

PART III. TEACHER MIGRATION: REMAINING ISSUES TO CONSIDER

10. Where have all the teachers gone? Why there are never any teachers in Africa's refugee camps and what we can do about it

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Abstract

When it is time to start formal education soon after a population has arrived in a refugee or displaced persons' camp, or has been isolated by war, it is often found that few qualified teachers are available. Using specific examples from Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia, this paper argues that refugees, like anyone else, are rationally motivated by the availability of income. Thus the inability or unwillingness to pay teachers a competitive wage in the camp or to give them contracts is seen as a deciding factor for people who already have salaries. Furthermore, even if they flee with the rest to camps or settlements, qualified teachers are frequently taken by non-education non-governmental organisations (NGOs), get scholarships or resettlement more easily and find jobs, when allowed, in the wider host community. The resultant shortfall in the teaching force means it becomes necessary to create a teaching force rapidly.

In the context of little academic literature on these subjects, this paper uses examples from 20 years' of participant-observation by the researcher to provide an overview of the situation and provide recommendations. Examples include: first, giving training and support to volunteer teachers in temporary primary schools in displaced people's camps in Khartoum; second, training teachers in the then Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)-held areas of the South of Sudan using a modular training system; third, primary teacher training in Somalia; fourth, the need to educate large numbers of children from AIDS-affected families in Zambia when the teachers were also sick and dying; and fifth, experiences from Francophone countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad, where a French version of Be a Better Teacher ('le Bon Enseignant') was used to enable teachers to be trained in-service.

Key words

Migrant, Refugee, Displaced, Remuneration, Teachers, Governments

10.1 Introduction

When formal education begins in a refugee or displaced camp, it is often found that there are few teachers available among the migrant population. This has been noted in Malawi (Mozambican refugees), in Uganda (Sudanese and Rwandese refugees) and in Chad (Sudanese refugees from Darfur). The same observation applies to populations isolated in civil wars (stayees) and in urban slum areas. Though this probably applies to all qualified and salaried people, this paper focuses on teachers.

Teachers are often very difficult to find among refugee populations. Along with the other salaried people, they may not have left with the rest, preferring to stay at home or move somewhere else in the country. They may have [also] decided to stay behind to support their remaining students. This may explain why there were only 373 qualified teachers for 60,267 pupils in Malawi at the beginning of the refugee influx from Mozambique in 1987 (Sesnan, 2009: 67).

10.1.1 Setting the scene: South Sudan in wartime

In successive waves, from 1983 onwards, much of the population of South Sudan was forced to flee by fighting between the government forces and the rebels. At first they fled internally to safer areas or to urban areas. Eventually, however, by 1989, large numbers were leaving the country, mainly to Kenya, Uganda, the Congo (then Zaire) and Ethiopia. From the late-1980s to 2005, South Sudanese could be found in:

- rural areas of South Sudan under SPLM control;
- isolated urban garrison towns (like Juba) from which the only exit, for 15 years, was a usually unaffordable flight to Khartoum;
- largely unofficial displaced camps around Khartoum and other big cities of the north; and
- camps or self-settled communities in the countries already mentioned.

Despite the agony of family separation, starvation and a large number of deaths, South Sudanese refugees were known for quickly setting up their own schools with little help. Usually it was only the churches that gave immediate help; NGOs and UN agencies arrived later. The schools they opened were not ‘child-friendly spaces’, or other currently fashionable, content-free substitutes for schooling, but a replication of the education ladder they had left behind – with some of its good points and many of its bad ones. After a short time, however, these schools started mimicking the education structure in the host country, particularly if it was English-language medium. It is worth noting that, for South Sudanese, Arabisation of their education was one of the prime reasons for their becoming refugees.

South Sudanese were not very concerned about ‘buildings’. They built ‘locally’ of wood, mud and thatch in rural areas or set up in a courtyard under plastic sheets in urban areas, particularly in Khartoum. The big problem was that – with rare exceptions – they did not have any teachers. This researcher observed this phenomenon first-hand among South Sudanese in Northern Uganda, in Khartoum and in rural ‘liberated’ Sudan.

10.1.2 A town full of teachers

This researcher undertook an education mission to Juba in 1989 (Sesnan, 1989). Juba was then the isolated capital of Equatoria (now a region of South Sudan), the province from which many of the refugees and displaced persons had fled. When the mission arrived at Juba, it was found that schools were actually operating, and the statistics on paper showed 15,000 children at primary school (a good number for the population size and make-up then). Among these there were around 700 teachers officially registered, teaching in temporary schools.¹ Since the total number of teachers in Equatoria in 1985 had been fewer than 1,000, this was an important fact. The reason turned out to be simple, but something which perhaps had not been noticed then or elsewhere: even before the final flight of refugees or displaced people, teachers had started getting themselves posted to where their salary came from. In some cases, the government formally moved a rural school to the city, as the rural areas fell to the rebels.²

Only the official school in Juba paid salaries. In the rebel areas, there was a policy not to pay salaries out of a misguided belief that people would teach for patriotic reasons alone. In the refugee camps in Uganda and Kenya, the word ‘salary’ was not used by the UN and NGOs, and only small allowances³ might be given on the grounds that food was free and, rather cynically, that there was no need to pay rent if you lived in a communal tent. One reason given for this was that the NGOs and agencies did not want to set a precedent.

