 2030 agenda,

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graduates in 2020. Focusing on qualitative higher education, the goal is that India could provide a share of global knowledge, based on workforce and skilled professionals.

<sup>9</sup> See UNICEF India, at <http://www.unicef.in/>

which specifies that “Education facilitates intercultural dialogue and fosters respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, which are vital for achieving social cohesion and justice.” (UNESCO 2015). It is therefore surprising that the Indian higher education sector reflects so little of these goals in practice.

As a direct result of India being involved in international educational development programmes, it also benefits from international funding for policy development and implementation. Following the adoption of the Education 2030 framework, UNESCO actively contributed to assessing and developing national capacities in evidence-based and results-oriented education planning and sector management, in India among other states, by “high-level analytical work (including development of a regional capacity development plan), knowledge sharing, policy dialogues, and in-country technical assistance.” (UNESCO-c, s.a.).

The United Nations Children’s Fund has also been implementing education programmes in India, with the scope of (re)establishing a well-functioning education system. With most of the focus of program implementation going towards primary and secondary education, India found itself in a vulnerable situation when it comes to percentage of populations enrolled in higher education, as it was shown in the previous sections. As such, UNICEF combined efforts with the Government, to enhance teacher training education, as part of its missions (UNICEF s.a.).

Under UNICEF tutelage, the Government of India devised national policy guidelines, like “The National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF 05), NCF for Teacher Education (TE) 2009, and Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009”, in an attempt to “paint a commendable vision to radically transform India’s elementary education system” (UNICEF s.a.). In order to reach these goals however, the teacher training system also needed support and renovation. This support came primarily from UNICEF, in the form of education teams working at local office across the country, strengthening TE curricula, building academic support systems, documenting good practices (UNICEF s.a.)

In recent years, UNICEF’s focus on improving teacher training in India intensified, in an attempt “to strike a balance between immediate needs in order to meet RTE goals and the longer-term structural reforms that are needed to strengthen TE systems”. Since 2012, the organisation worked on helping the country elaborate and reach the five-year education goals in TE. Among these goals, the one relevant for this thesis speaks of partnering “with states and selected universities to develop six Schools of Education to become Centres of Excellence in

Teacher Education, conducting innovative TE programmes (B.El.Ed, M.Ed.)<sup>10</sup> as well as interdisciplinary research on elementary education.” (UNICEF s.a.). In terms of global education norms, UNICEF’s direct involvement in the development of teacher training programmes in India, which in turn will influence primary and secondary education, is telling of the organisation’s normative influence and will be further analysed in the Findings and Discussions chapter.

Reports by UNICEF show that reforms only implemented on paper are not enough to bring substantial and lasting changes, unless larger structural modifications are brought to the Indian teacher education system: “(...) The alarming state of Teacher Education in the country is reflected in the fact that, in recent years, the majority of graduates that have appeared for the central Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) have failed to demonstrate even the most basic knowledge base expected from a teacher.” (UNICEF s.a.).

Global trends (supported by agendas like Education 2030, MDG) push towards mass education, wide access to knowledge<sup>11</sup>, an increased use of English-language curricula (owned in part to international and interdisciplinary research and academia, and to academic mobility). India, with help from international organisations like UNICEF and UNESCO, aims to adhere to these international trends. In 2012, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Education of Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) was established in New Delhi, under direct patronage of UNESCO (MHRD 2016). Its aim to “specialise in research, knowledge sharing and policy formulation in the area of education for peace, sustainability and global citizenship” follows international trends, and represents a “UNESCO’s efforts to ensure quality education for all” and to “equip future generations with the tools to lead change for a more peaceful and sustainable world.” (MGIEP s.a.). In its role of developing, implementing, monitoring education initiatives around the world, UNESCO proves it holds a central position in global education, and as the examples presented above demonstrate, this role is well established also in India - yet another way global norms make their ways within national education policies.

Despite the international commitment to helping out the Indian education system, scholars like Altbach, Chitnis, Faust and Nagar critique the developments in the education sector, pointing out that “systemic reforms have largely failed” (Altbach 1993: 4). The often invoked reason for failure has to do with governmental approaches, or lack of funding, as it will

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<sup>10</sup> B.El.Ed - Bachelor of Elementary Education; M.Ed - Master of Education (UNICEF s.a.)

<sup>11</sup> MOOC - Massive Open Online Course - are courses characterised by unlimited student participation through open Internet access. MOOC represent an increasing trend, adopted even by prestige universities (such as MIT, Harvard, Stanford, Princeton etc.), available through platforms like Coursera, EdX, Udacity. Source: Utdanning.no [https://utdanning.no/tema/nyttig\\_informasjon/mooc](https://utdanning.no/tema/nyttig_informasjon/mooc)

be shown in the next section. The lack of visibility for reforms, IOs involvement, and programme implementations also appear enumerated among the reasons leading to unbalanced programme success (Bobb 2015).

#### **4.1.3 Local Perspectives on Global Matters**

The British period marked the higher education in India by making it follow the colonial rule and creating a culture of a ‘subject colony’ (Chitnis 1997). As it was shown in the timeline, there was a focus on absorbing knowledge, without making sure that a system to create knowledge and advance technologies was implemented. In the words of Suma Chitnis: “There was very little concern for developing capabilities for critical analysis, creative thinking, experimentation, exploration, for testing of concepts and for a range of other skills characteristic of mature and well developed systems of higher education.” (Chitnis 1997). Government control over the higher education sector, including over the private higher education institutions represents a serious factor in the implementation of education initiatives (Kaul 2006: 34).

Various other authors note how the social fractures encountered in India nowadays and created by English education, can be traced back to the colonial times (Kumar 2005, Viswanathan in Faust and Nagar 2001). Viswanathan further argues that colonial education in India has been devised and implemented with the purpose of “furthering colonial rule” (Viswanathan cited in Faust and Nagar 2001). And while her book looks specifically at how English literature was used to ensure cultural and political hegemony in colonial India, developments in the education system in the century of British colonial rule in India strongly suggest that slowly, English-medium schooling passed to being a practical study, rather than a moral one (Viswanathan in Faust and Nagar 2001). “The moral motive (...) to reinforce notions of social duty, obligation, and service to the state, is disengaged from English studies as a result of British apprehensions that their Indian subjects were being encouraged to rise above their stations in the name of self-improvement and so challenge the authority of the ruling power” (Viswanathan in Faust and Nagar 2001).

The national Department of Higher Education is responsible for the development of the basic infrastructure of the higher education sector in India, both in terms of policy and planning (MHRD s.a.). Therefore, implementing programmes, policies and restructuring the system, even if it involves international help, is characterised by national terms. Even if scholars, such as Jayaram (2004: 85), note that the structural adjustment adopted by the government in the 1990s have slowly engaged the mechanism for changes in the education system, it is also acknowledged that the growth and transformation have been slowed in the following decade,

and that India is still facing huge challenges when it comes to having a well-functioning higher education system (Jayaram 2004).

A columnist for both printed and Internet-based Indian newspapers, Dilip Bobb, resumes quite simply what the governmental influence means for the local education context: “(...) UNICEF’s contribution to India has been colossal. (...) all UNICEF actions are merely part of existing Indian government projects (...)” and this is why probably “(...) actual impact gets watered down to a large extent” (Bobb 2015). Bobb invokes another reason for the slow effect of, in this particular case, UNICEF projects on education. Namely, that since the organisation has shifted focus in India, from being a temporary emergency relief body to sponsoring governmental long-term projects, it lessened both the influence over the projects, but also their visibility (Bobb 2015). This view is sustained by the organisation itself and given the global image it has, can fast lead to a trend among other international organisations. Referring specifically to higher education programmes on teacher training, the UNICEF India website reads: “UNICEF attempted to strike a balance between immediate needs in order to meet Right to Education goals and the longer-term structural reforms that are needed to strengthen teacher education systems” (UNICEF s.a.).

A series of governmental initiatives intend to follow up on the global education framework to which India has committed itself, as we have seen in previous paragraphs, but the extent to which the Department of Higher Education is successful in its endeavour is something to be seen in a longer term. Among national projects, the Department of Higher Education enumerates the improvement of technical education, language education, book promotion, scholarships, even distance learning programmes (MHRD s.a.). However, statistics on how this programmes are implemented and rates of success are largely unavailable, confirming what scholars have been saying about the chaotic, little structured and largely ineffective education system (Altbach 1993 and 2005, Jayaram 2004).

Taking just the language in higher education programmes as an example, a quick overview points towards the fact that the language policy is both ‘language-development’ oriented and ‘language-survival’ oriented (MHRD s.a.), which makes implementing language programmes complex and demanding. The Department of Higher Education within MHRD (s.a.) maintains that language policies occupy “an important place in the National Policy on Education and Programme of Action” and informs of its pluralistic approach. However, practical reasons do not allow for schooling programmes to be run in “10,400 raw returns of mother tongues (...) rationalized into 1576 mother tongues”, as identified in the national Census from 1991 (MHRD s.a.). Other examples of national initiatives that are focused at promoting



local languages and dialects are the establishment of language universities across the country (MHRD s.a.). However their number (only six) is severely limited in comparison to the large scale of student body and the multitude of mother tongues and dialects. Furthermore, the language universities also focus on the promotion of English language (MHRD s.a.), which again could be seen as forcing an international language into local context, instead of the other way around, and as an attempt to maintain and promote the British elitism.

The scope of the language-survival programmes takes into consideration local context to a certain level (a very important aspect in peacebuilding approaches), but the predominance of English as a language of instruction, reminder of the last colonial period, is one of the factors that prevents complete and successful national initiatives. Drawing parallels with peacebuilding approaches, this represents a major flaw of the Indian education system. Local contexts are complex and language is of high importance in preserving culture, passing on knowledge, respecting local history. Where local dialects are not considered, information, knowledge, culture get lost over time.

Many scholars fear that the higher education system in India is far from raising at the level of other well developed education systems, and scholars like Jayaram and Altbach identify, as we have seen above, a variety of reasons for the slow development in India. The quinquennial plans further identify the realities of Indian higher education:

“While access to higher education has improved for all social groups, including the disadvantaged, their relative disparities have not reduced substantially. These inequalities are not one dimensional: gender, disability, class, caste, religion, locality and region are some of the principal dimensions of inequality and when more than one of these conditions exist, their impact is compounded. Access to higher education, especially to prestigious programmes and institutions that are in demand, continues to reflect inherited social privileges.” (Planning Commission 2013: 102)

Before going on to the next case study, it is maybe worth mentioning that for a country of the complexity and size of India, where inequalities have been embedded for centuries, where ‘inegalitarian tendencies’ seem to mark deeply the higher education system (Altbach and Jayaram 2015), the real challenge is to first establish strategies for a well-functioning higher education system, before one can look at how it can be employed to helping out the country from a cultural and human development perspective.

The Indian higher education system is still fighting marks of British colonialism, from language policies, to organisational structure of the education institutions, to curricula development, to stark social strata differences. Historically, challenges are connected to an

elitist higher education system, implemented over centuries; to little understanding of cultural and local context, of language complexity, and social system; to huge disparities in social class and casts and therefore huge differences in access to higher education. The predominant instrumental approach promoted by the government, that higher education needs to provide the country and the world with highly skilled professionals, for economic gain, comes at times in contradiction with global educational norms, concerned with equal rights and possibilities for long-life learning.

Dube (cited in Jayaram 2004) resumed the struggling higher education in India clearly, by stating that the sector needs to depart from the image of an “immobile colossus - insensitive to the changing contexts of contemporary life” and embrace an efficient strategy, which will eventually allow it to stand next to other global higher education systems, not only in enrolment numbers, but also in quality, attention to local context, and universal education rights.

## **4.2 Sierra Leone – The Two Sides of Education**

Sierra Leone as a case study is a good example for both the shortcomings of education within the peacebuilding approach, but also for what Novelli and Smith (2011: 18) called “a successful case of UN interventions”. In the following paragraphs, I introduce Sierra Leone as a relevant case study for education and peacebuilding, by first presenting the country’s background in relation to the education system, followed by global framework and education and peacebuilding initiatives implemented, and ending with the differences in peacebuilding projects, between the global and local frameworks.

### **4.2.1 Greed vs. Grievance – Timeline and Outcomes**

Sierra Leone shares with the first case study being a former British colony. The country gained independence and was released from British protectorate in 1961, but unlike India (who is considered still a developing country), Sierra Leone finds itself on one of the lowest positions on the Human Development Index (Novelli and Smith 2011, Novelli 2011).

The civil war in Sierra Leone started in 1991, when members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacked various towns with the scope of overthrowing the regime that had been ruling the country since 1968 and to install democracy. While an UNICEF report underlines that opinions on the legitimacy of RUF’s actions are divided, some authors support the view that the society in Sierra Leone of 1990s was “riven with inequalities, patronage and deprivation” and that the civil war and the following years of conflict might have been fuelled by the general failure of the country to tackle the social inequalities (Novelli 2011: 17-20).

Following years of conflict, the international community intervened in 1999, under the mandate of the UN (previous international interventions were not under UN mandate), to oversee that the peace accord, designed to put an end to the country's civil war, was respected and implemented (Novelli 2011).

The formal end of the war in Sierra Leone came in 2002 and while the peace generally persisted and elections in 2012 were held without UN oversight (BBC 2017), the war took a heavy toll on the country's population. It is widely acknowledged that the civil war in Sierra Leone was plagued by "mass abductions and child soldiers, drug use among combatants, and the widespread use of rape and sexual violence" (Novelli 2011). The lack of a proper functioning education system is seen as a contributing factor to the high youth-toll of the war (Novelli 2011) and in the next paragraphs, I briefly draw an overview of the education sector.

Like in India, education in Sierra Leone is rooted in its colonial past (Novelli 2011, World Bank 2007), and after its independence, the country inherited a biased education system, aimed at the urban middle class. The purpose was to prepare students for higher education and ultimately for employment in governmental positions (World Bank 2007: 30-33). Furthermore, the colonial vs. protectorate past of the country, dividing Sierra Leone in both administrative, but also geographical and social terms, maintained and enhanced the difference in educational opportunities in the country (Novelli 2011: 26-27). The World Bank report summarized the historical context and its influences on the education system in simple but eloquent words: "Most Sierra Leoneans were unable to access formal education or forced by circumstances to work before completing primary school. (...) The Sierra Leone education system became an elitist system that excluded the majority of the population." (World Bank 2007: 34).

In terms of the higher education sector, Sierra Leone was a pioneer in the region in its colonial/protectorate period: "The country played an important role in the training of the first corps of administrators, doctors, and teachers in English-speaking West Africa in the first half of the last century." (World Bank 2007). However, over a decade of civil war scarred deeply both infrastructure, with school and education institutions destroyed, but also killed thousands of teachers and students (Novelli 2011: 28-29). So the questions remains of how did the international community intervene in Sierra Leone, to help rebuild its capacities, the education sector and create and maintain peace and prevent relapse into conflict? In the following section, I present global initiatives that have combined or tried to combine education and peacebuilding projects and the degree to which they have been successful.

#### 4.2.2 Global Norms in Fragile Context

Following a period when the international community was reluctant to intervene in the Sierra Leone conflict, in 1998 an observer mission under UN mandate, UNOMSIL<sup>12</sup>, was officially deployed in the country. The purpose of the mission was to monitor the military and security situation in Sierra Leone, advise on the effort to disarm combatants and to map the atrocities and human right abuses happening against civilian population (Novelli 2011). The mission was forced to evacuate due to continuing violence, and all UN offices (including UNICEF) had to relocate or simply stop their activity. The international community consequently deployed UN peacekeepers in 1999, under the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which remained the main international peacekeeping body until December 2005 (Novelli 2001, BBC 2017).

The year 2005 saw the launch of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), who put Sierra Leone of its agenda, as one of its first pilot countries (Novelli 2011). And despite a list of comprehensive key areas for peacebuilding activities, which were decided upon together with the Government of Sierra Leone, none of the initial projects were specifically focused on education (Novelli 2011). This is perhaps telling for the general UN view on education within peacebuilding, at least in the early days of PBC activity, and will be analysed in the next chapter. It suffices to say here that early peacebuilding architecture, under UN mandate, was not placing importance on education and its potential, as it employed a “security-first approach” (Novelli 2011).

Both UNICEF and the World Bank reports (Novelli 2011, World Bank 2007) point out that despite the initial lack of focus on the education perspective and importance in peacebuilding, early PBC projects were very important for raising awareness on the situation in Sierra Leone. Also, they were essential for identifying ‘ingredients’ for democratic capacity building, good governance and protection of human rights in the country (Novelli 2011).

International interventions in Sierra Leone, targeting education programming and policy, have been divided into three categories, according to UNICEF: during the armed conflict (1992-2001), in the immediate aftermath of the conflict (2001-2007) and in the medium term (from 2007 onwards) (Novelli 2011: 35-49).

During the armed conflict, most of the education initiatives were taken by UNICEF, and were targeting basic education by “providing schooling for those displaced by the conflict and ensuring that emergency education provision was available (...)” (Novelli 2011: 35). Again, the status of former colony/protectorate had an impact on how education initiatives were dispersed

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<sup>12</sup> UNOMSIL (July 1998 - October 1999) - United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone

within the country, with the former colony region benefiting more of international humanitarian aid than the rest of the country, which had previously only had the status of protectorate (Novelli 2011). Despite efforts from international actors, like UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, to provide education, through programmes like RAPID-ED, School-in-a-Box, camps for internally displaced people (IDP)<sup>13</sup>, there is still an ongoing debate within the international community about “the relative priority of educational interventions during the conflict period - in relations with provision of food, shelter, and health care - yet this need not to be a zero-sum debate” (Novelli 2011: 37). In other words, keeping schools and education opportunities open during and right in the aftermath of conflicts can have important psychological effects, can help guide people’s perceptions on war and in general, can significantly and positively affect post-conflict recovery (Novelli 2011: 37).

It is furthermore unfortunate that international efforts to maintain the education system were not directed towards the higher education system, as Emerson A. Jackson (2015: 15-16) notes: “The lasting dilapidated legacy left by a decade of civil war also accounted for difficulties (...) to promote research and development work by respective universities”. The view is supported by others, like Camilo Guerrero (2014: 3): “At the height of the civil war, higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country were looted and vandalised, worsening the fabric of higher education. Although the physical infrastructure of these HEIs has been restored, some continue to operate in poor physical conditions.”

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, education gained momentum and there were both governmental and international efforts to meet the demand for educational programmes (World Bank 2007, Novelli 2011, Novelli and Smith 2011). However, as part of peacebuilding projects, few to none were directed towards higher education. Success of programmes like CREPS<sup>14</sup>, rebuilding schools and facilities for primary and secondary education, was not immediately translated to aiding the destroyed higher education sector. While the country was in dire need of teachers and qualified professionals, primary education was a core priority, representing a “clear sign to the population of state presence” (Novelli 2011: 43). It was not until the ‘medium term period’ (from 2007 onwards), that international community actively participated in development and implementation of initiatives designed to use higher education to peacebuilding effect (Novelli 2011).

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<sup>13</sup> RAPID-ED, School-in-a-Box and IDP camps were educational programmes implemented during the civil war period, as a joint effort by UNICEF, UN, UNESCO, UNHCR, the Ministry of Education and various NGOs and aid agencies.

<sup>14</sup> CREPS - educational intervention which condensed six years of primary education into three years, targeting demobilized youth refugee returnees and youth who missed out on primary education due to war (Novelli 2011)

In 2007, with strong support from UNICEF, the government of Sierra Leone devised and launched the *Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2007-2015*. The plan represented a step in the right direction for the higher education sector, as it acknowledged the brain drain at higher education level, with many professionals having fled the country during the civil war, and the lack of qualified teachers (Novelli 2011: 44-46). Consequent efforts to stabilize teacher-training programmes were taken, but as they were mainly supported through local initiatives, they will be presented in the following section.

Most of the international aid towards the revival of the higher education sector in Sierra Leone seems to have been provided in the medium term post-conflict period (World Bank 2007, Novelli 2011, Guerrero 2014). From a peacebuilding perspective, the education initiatives were mainly directed towards teacher training, as “the role of teachers in shaping the minds and ideas of your people is central.” (Novelli 2011: 54). Teacher training programmes in Sierra Leone became more relevant in the ESP 2007-2015. Under UNICEF guidance, the core strategies focused on preparing teachers for “scarce areas such as mathematics, French, science, technical and vocational subjects”, on “addressing the gross disparities in male-female enrolment rates at the post-primary level” (Novelli 2011: 44-46). Post-primary education also became a core strategy, in an attempt to produce skilled professionals, like “administrators, qualified teachers and female role models essential for the healthy development of the nation” (Novelli 2011).

Other international educational initiatives were implemented through Demobilisation, Disarmament and Rehabilitation (DDR). Being central to UN missions in Sierra Leone, the DDR programmes had a specific educational focus. Almost 60 per cent of the estimated 72.000 people that have undertaken DDR programmes, participated in skills training, while 24 per cent enrolled for the first time or re-entered formal education (Novelli 2011). DDR programmes were especially important in Sierra Leone, where the child, youth and young adults enrolment in war was high. However, according to evaluations and interviews with participants, some of the DDR goals were more difficult to meet. Participants were vocal in that precisely skills training for young adults required more than the standard six months training, with a focus on the types of skills required on the market, to avoid “saturation in the market” (Novelli 2011).

School building and reconstruction programmes also featured in international efforts in Sierra Leone, but are not detailed in this thesis, as the focus was especially on basic education. As a last example of international educational interventions in the country, the refugee return programmes must be mentioned. The UNICEF report (Novelli 2011) presents briefly that when it comes to the education sector, teachers were again a main category that UNICEF and UNHCR

focused on. This is highlighted through offering backdated salaries to returning teachers and assistance in repatriation and reintegration programmes (Novelli 2011).

As it is shown in the paragraphs above, international initiatives for rebuilding the education system in Sierra Leone were not in limited number. However, the extent to which peacebuilding in Sierra Leone has been achieved through these educational initiatives is under debate (Novelli 2011: 55) and will be analysed in the findings chapter of the thesis.

#### **4.2.3 Education and Peacebuilding from a Local Perspective**

Higher education has a long history and played an important role in Sierra Leone before the civil war, as it was shown in the previous section. Being the country with the only institution of higher learning in West Africa from 1827 to 1948, Sierra Leone was known as “the Athens of West Africa.” (Matsumoto in Paulson 2011) and its role in training the first corps of doctors, administrators, and teachers is well acknowledged. The civil war put a stop to the development of the higher education sector and as it was presented in the previous section, most of the international peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts involved education initiatives directed towards primary education. In the post-civil war period and already after the Peace Accord in 1999, the reconstruction of the country’s education infrastructure was initiated by international agencies, with close involvement of the government (Novelli 2011).

A main distinction between the national and international programmes within the education sector is that while the international community focused on primary education (with the exception of teacher training programmes), national policy initiatives were also looking at how the higher education sector can be revived. Camilo Guerrero points out to five different pieces of legislation that were enacted between 2001 and 2007 and that “laid the foundations for the higher education environment that exists today” (Guerrero 2014). Furthermore, the 2013-2018 *Agenda for Prosperity and Development Strategy*, also showed the government’s intention to improve the “quality of and access to higher education through increased national funding, supervision and research. The state provides the bulk of funding for public HEIs in Sierra Leone.” (Guerrero 2014). In assessing the country’s funding towards the higher education sector, Guerrero finds that unlike other governments which follow developmental goals in prioritizing projects, and allocate funds based on institutional performance, funding towards the higher education in Sierra Leone is mainly based on the national budget, national priorities and historical allocation. The downturn to this approach is that while official support is present, the way in which is conveyed gives little motivation to the higher education institutions to improve (Guerrero 2014).

An UNESCO report (2013) found that enrolment in engineering, agriculture, sciences and medical studies accounted for small shares of total enrolment (between 3 and 5 percent), whereas the bulk of students were registered in teacher education, humanities and polytechnics (33 percent, 22 percent and 19 percent respectively)<sup>15</sup>. However, none of the higher education programmes are specifically connected to peacebuilding efforts<sup>16</sup>, apart from, again, teacher training programmes, whose importance in forming new generations and create the right environment to consolidate the education system has been acknowledged in previous paragraphs.

Overall, higher education seems to be only minimally considered in peacebuilding projects that UN, UNESCO and UNICEF have conducted in Sierra Leone, a marginal component in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country (Novelli 2011). The case report commissioned by UNICEF also unveiled that Sierra Leone is a special case, where education, apart from not being used to its potential within peacebuilding efforts, sits also “at the heart of the core problems of Sierra Leone society” and is also “one of its potential solutions” (Novelli 2011). The drivers of conflict in Sierra Leone are disputed, but academic literature, as reviewed in the UNICEF report (Novelli 2011) identifies it as a “greed vs. grievance” war. The conflict is characterised by complexity, with scholars divided between the reasoning that war was fuelled by the greed of the political class and the reasoning that historical, geographical and social inequalities led to war. Moreover, research identifies education as a driver of Sierra Leone’s conflict, because it finds that youth and young “semi-educated and unemployed” adults, frustrated with an elitist and excluding education system, with no opportunities of finding work, turned their anger at a “collapsing education system” and saw war as an opportunity to “reverse entrenched power structures” (Novelli 2011).

The general consensus is that education was largely marginalized in the UN peacebuilding strategy in Sierra Leone. The country is largely seen as a successful case of UN interventions, since it went through two elections without “the return to large-scale violence more than a decade since the cessation of hostilities” (Novelli and Smith 2011). At the same time, Sierra Leone also represents a case where education, elitist and geographically uneven, was an important driver for conflict. Although the UN has been a strong presence in the country since 1998, both within peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, and although UNICEF and

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<sup>15</sup> Figures are representative for the year 2009/2010

<sup>16</sup> Typical education and peacebuilding programme: Learning for Peace - a four-year Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme, between UNICEF, Netherlands, the national governments of 14 participating countries, that focuses on education and peacebuilding  
[https://www.unicef.org/education/bege\\_65480.html#learningforpeace/countries/sierra-leone](https://www.unicef.org/education/bege_65480.html#learningforpeace/countries/sierra-leone)



UNESCO contributed to peacebuilding through long-standing involvement during the conflict and in its aftermath, the IOs recognize that education programming was not based on peacebuilding analysis even though the interventions were designed as peacebuilding actions (Novelli and Smith 2011). Sierra Leone is also an example for undeveloped relation between the higher education system and peacebuilding approaches, given that the international community recognizes education is potentially an important factor in the successful implementation of peacebuilding projects, but too little is done to analyse the potential role of higher education in peacebuilding.

The next case study will introduce Afghanistan, as a country which has been under the international magnifying glass for over a decade, and towards which the international community has put a lot of effort to build peace, to this date without the success predicted and expected.

### **4.3 Afghanistan – A Never-Ending Peacebuilding Story**

A report from 2010, published by UNESCO and titled “Education under Attack 2010”, followed by “Education under Attack 2014” (commissioned by GCPEA), present the scale to which both education at primary and secondary level, but also higher education, are very often victims in conflict situations. Particularly higher education is here of interest, as both reports identify various threats to it. From rejecting academic politicization, to protecting religion, ethnicity, gender, to exposing crimes by the government, higher education comes very often under the magnifying glass in conflict areas, and as such becomes a direct target for assault (UNESCO 2010: 74-76).

Various attempts to restructure and help the education system within peacebuilding have been taken in Afghanistan, from basic education initiatives, like rebuilding schools with donor aid and providing schools with books (USAID 2016), to helping out with higher education capacity building and enrolment (UNESCO s.a., USAID 2016). International organizations that promote development and provide humanitarian aid to countries affected by conflict have long included support to education (Burde and Khan 2016, Sigsgaard 2009, Spink 2005) and Afghanistan has been high on the priority list for donor and aid organisations. In the following paragraphs, I present a brief timeline of the education system in Afghanistan in general, while nuancing the higher education, followed by examples of international initiatives and the result of implementing them locally.

#### **4.3.1 Education in Decline – Different Influences, Same Results**

In the aftermath of 9/11, Afghanistan landed under the international magnifying glass once more. What the world saw was an isolated country, scarred by poverty, wars and strict sharia laws, where women had no rights and terrorists were ‘at home’ (Spink 2005: 195-196). However, through the centuries, Afghanistan also amassed countless cultural traits, ethnicities and traditions, making it a country rich in history (Spink 2005). After gaining independence from the British at the beginning of the 20th century, the country faced a void in national identity, and to reconstruct it, the government needed to introduce a modern education system throughout the country, with the goal to develop technical skills for its people, and to create a national identity for the newly independent Afghanistan (Spink 2005). Modern higher education in Afghanistan began with the establishment of various faculties in the period 1932 - 1948 (Medicine, Law, Science, Letters), which eventually formed the basis of the University of Kabul (Samady 2001: 59). The first teacher training college was established in 1956 and marked the interest and intention of developing a well-functioning education system in the country (Samady 2001: 59). Prior to the Soviet invasion, the Afghan education system saw a surge in attention for the development of education in general, and higher education in special, especially after the launch of the first five year economic development plan in 1956 (Samady 2001).

The period 1978-1991 was marked on the education front by a transformative wave. In close collaboration with the Soviet political and education advisers, the government formulated new education policies, which “conformed to the country’s political objectives and agenda and adapted the education system to the Soviet model of education in order to facilitate closer collaboration in education and training” (Samady 2001, Spink 2005). As such, the Revolutionary Council issued a decree in 1980 which purportedly underlined the importance and role of education for the Afghan society. Historical timeline shows that reforming the society and imposing modern, be them Western or Soviet norms, was not successful in Afghanistan. This was mainly due to the country-wide opposition to international influences, due to internal diversity, conflicts and not least, due to the strong traditional groups of influence in the country (Samady 2001). In spite of the fact that the country's education system was under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education and of the Ministry of Higher Education, and in spite of the fact that the Cold War period contributed to international aid that poured into Afghanistan, from both Soviet and US governments, the educational reforms were not grounded enough to impede the rapid growth of the Taliban influence (Spink 2005).

Educational reforms, including infrastructure, suffered irremediably with the establishing of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in 1992. Samady offers an eloquent description of the period, right after the mujahedins entered Kabul in 1992:

“(…) most of the infrastructure for education in large areas of the countryside had collapsed, as a result of fighting and the exodus of people from rural areas. About two thousand schools were damaged or destroyed. Thousands of teachers were either victims of the war or had left Afghanistan. There were serious shortages of textbooks and basic equipment and teaching materials.” (Samady 2001: 77).

The international community had envisaged a different evolution for the country. However, in the absence of a clear constitution, and amplified by the division between ethnic leaders, and the ruling of a government formed by mujahedins, the few education policies and strategies which existed in Afghanistan prior to 1992, essentially collapsed (Samady 2001, Spink 2005). Furthermore, any hope of development in the field of education was destroyed by the arrival of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, which saw both primary and secondary, but especially higher education, all but obliterated.

A tipping point for Afghanistan was the sudden attention given to the country in the aftermath of 9/11. The international community looked at Afghanistan with a renewed interest, and when in 2002 entered the country after a long absence, it encountered a devastated and split nation, a huge regress in development and literally no educational system and infrastructure (Spink 2005). The education sector that had only experienced a couple of decades of development was reduced to ashes by the Taliban, who burnt schools for promoting communist ideology and forbade girls to attend schools for religious reasons (Spink 2005: 200-201) and the international community faced, once more, the difficult task to try and rebuild an important brick for the Afghan society.

The next section looks at what education initiatives were taken by the international community, as part of peacebuilding attempts in Afghanistan and how much did they function.

#### **4.3.2 Failing Global Norms in a Failing Country**

Various international reports and research papers registered statistics on the education development in Afghanistan (Samady 2001, Spink 2005, Burde and Khan 2016, Sigsgaard 2009). As such, it is noted that in the year 2000, enrolment in primary education barely reached the level of 1978, with girl enrolment almost imperceptible at national level. Samady noted for the UNESCO report that “there is some secondary education, but there is no significant

technical and vocational or higher education in the country” (2001). Despite the tragic war, in conditions of poverty and despair, people still showed an interest in education, as the implementation of many international initiatives proves.

Dana Burde and Jehanzaib Khan (2016) conducted a field study in a violent region in Afghanistan, in order to map what education efforts were undertaken under the auspices of the international community, and what was the local response to these education campaigns. It is important to note that Burde and Khan identified with the idea that in the context of international humanitarian aid and human rights work, norms tend to emerge through moral or norm entrepreneurs. But critique to this attitude underlines that when international actors, who promote change in vulnerable areas, intervene, they tend to ignore the normative shifts that are emerging with the local actors (2016: 46). The international aid programme which formed the basis for Burde and Khan’s study was developed and initiated by a major international NGO, Save the Children International (SCI). Analysing it, Burde and Khan found that most significant barriers to schooling in conflicted or post-conflicted areas are “poverty, violence against education and their own lack of education” (NB. education of the parents) (2016: 73-74). Burde and Khan also found that context-specific situations have a huge influence on the outcome of humanitarian intervention, not least because “despite broad endorsement, promoting universal rights may conflict with dominant local attitudes, values and customs” (2016: 74).

A case study on Afghanistan, commissioned by INEE and authored by Morten Sigsgaard, identifies five drivers of fragility that influence the outcome of international efforts: security, economy, governance, and social factors (poverty, health and education provisions and destroyed infrastructure) (2009: 17). Sigsgaard sees security as an important factor in the success of education programmes, but notes that it needs to be supplemented by other resources. International initiatives like community-based and home-based education have been long-established in Afghanistan, in order to overcome safety issues (Sigsgaard 2009: 19). But NGOs and agencies providing education programmes in Afghanistan (Save the Children, CARE, The International Rescue Committee, the Swedish Afghanistan Committee, UNICEF, UNESCO etc.) approached the security dilemma by working either ‘around’, ‘in’ or ‘on’ conflict (Goodhand cited in Sigsgaard 2009: 20), which produced different rates of success and goal-reaching for each of the international programmes. An example is Save the Children UK, which is implementing education programmes by often using only local, Afghan staff. The approach is both criticised for being unethical by protecting Western staff from dangers, while local staff are sent to conflicted areas, but it is also a way of discreetly reducing visibility of international efforts, in a bid to maintain and offer opportunities to those population segments who need it

most (Sigsgaard 2009). The opium-based economy, the governance, the corruption and even the harsh geographical environment, further contribute to varying degrees of success of educational efforts in Afghanistan, by often keeping the international donors and aid agencies at a distance.

As it was shown earlier in the thesis, precisely the lack of local perspective in international peace efforts are what some authors name as failing elements in peacebuilding processes. As an example, Jeaniene Spink analysed the reason for failure of Back-to-School campaign in Afghanistan in 2002 and pointed towards the project's weaknesses (Spink 2005: 200). Lack of coordination between international actors and local entities, the political context and the failure to reform teacher training structures in the country, combined to weaken the educational peacebuilding efforts (2005: 200-203). Spink further noted that restructuring an education system scarred by decades of conflicts is both a long-term project and a difficult one (2005: 204). In addition, the dynamics of the education field produced shifts, from the position that education is mainly a force for good, to a newer widespread conception that education is not necessarily a neutral force, but on the contrary, that it can perpetuate conflict and effectively stop peacebuilding efforts (Spink 2005). It urges a new view on education in fragile situation and on education as a peacebuilding component, that education should not solely be seen as a logistical operation, but that the local perspectives and the qualitative components play a more important role than previously thought (2005: 204-205).

Other international initiatives, like UNESCO's "Strategic Planning and Capacity Development for Higher Education in Afghanistan" have been trying to contribute to the development of the education sector, and at the same time create a sound base for a peaceful nation. While the programme provided technical support to the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan, by focusing on capacity building for policy analysis and planning, it also represented a joint effort with the World Bank, to develop a five year National Higher Education Strategic Plan (UNESCO, s.a.). In working to develop and implement a viable national education strategy, the Ministry of Higher Education set the first steps on the recovery path.

One of the important education aid donors in Afghanistan, USAID, in collaborations with the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, pledged 45 million dollars for the period 2014-2020 to the Strengthening Education in Afghanistan II (SEA II) programme. High on the priority list for SEA II are literacy programmes, especially for women, as well as printing textbooks, furnishing schools, establishing mobile libraries (USAID 2016b). Furthermore, in terms of bringing higher education in the spotlight, SEA II created a scholarship programme for women pursuing higher

education Afghanistan, as well as providing maths and science training to public high schools in disfavoured provinces (USAID 2016b). Through the first three years of implementation, SEA II also “trained over 750 maths and science teachers and laboratory technicians” and paved the way towards higher education for over 1300 students through university entry exams preparation programmes (USAID 2016b).

Curricula developed at the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF), the first private, non-profit university in Afghanistan, established again, under the auspices and support of the USAID, is based on US liberal arts model - a move which speaks for what kind of cultural and educational global norms define its programmes. Values like ‘free expression’, ‘tolerance’, ‘mutual respect’, ‘critical inquiry’ are promoted, and on its website, the institution pledges to respect “the principles of equality and fairness without regard to gender, ethnicity, religion or kinship” (American University of Afghanistan s.a.). The approach to education and skills development, inclusion of local staff and content of curricula (business, information technology, political science and public administration) reflects global influences onto the higher education system. Little of the Afghan cultural context is mirrored in the university’s curricula, and the Western ‘business-like’ model followed by AUAF detracts from the work the international community is doing towards building peace in the country.

As it is shown in the next section, a great deal of challenges arise from the different perceptions of what peacebuilding should be like, from the international and from the local perspective.

### **4.3.3 Education, Peacebuilding and Local Norms**

A country with the tribal and linguistic diversity, strict Islamic tradition and embedded values was always going to represent a complex case for Western interventions. After decades of war and conflict, the role of traditions, the ethnic diversity, the family values, should have been explored and integrated at a higher rate into educational programmes and peacebuilding efforts (Samady 2001). This represents major problem not only in Afghanistan, but also in a number of other countries and regions, such as the Balkans, where the conflicts were also based on ethnic diversity (Samady 2001: 100).

In the case of Afghanistan, international organizations and donors have given priority to primary education as part of a global effort to rebuild the education systems, and this represents an extra burden for the higher education initiatives in the country (Hayward and Babury 2015: 19). Major donors like the US Agency for International Development and the World Bank cannot fund programmes that are complex enough to succeed given the

environment in Afghanistan. An Oxfam report (Waldman 2008) showed that population in Afghanistan is not only facing Taliban threats, that compromise education initiatives, but rather the picture is more complex and it involves warlords, criminals, international forces, drug traffickers, corrupt police, other tribes, embedded cultural and religious views etc.

Higher education supported by the international community faces further threats, in the form of direct attacks, such as the one in August 2016, against students and staff of the American University of Afghanistan, in Kabul (CNN 2016). Under the auspices of the USAID, the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan approved the founding of the first private, non-profit university in the country, in 2006 (USAID s.a.). In the Afghan context, implementing education measures is both complex, demanding and to a large extent, dangerous. The Islamic tradition is an important factor to be considered when it comes to implementing education programmes, together with ethnic diversity, and all the way to the role and influence of Afghani family values and structures.

It is maybe the place here to introduce in more detail the views that education can play a negative role in fragile situations, or contribute to creating fragile situations. A growing group of scholars (Bush and Saltarelli 2000, Matsumoto 2008, Burde and Khan 2016) have analysed the two faces of education, in the Afghan context. As an indication of how implementing education initiatives can backfire, both Burde and Khan (2016) and Matsumoto (2008) present UNICEF's "Back to School" programme. Within the local context, although much focus was put of literacy and capacity development, girl enrolment and education for returning refugee children, programmes that addressed specific education needs, had marginal status (Matsumoto 2008). The list of dangers is still comprehensive, after years of international involvement in Afghanistan. Poverty, security, violence against education, lack of adult literacy, and culturally embedded norms (such as the fact that in many regions of the country female students do not have access to education because there is a lack of female teachers), represent significant barriers in implementing successful education initiatives as part of peacebuilding efforts (Burde and Khan 2016). Decades of international influence served also to increase the fears that education programmes are means to indoctrinate, to teach un-Islamic ideas, to reduce emphasis on religion (Burde and Khan 2016) or to maintain or increase ethnic differences (Matsumoto 2008). Reluctance to Afghani curriculum being developed by 'outsiders' and lack of consideration that international community showed in policy and curriculum development, course material printing, have allowed radical groups to regain influence and minimize the effect of the international community initiatives in the education sector (Spink 2005).

Education is not considered a force only for good anymore, but is rather seen as a transforming process, intimately related to peacebuilding efforts (Spink 2005). More and more scholars, authors, policymakers, international organizations agree that peacebuilding is “not only about imposing solutions or preconceived ideas”, but that it very often “involves self-analysis, and should help communities to develop their own means of strengthening social cohesion” (Waldman 2008). Spink (2005) goes further and underlines that “there is now an urgency not only to provide rapid educational responses (...) but also to address the role of education in the root causes of conflict”.

The case studies introduced in this chapter show that implementing education in fragile context as part of peacebuilding actions cannot be seen only as a simple, logistical operation, with a short timeframe and superficial international involvement. Often times, as Spink noted “simply reprinting the same textbooks and employing the same teachers in the post-conflict stage will not ensure peace and reconciliation” (2005: 204). An emphasis must therefore be put on rebuilding and restructuring education systems as a whole, rather than just building on systems that are not properly understood by the international community (Spink 2005). The next chapter focuses on presenting and analysing the data gathered in the research process, while keeping in mind the research questions that inform this thesis.



## 5. Findings and Discussions

This chapter discusses the main findings of the case studies and the in-depth literature review, while making use of the main research question

- *What is the role of higher education in peacebuilding?*
- *What are the characteristics of the higher education system in the context of peacebuilding? and*
- *In which way are local contexts considered in the construction of higher education institutions, within a peacebuilding approach?*

The research questions are applied to the data, with the aim of presenting, discussing and analysing the main findings. Looking closely at the data through the lenses of the research questions also provides a more comprehensive discussion and analysis in this thesis. Relating the cases with the theoretical and conceptual section and making the connection with the peacebuilding literature supports the assessment of the main topic, that higher education does have an important role to play in peacebuilding approaches, but that to date, this role is both under-researched and not sufficiently exploited.

A few important approaches for analysing the data in this thesis were inspired from Dana Burde. The author looked at the relationship between education and conflict, and education and protection, while at the same time differentiating between education in crisis and education in development, and analysing the role of state in the field of education in crisis (2005: 25-27). Through the first chapters of the thesis it was shown that international humanitarian agencies (and governmental humanitarian aid agencies, like USAID), IOs, peacekeeping and peacebuilding bodies, all have and employ strategies where education is acknowledged and taken into consideration, although this is done to different extents.

In the case of India, a country which does not actively benefit from peacebuilding as such, the main approach towards education was found to be in tight connection to development. Indeed, it confers a highly instrumental role to the field. But it was found that governmental efforts intend to keep up with global trends in education, by signing on education treaties, goal papers, by actively participating in international education programmes etc. The weakness here is formed by inconsistencies between official goals and the realities of the Indian education system, be they financial, political, demographic, historical, linguistic, and social.

Sierra Leone is an example for international and national efforts that combined towards reaching peacebuilding goals. And it is widely accepted that these goals were met, given the international consensus that the country is in a period of peace. Furthermore, Sierra Leone

represents also one of the first countries where education and peacebuilding were seen as complementary elements, where the capacity to increase the positive effects of peacebuilding interventions was directly targeted (but some would say, without success). Given the differentiation provided by Dana Burde, Sierra Leone can be categorised as a country where education was considered a useful strategy already in conflict phase. This will be detailed later on in the chapter, but it can be mentioned here that education initiatives during conflict were not highly successful. Through DDR programmes, education also aimed to play an important, although instrumental, role in economic development, with the majority of the participants agreeing that the approach should have been more sensitive to local needs and contexts.

The case of Afghanistan is the most complex of the three countries. Education initiatives were employed from the moment international forces entered the country in the aftermath of 9/11, but it is at best debatable whether these programmes were successful. As the country is still struggling to reach the stability that would benefit most the education system, global education norms clashed with deeply rooted Afghani norms, to a level that allows for the remark that higher education and peacebuilding in Afghanistan are far from being well integrated.

Scholars and policy makers do not always agree on the role education has to play in peacebuilding strategies, and often this influences policy recommendations and practical approaches. The research and analysis also revealed that there is an important difference between literature which focuses on education programming within peacebuilding and the academic literature (Smith 2010). To be more explicit, while education and peacebuilding literature stresses to a greater degree security, reconstruction, and protection aspects, the academic literature emphasized more the capacity building, and transformative role education can have.

## **5.1 From Theory to Practice**

When it comes to the connection between the literature and how the policies, programmes, and interventions are applied in practice, the research shows there are discrepancies between how global norms are interpreted and how local context are considered. Maybe a stark contrast between the two is again found in the case study Afghanistan, where local norms seem to resist to global education norms being implemented. The fact that schools are destroyed because they are in stride with cultural understanding of education, or because of the meaning they carry (often seen as a product or reminiscence of a Western education system); the fact that a basic human right, like the equal right to education, is not met; the fact the role of women in society creates normative tension between local and international groups, represent

important elements to be considered in programme implementation and policy development. No specific policies in the case studies were found, that focus on the interaction between higher education and peacebuilding.

Such findings give an answer to the first research questions, and at the same time reflect on the gap between the theoretical and practical approaches to higher education and peacebuilding. At the moment, there is no predominant role for higher education in peacebuilding. At least not from an official, institutionalised point of view. There are global agendas, like Education 2030, that mention the right to education on a lifelong basis. UNICEF has acknowledged the importance of education in peacebuilding. Nevertheless, the realities of peacebuilding and higher education are that they operate on different premises, although the connection between the two fields is possible because these premises are not mutually exclusive. It is difficult to make them compatible to the point where higher education becomes a successful element in peacebuilding architecture. However, as it is shown in the following paragraphs, there are contexts where higher education and peacebuilding can be bridged.

Academics like Peter Buckland also looked at the relationship between education and conflict. Unlike Burde (2005), who stated that ruling on the role of conflict on education is not simple, Buckland approached the topic with a strong statement: “Conflict has a devastating impact on education, both in terms of the suffering and psychological impact (...)” (2005: 13). Moving to differentiate between destruction of education by direct conflict, and as a result of years of official neglect following conflict (2005: 16), Buckland’s remarks are relevant for the situations encountered in the case studies. India is representative for the latter example (although conflict is here replaced by long colonial history) and Sierra Leone and Afghanistan are examples of education systems destroyed by conflicts. Buckland identified specific challenges for rebuilding and reinstating education systems post-conflict, like helping the vulnerable, giving psychological support to students, or establishing programmes of peace education (2005: 57-61), and these type of programmes were traced to the case studies here.

Scholars identify serious challenges to the sector of education in conflict or postconflict situations, among which a recurrent challenge is the fact that primary education is naturally the first to receive international attention. A direct consequence is that secondary and higher education are suffering much more during conflict and use more time in recovering (Buckland 2005), yet not enough is researched on this topic. Economic development is an important drive in the all the postconflict interventions, yet Buckland noted that giving more attention to basic education at the expense of higher education can create an imbalance in the economic fabric of

the states, directly affecting them long-term (2005: 63-64). These views were often encountered in the literature and data reviewed for this thesis.

A series of UNICEF, UNESCO and INEE reports<sup>17</sup> were analysed in depth, as their focus was on the role of education in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, among other countries. Education in this context is scrutinized in the quest to provide evidence on the role it has in peacebuilding, as well as examining how “education interventions and programming could have a stronger role in the UN peacebuilding architecture” (UNICEF 2011).

Big ‘players’ in global education, like UNICEF, UNESCO and other international agencies, are found to be the main actors that stand behind the education programmes developed in the countries studied for this thesis. As such, much of the programme implementation bears their characteristics. An UNICEF report (2011) included reviews of the peacebuilding programmes, in order to assess the existing knowledge, and identify gaps in the literature, as well as looking at UNICEF’s actions in post-conflict contexts. Findings indicated that “most of the education programming in post-conflict contexts is not being planned from an explicit peacebuilding perspective” (UNICEF 2011: 7-8). It further showed that existing peacebuilding programmes are not effective in preventing relapse into conflicts because they are mainly limited to “disarmament, multi-party elections or establishing market economy” and do not confer education a sufficiently important role (UNICEF 2011: 8). Other studies commissioned by UNICEF looked at the role of education in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings, with the purpose of creating an evidence base about the role and potential of education in peacebuilding processes, identifying elements that could help improve UN peacebuilding (Novelli 2011, Zakharia 2011, Vaux 2011). Novelli and Smith (2011), found that the concept of peacebuilding is not well defined and the education sector has not been strongly integrated in peacebuilding programmes. Furthermore, it was found that education programming supporting peacebuilding is distinct from humanitarian response programming and conflict-sensitive education, and the education sector has potentially a role in supporting transformations in post-conflict societies,

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<sup>17</sup> UNICEF, The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: a synthesis report of findings from Lebanon, Nepal and Sierra Leone, [https://www.unicef.org/spanish/evaldatabase/files/EEPCT\\_PeacebuildingSynthesisReport.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/spanish/evaldatabase/files/EEPCT_PeacebuildingSynthesisReport.pdf)  
UNESCO/INEE, Education and fragility in Afghanistan: a situational analysis, [http://www.w.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/education\\_and\\_fragility\\_in\\_afghanistan.pdf](http://www.w.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/education_and_fragility_in_afghanistan.pdf)  
UNICEF, The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: Literature review, [https://www.unicef.org/education/files/EEPCT\\_Peacebuilding\\_LiteratureReview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/education/files/EEPCT_Peacebuilding_LiteratureReview.pdf)  
UNICEF, The Role of Education in Peacebuilding. Case Study - Sierra Leone, [https://www.unicef.org/education/files/EEPCT\\_Peacebuilding\\_CaseStudy\\_SierraLeone.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/education/files/EEPCT_Peacebuilding_CaseStudy_SierraLeone.pdf)

still to be explored (2011: 7-8). These aspects are consistent with findings in this thesis and are presented in the following paragraphs.

Given the complexity of the research and the way the case studies were structured, the remainder of this chapter is divided into two subsections. The first part considers the international approaches and forming of norms around education and peacebuilding and investigates how higher education becomes part of peacebuilding strategies. The second part of the chapter is analysing how decisions regarding education and peacebuilding were implemented at local level. For this purpose, the case studies created the relevant background and while the analysis will not limit only on the three case studies, they represent the main insight into the research field.

## **5.2 Global Norms in Higher Education and Peacebuilding**

The conceptualisation of both education and peacebuilding is a recurrent theme in the data analysed, and various authors note the effects conflicts can have on states and implicitly, on population (Midttun 2006: 1-2). The research found that initiatives are not lacking in the field of education in emergencies, and Eldrid Midttun (2006) raised the question on the roles different actors play in emergencies, using the example of the Norwegian Refugee Council. However, education in crisis situations is very often limited at primary education, and while programmes to advance education within peacebuilding are constantly developed, higher education has not reached an important position within the field.

In the case of Sierra Leone for example, education programming and policy development was spread over three periods and attempts were made to adapt the interventions accordingly. During the armed conflict, initiatives were focused on providing schooling for children affected by the war, through RAPID-ED programmes, led primarily by UNICEF. Education for young adults became a focus in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, through DDR initiatives. Aimed mainly at rehabilitation of former combatants, DDR programmes had, over the course of six months, a predominant focus on building skills that allowed integration on the job market (Novelli 2011). It was only in the medium term period (from 2007 on) that higher education featured as part of peacebuilding programmes in Sierra Leone. Mainly in the form of teacher training programmes, higher education took an important role of educating professionals with the scope of rebuilding primary and secondary education. From the perspective of global norms, the right to education, and attempts to offer equal access to education to both girls and boys, providing a safe space for children in the midst of war, are elements that were implemented through international interventions. But for example, the DDR

programmes, aimed at youth and young adults, proved to be too short-termed, with many participants asserting that six months do not allow full rehabilitation and skills development (Novelli 2011). This can be seen as a direct result of contradiction between education and peacebuilding interventions. In terms of education, the goal was to provide re-entry to school and skills to as many former combatants as possible, fulfilling in this way global educational targets. In terms of peacebuilding, which is in essence a long-term approach, the six-month period for each DDR programme was not sufficient to cover psychological, schooling, reintegration needs.

India, as the illustrative and historic case, did not benefit of education in emergencies programmes as such. However, given its social class disparities, huge economic imbalance among its people, large range of languages, India forms the ground for contexts that are similar to contexts where peacebuilding is employed. To meet economic, cultural, social needs, to fight economic and social discrepancies, the Government, immensely helped by UNICEF, devised new Teacher Education (TE) programmes (UNICEF s.a.). Since 2012, education goals in the TE programmes are closely monitored by UNICEF (s.a.). As such, one can assume programme contents are highly influenced by the organisation's norms. Notwithstanding, maybe for the first time in the case studies, an interesting approach to higher education and global norms emerged. That UNICEF (s.a.) "*attempted to strike a balance between immediate needs in order to meet RTE goals and the longer-term structural reforms that are needed to strengthen TE systems*" can represent a way of combining higher education and peacebuilding. The approach aims at combining both long-term and short-term goals, adapting to education and 'peacebuilding' norms. How successful this type of approach can be, is not yet measurable. But in the long run, including higher education in peacebuilding architecture in this way might become a key element for programme design.

Programme implementation has been extensive in Afghanistan, given the tremendous international involvement in the country. From initiatives for primary and secondary education, like Back-to-School (BTS), School in a Box, community-based schools, to women literacy programmes, establishing a peace centre at Kabul University, and the opening of the first international higher education institution (AUAF) with support from USAID, Afghanistan did not lack of education interventions (Spink 2005, USAID s.a.). The research found that UNICEF and USAID continue to be important players in the country, standing behind many of the education programmes. For example, the BTS campaign saw an impressive three million children return to schools in 2002 (Spink 2005), although the campaign was eventually met by controversies. Firstly, in the excitement that after years of Taliban rule, schools were accessible

again, and girls were allowed access to education, the international community, led by UNESCO and UNICEF, did not pay attention to either curricula, nor to the fact that the Ministry of Education, in the National Development Budget of 2002, declared that “main goal of education sector in Afghanistan was to provide literacy programmes for the remaining male family members of Afghan martyrs” (Spink 2005).

In a stark example of how little global norms, such as schooling for all, get along with local contexts and norms (in this case, education only for male students), many of the education initiatives in Afghanistan were found to be less successful than initially predicted. Curricula development and providing materials for schools is also found to be an impediments for successful outcomes in the BTS campaign in Afghanistan, again an indicator of the difficulty to embed global education norms in fragile, local contexts. In 2002, in preparation for the return to school of millions of children, USAID and UNICEF provided funds for manuals (Spink 2005). However, the Minister of Education at the time was reluctant to the Basic Competency Learning (BCL) school books sponsored by international funds, revised to meet the needs of a recovering, war-torn nation, but mainly from an international perspective (Spink 2005). In retrospect, this represents a clear example of how implementing global education norms, in this case through curricula development, clashes with the multi-factored local realities. The rush to fulfil literacy goals and implement education programmes as means to offer a sense of normality to populations deeply affected by war, are understandable from an ‘education in emergencies’ point of view. But local circumstances, a mixture of cultural aspects, religion, history, fear, psychological trauma, lack of literacy, lack of infrastructure, and many other factors, weighted heavily over the rapid educational approached. It might be that the ongoing attacks on the education system in Afghanistan, including fairly recent on the AUAF (in autumn 2016), are driven by the lack of understanding, both from the part of the international actors, but also from the local communities, of how important it is to interconnect local and global norms.

Literature and data on implications of higher education in peacebuilding in Colombia and Kenya for example, point towards several functions that higher education can have in conflict or post-conflict contexts. Pacheco and Johnson (2014) identified that higher education can effectively be employed by protecting youngsters from forced recruitments, re-integrating former combatants to society through educational programmes, re-incorporating displaced people, towards the long-term effect of producing human capital that can help build peace. DDR approaches in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan were active and yielded results to certain extents. Both countries reported high numbers of former combatants participating in the programmes, but different context led to different results. While Sierra Leone is a ‘success’ story from a

peacebuilding perspective, Afghanistan is slowing down its progress after the large-scale withdrawal of international troops in 2014-2016, demonstrating again that failure to anchor global norms into local realities represents a weakness in programme interventions.

Global education norms are visible also at institutional level in the case studies presented. Staying true to the isomorph factor that is one of the characteristics of sociological institutionalism, developing higher education institutions in fragile contexts has been framed mainly around British university models in Sierra Leone and India, while a predominant US model is visible in Afghanistan. The academic structure and curricula, or even enrolment criteria, seem to follow international models. Perhaps more accent is placed on religion, even in an academic context, in Afghanistan, compared to the other countries. But for example, in the case of the American University in Afghanistan, the American model of institution, of education, of research is predominant (AUAF s.a.).

There are efforts at higher education level to meet local demands and necessities, (such as language universities in India or teacher training programmes in Sierra Leone), centres that focus on education for peace and conflict prevention (Afghanistan Centre and the National Centre for Policy Research at Kabul University). But the research also found that rebuilding higher education institutions in fragile contexts is often characterised by developmental goals. India strives to become a provider of global professional workforce and develops its higher education system to meet increasingly demanding economic landscapes. Sierra Leone and Afghanistan are in dire need of rebuilding their own economies, and as such, must fill the gaps in the sectors by training people at an advanced level. In essence, building universities with a peacebuilding strategy in mind does not appear to be a priority in any of the countries analysed.

It was already pointed that most of the education programming in fragile contexts is not being developed within peacebuilding frames. On a deeper analysis, one sees that social transformation through education develops two aspects (Novelli 2011, Spink 2005, Smith 2010). One is represented by short term approaches as immediate response to conflict, like education for refugees, or as part of DDR programmes, as in the case of Sierra Leone and Afghanistan. The other approach is long term, like teacher training programmes that have the capacity to shape and develop citizens through the influence on primary and secondary level students.

Academics agree that education programming in fragile context should focus more on the transformative potential of higher education, like for example teaching police forces about human rights in Afghanistan, or the teacher training programmes already developed in India, or as part of peacebuilding strategies, as is the case with Sierra Leone (Smith 2010). An



overwhelming number of education programmers, scholars and NGO reports point that education is important for tackling root causes of conflicts, as even if security and economic causes of conflict are addressed in first stage, there might be underlying aspects that need to be addressed (Smith 2010). Limited data however is found on the higher education effect on peacebuilding, and this represents a direct challenge for the thesis.

### **5.3 Conflicting Local Contexts and International Programmes**

It was already noted in the methodology chapter, that the paucity of data also affects the findings and the analysis. Gathering reliable data from countries in fragile context, be they conflict or post-conflict situations, is severely limited by security issues, lack of databases, language barriers, physical access etc. The authors of one of the few existing studies on higher education and peacebuilding, Pacheco and Johnson (2014: 7-8), found that peacebuilding efforts have taken many shapes under higher education institutions in Colombia and Kenya. They identified a variety of initiatives and results, from “charity activities organized as outreach for the university community, to contributing to social and economic development; from conflict resolution workshops, to unemployment buffering through higher and nonformal education; from contributing to the demobilization of combatants, to the provision of higher education in refugee camps.” Smith (2011) also finds that peacebuilding has to be embedded in education early on in fragile contexts, but Pacheco and Johnson take peacebuilding as a role of higher education, and find that it “must be more than just a reaction to conflict, it must be infused into the purpose of higher education in fragile states. Providing opportunities to universities to play a role in peace building and funding university activities in conflict abatement may contribute to a new discourse and sustainable responses to violence.” (Pacheco and Johnson 2014: 7-8). The case studies analysed for this thesis can confer similar findings as in the above-mentioned studies.

Local initiatives within higher education and peacebuilding are scarce, maybe because peacebuilding is a process that very often involves international commitment and interventions. As it was shown, international organisations like UNESCO and UNICEF, Save the Children, USAID, are important players in norm development and implementation. Essentially, it was found that national governments mobilise to generate, adopt, implement, and monitor education initiatives, but only after the international community paved the way. And international players are often fairly unaware of underlying cultural, historical or religious values. In this way, there is a discrepancy between developing programmes internationally and their success when implemented locally.

For the multitude of factors that contribute to the general picture in Afghanistan, the country is best to represent the struggles in integrating higher education and peacebuilding. By trying to implement global norms of education in a country deeply marked by its own values (especially since these values are ‘skewed’, in Western view), the international community stirred the education system towards precisely the local norms that it was trying to avoid. As it was already analysed, pushing for EFA goals, and trying to make local schools use BCL manuals, caused sharp reactions from the Afghan authorities: boys were the priority in BTS programmes, while schools ended up using manuals printed in the 1970s, which had outdated messages, including of violence, religious content and historical inaccuracies. For example, during the BTS campaign in 2002, it was long before the international community realised that students were learning from manuals printed with US funding during the Soviet-era, which meant that references to violence, jihad, weapons, etc. had not been removed before the new generations started using the books (Spink 2005, Burde and Khan 2016).

Overall, implementing global education norms in fragile contexts is a difficult process, and the case studies highlighted this aspect. Furthermore, the case studies accentuate that failing to consider these contexts can cause violent clashes, as in the case of AUAF being attacked in 2016 or UNICEF missions being forced to withdraw at the beginning of the conflict in Sierra Leone. What the researched found is that in most of the cases, peacebuilding interventions have not considered education from the planning phase. Moreover, higher education got a marginal role in the incipient phases of peacebuilding and when it was at all considered, it seemed to hold a predominantly instrumental role, rather than that more philosophical role, that is concerned with shaping the individual, creating citizens or legitimising knowledge.

#### **5.4 Final Remarks**

Barakat and Chard (2002: 819) stand behind the views that in social sciences, the word ‘institution’ has two different meanings (institution as organization and as rule or convention), but both share common characteristics, that regardless of their formal or nonformal statue, institutions have legitimacy and are perceived to meet social needs. Considering higher education institutions in the theoretical and conceptual context in this thesis, one sees that they do not necessarily meet social needs, even when the social needs are expressed by population. Very often, efforts to make education a permanent feature of humanitarian aid and intervention programmes are influenced by contexts, which in turn creates a varying effect on how institutions are perceived and their missions are defined.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE 2010) worked on a number of policies, programmes, community-building projects, under the auspices of NGOs, UN agencies, ministries etc., since it was established in 2000. The purpose of the agency was to work on recommendation papers, reports, and education policy papers, and in general, to increase awareness on the role of education in fragile context, since it was established as a direct result of the birth of the new field of education in emergencies. A report commissioned one decade after the agency was founded, looked specifically at the complexity of education in conflict-affected areas and fragile context (INEE 2010). One of the important features, analysed for this thesis, is that it brought forward how important contextualisation is, especially since interventions in conflict-affected areas can start on different premises, depending on the interpretation of fragility and emergencies (INEE 2010: 4-5). The authors of the report identified various factors which are characteristics of conflict and state fragility and underlined that “social conditions associated with conflict and fragility further affect the delivery of education services in nuanced ways” (INEE 2010: 5). The way education is perceived has important effects on the relationship between providers of education and the recipients. The case that in Afghanistan girls are not sent to school because there are no female teachers, or that parents fear their children will learn ‘foreign’ values and forget their own, are examples that speak for the previous statement. Furthermore, that “(...) education systems have the symbolic value of (re)establishing state legitimacy in the eyes of the population” (INEE 2010: 9) can be an important factor of how people in fragile situations perceive education.

It was also found that data analysed for this thesis does not answer conclusively to the research questions. Nevertheless, a prominent finding is that while primary education has already emerged as an important pillar of humanitarian action (UNESCO 2011, Milton and Barakat 2016), higher education still does not hold an important position in either research, policy making, programme design or programme implementation. Sansom Milton and Sultan Barakat (2016) provided amongst the most recent analyses of higher education’s role in recovery in conflict-affected societies and identified a gap in the field. Namely that how higher education can be employed in post-war recovery has not been exploited in the past, compared to the attention which has been given to how to protect or rebuild education systems affected by conflicts (2016: 403-404). Evidence on how higher education can influence peacebuilding through “promoting messages of violence or peacebuilding, addressing inequalities and through identity politics” (2016: 413-415) is not widely considered, and this is consistent with the findings in this thesis.

There are not sufficient higher education and peacebuilding initiatives to assess how the local contexts are being considered in rebuilding higher education infrastructure. However, the one recurring aspect in the academic, programming and grey literatures is that higher education as a field needs to be addressed and taken into consideration in the early stages of post-war recovery, to prevent undermining post-war transition and reconstruction (Milton and Barakat 2016).

Implementing higher education initiatives into peacebuilding strategies is, as it was already established, a scarce approach. However, the high influx of refugees in the past years, both towards Europe and other parts of the world have triggered increased interest in higher education opportunities for refugees. The leitmotiv of the thesis is role higher education plays in peacebuilding, therefore the connection between higher education and refugees was not prioritized. Notwithstanding, some of the few higher education initiatives in peacebuilding do refer to refugees and as such are briefly presented here. Rasheed and Munoz (2016), Coffie (2014), Waters and LeBlanc (2005), see the potential in higher education institutions offering education to refugees, both to “develop human capital necessary for peacebuilding” (Coffie 2014), or to bridge communities (Rasheed and Munoz 2016). The backdrop of this type of programmes is, as Waters and LeBlanc noted, that a functioning education system, and functioning higher education institutions contribute to state legitimacy and are signs of a state’s capacity to meet its citizens’ rights. In terms of citizenship, refugees are in essence persons without a state, therefore a paradox between the scope of the institutionalised higher education and the realities of employing higher education for refugees emerged and represents a good topic for research, with a focus on peacebuilding ‘outside’ (Waters and LeBlanc 2005).

Overall, this chapter aimed to present the findings from the research and discuss their relation to the research questions. Following the pattern established in the case studies, it first explored what role do global norms have in education and peacebuilding and then looked for connections between the local contexts. The last chapter of the thesis summarizes the research and provides concluding notes on the information discovered so far, as well as describing how the thesis contributes to the field of higher education and peacebuilding.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to offer a detailed account on how higher education and peacebuilding can be connected and applied in practical peacebuilding architecture. The thesis's goal to provide a detailed account of how and when higher education becomes embedded in peacebuilding has been carefully followed, but due to the complex and at the same time, under-researched, nature of the subject, the analysis is not at all exhaustive. The research was based on a qualitative research design, as it was explained in the methodology chapter, a design which was drawn together by the theoretical insights, the case studies, and the literature.

The thesis has been engaged in showing that higher education can and should be employed more in international designs for peacebuilding, and for this purpose, used the empirical examples of India, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan. In the previous chapter it was shown that higher education can be employed in peacebuilding architecture by developing targeted programmes within teacher training, refugee education, or by developing universities that nurture local language and dialects, like in the case of India. Rehabilitation of former combatants, culturally-sensitive programmes, developing curricula on peace and helping to increase adult literacy, were all found to be a natural, albeit not universally valid and highly underestimated, link between the fields of higher education and peacebuilding. The two fields should complement each other for various reasons, but essentially, the benefits stand in the effects higher education can have in conflict recovery and in rebuilding national capacities in fragile contexts.

By investigating the conceptual and normative guidelines, translated into real life, the thesis aimed to find the connection between higher education and peacebuilding. In particular, it investigated whether higher education is approached within peacebuilding from an instrumental point of view, or rather having a greater scope, that of forming citizens, of nourishing identities and help rebuilding societies. The complex relationships between higher education and peacebuilding showed that from an educational perspective, it is important to build institutions that create citizens and give state legitimacy, and give a sense a normality to countries in fragile contexts. However, higher education can also be employed in a more instrumental way, by filling gaps in skills and knowledge, which in turn can help reviving economies.

The research findings have brought into light that higher education is employed sometimes into peacebuilding architecture, although most of the times, if education is considered at all, the initial international efforts are directed towards primary education.

Looking at how higher education initiatives have been employed in the countries presented as case studies, the research found that higher education and the way it is perceived, is highly influenced by global trends. Administrative and academic structures in India and Sierra Leone are based on a widespread British model; some of the university education in Afghanistan is developed following American liberal arts model; teacher training programmes are developed again on Western models. Furthermore, trying to meet goals for EFA, MDG, and Education 2030 puts governments under direct supervision of international organisations like UNICEF, UNESCO, causing many of the programmes to bear their trademarks.

Whether higher education in India, Afghanistan or Sierra Leone serves the purpose in peacebuilding architecture, is highly dependent of the isomorph aspect of the field, and on the capacity of each country to adjust higher education to local context. Looking back at the theoretical literature, it is clear that a global, institutionalised higher education system exhibits a series of advantages in rebuilding national higher education systems. Universities can be modelled on existing institutions, curricula can be replicated, and research networks can be faster created. A drawback however, is that local contexts in fragile situations are often deeply defined by local norms. Forcing the ‘apparition’ of a higher education institution in the aftermath of a conflict for example, without taking into account national policies on education, women’s role in the respective society, social and economic backgrounds, can have negative effects on the institution itself, and on the peacebuilding frameworks in which it is embedded.

Analysing the data and the empirical cases showed a discrepancy between the institutionalisation of higher education in fragile contexts (during conflict, post-conflict and in a historical perspective) and the peacebuilding strategies. The ‘globalised’ higher education, with its isomorph characteristics, such as similar curricula, replicated organisational form, fields of studies, credentials, and student status, or the race to become ‘top-ranking’ institutions, is in stride with peacebuilding interventions, which focus on local, cultural, and social context.

Conflict is seen as a destructive force on education, from the devastating impact it has on human lives, to sometimes almost complete destruction of the education infrastructure, but also through the psychological traumas it inflicts on the ones exposed to it. Long recovery periods after conflicts are usually characterized by economic turmoil, lack of capacities, lack of infrastructure, and lack of skilled and educated societies. It was shown in the case studies, that both in the cases of Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, the population is distinguished by a majority of youth inhabitants, for whom education represents an even more important aspect in terms of peacebuilding and recovery.

Unfortunately, higher education and peacebuilding interventions are, more often than not, poorly synchronised. In the words of Buckland (2005) there is a “pervasive sense of urgency” in international interventions in fragile context, yet building peace is a long-term activity. This sense of urgency in rebuilding education infrastructure, which in a way legitimises institutional isomorphism, is conflicted by the realities of long-lasting peacebuilding approaches.

The role of higher education in peacebuilding is a complex and under-developed, under-researched issue. The extent to which higher education is considered within peacebuilding approaches varies in terms of conflict context, human and economic resources, cultural context, norm interpretation and a myriad of other conditions. As this thesis illustrated, the two fields have, more often than not, competing priority lists, and the real struggle in embedding higher education in peacebuilding consists of finding the balance between these priorities.

The reality that peacebuilding is generally conducted in terms defined by the UN, makes the organisation and all of its agencies central in peacebuilding architecture, through resolutions, reports, recommendations, projects, treaties, accords, and missions. Higher education on the other side, is implemented within national legislation, even if modelled on global frame. Given that peacebuilding is a process that is very much depending on local context, while higher education is institutionalized at a global level, the combination of the two factors creates, as it was seen in the case studies, complex backgrounds that require more resources, funds and time to be implemented.

Education is slowly gaining terrain in international policy making, and especially international organisations recognize its importance in restoring nations that have suffered under conflicts, that are still suffering and that are struggling to build peace. As such, initiatives for next policy periods, millennium goals and other accords on which countries around the world sign, start to place education higher on their agenda. Notwithstanding, there is still a long to go, before education as such becomes a priority, and this leaves higher education even further from being considered an imperative factor in general, and in peacebuilding in special.

The difference between education and peacebuilding and education and development was illustrated through the case studies, but in general, higher education is only marginally considered, either in peacebuilding or in development. As it was shown, education is also important for statebuilding. However, the research illustrated that in extreme cases, where states are too fragile, an increased focus on educational programmes will not stabilize the country, like was the case in Afghanistan. The reason for this can be found in the complexity of factors that need to play equal roles in statebuilding processes, and in the fact that education needs to

interact with many other elements and is just one piece of the puzzle that statebuilding represents. For example, teacher training programmes in fragile contexts are constantly forming the individuals, a goal for both higher education and for peacebuilding. But while the latter is striving to remove the root causes of violent conflict and supporting local capacities for conflict resolution, and to prevent relapse into conflict, it needs to find the right tone with higher education if the programmes are to be successful.

The analysis also revealed that there is an important difference between literature which focuses on education programming within peacebuilding and the academic literature. While education and peacebuilding literature stresses to a greater degree security, reconstruction, and protection aspects, the academic literature emphasized more the capacity building, and transformative role education can have. This answers the first research questions, and at the same time reflects the gap between the theoretical and practical approaches to higher education and peacebuilding. Furthermore, the research illustrated that most education programming in fragile contexts were not developed with a peacebuilding perspective in mind, whereas higher education was almost exclusively not considered, maybe except for teacher training programming.

This thesis showed that education has the potential to develop the human capital required in successful peacebuilding, but to do so it needs a larger international commitment towards higher education. While security, economy, infrastructure reconstruction are given priority in first phases of peacebuilding strategies, education represents an important tool for addressing underlying causes of conflict, but its value is underestimated. In Smith's' words (2010): "there will also be the need for education that addresses deep-seated social and cultural issues, such as freedom of the media, or influence of religion on state institutions." What the research for this thesis also brought forth is that the complexity of the field suggests that strategies for implementing higher education into peacebuilding architecture cannot be defined on a general pattern. Instead, the many dimensions that make the field so complex must be context-sensitive and consider national and local settings.

Domestic politics, lack of funding, economic turmoil, culturally embedded values, language barriers, international interests, all represent circumstances that influence deeply the view on higher education in general, and as part of peacebuilding architecture in special. The challenges to bridge the two fields are real and form a complex background for any type of humanitarian intervention. Notwithstanding, a first step towards bridging the gap is acknowledging its existence, and through current international responses to conflicts and crises, a pattern where education and higher education are employed, is slowly and surely emerging.



This gives hope to future education programming, policy development and ultimately, to faster conflict recovery and successful peacebuilding strategies. Ultimately, this thesis identified a niche in a research field that is relevant in the current global context and in doing so, took a first step towards future exploration of higher education and peacebuilding.

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