Further, it was not simply a matter of salary; a teacher who was deemed to be ‘established’ in the system had many benefits and entitlements, including a rank and a pension; people were reluctant to lose these, even though likely payment was many years away.

When they could, teachers fled or gravitated towards their salaries. Of course, it was not always possible to do this if the flight came suddenly and the way to the main town was

blocked. This led to at least one interesting exception to the rule, the case of the Sudanese refugees in Dungu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (ex-Zaire) in the early 1990s. Most of the population in these camps had fled from the town of Maridi in Sudan, where the major teacher training college was. The camps were full of teachers and teacher trainers. The workforce also included priests, pastors and a bishop. Here there was a different problem: the local officials told them they could only teach in French, a language none of them knew (Sesnan, 1993).

10.1.3 Recognition of teachers

A formal qualification is not normally an issue if a refugee with at least secondary education wishes to teach in a camp, but this depends on the strictness of the NGO managing education. The lack of qualification becomes an issue if teachers wish to teach beyond the camp at schools in the host country, or if they had not completed secondary school.⁴

10.1.4 It's the money

Teachers will naturally try to go to where the money is. In every situation this researcher has worked in, there would have been no shortage of qualified teachers if a good salary had been offered for the job. Should agencies offer US\$500 a month for qualified teachers, instead of the widely recommended US\$100 in the short term, a lot of teachers would simply appear, either from inside the home country or from among the refugee population who had found these 'allowances' derisory. Indeed, a budget spent on paying teachers decently might even be lower than the total of all the budgets for short in-service training.

10.2 Creation of a teaching force in an emergency or the short term

In the absence of qualified teachers, it may be necessary to train a new teaching force. What follows are some examples of where this has been done. This researcher has been a contributor to the evolution of such materials.

This paper now briefly considers programmes that have addressed the issue of training the untrained teacher to become *competent*, *knowledgeable* and *confident*. This implies the need to learn methodology and, if teachers do not have a great deal of basic knowledge, the need to learn to become knowledgeable as well, possibly by returning to secondary education. Resources and enrichment of the teaching experience also play a role here.

Experience shows that programmes must combine all this with strong support, raising teachers' confidence in class so they will enjoy teaching. People who have never enjoyed and do not enjoy teaching find it hard to be good teachers; this is often (i) because they do not have much confidence and/or (ii) because they may not know what a good lesson looks like.

10.2.1 Khartoum in the 1980s

In the late 1980s there was a massive population movement into Khartoum, both from the south and the west of Sudan. The city authorities made no provision for the education of the children of these incomers, even when they numbered in the hundreds of thousands; they were deemed to be squatters and were not included in city planning or provided with school places. They lived in vast un-serviced camps, which were frequently destroyed – often brutally – and pushed further and further out into the desert.

Schools were set up in these difficult circumstances by the people themselves. Only the Catholic Church, in the form of the Archdiocese of Khartoum, and one secular organisation, the Sudan Open Learning Organisation⁵ (SOLO) supported by Oxfam America, provided any kind of meaningful assistance.

SOLO used its experience of providing a form of distance education to refugees (both urban and camp-based) from Ethiopia and Eritrea to provide pupils' materials. Because of

the lack of premises – and indeed the danger of premises being bulldozed by the authorities – SOLO adopted and developed the idea of a school kit, calling it a *School in a Box*.⁶

SOLO developed a self-help course for the large number of ‘volunteer’ untrained teachers, called the *Teacher Assistance* course. This course had 30 short modules on specific and practical themes (‘How to Use the Blackboard’ and ‘Handling Large Classes’ were two examples). These were to be studied alone in teachers’ tents or shacks, and in small groups with an experienced teacher wherever one could be found. The course was available first in English for the Southern displaced, then in Arabic for the other refugees. No effort was made to include more than the simplest educational theory or pedagogy; the urgent need being seen was to make the teacher competent and confident in front of the class.

10.2.2 South Sudan

In the early 1990s, as agencies sought to address education problems in the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA)-held areas of South Sudan (which also suffered great isolation during the civil war), a modular training programme was set up under the South Sudan Education Coordination Committee (upon which this researcher represented the Education Programme for Sudanese Refugees and Makerere University).

This programme, managed by the Sudan Literature Centre, was wider than the Khartoum programme of SOLO and included for the first time modules on psychology and history of education and subject-specific modules such as mathematics. Thus it explicitly recognised that the teacher did not just need to learn methodology (pedagogy), but also had to have their own knowledge improved.

In theory, after three years of these vacation courses a primary teacher accumulated sufficient modules to be given a certificate. This did not often happen in practice, however, as NGOs lost funds or lost interest and teachers moved on to other places or other jobs.

At this point, the UNESCO Programme of Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction (PEER) and UNICEF commissioned the current researcher to write a work that took the title *Teacher’s Friend*, and which provided the teacher with model lessons and a series of questions and answers on good practices. A section on ‘General Knowledge’ was also included for the first time. The 40 model lessons were designed to be worked through by an inexperienced teacher step by step. Each lesson simultaneously illustrated a *method* (group work, taking the class outside and so on) and a *theme*, which could appear across several lessons. ‘The work my mother does’ and ‘My sister is good at mathematics’, for example, illustrated gender themes, while ‘Vaccinations and injections’ and ‘Symptoms and diseases’ illustrated medical themes.

Though written specifically for South Sudan, the *Teacher’s Friend* was later translated into French for the Democratic Republic of Congo (*Le guide pédagogique*) and into Portuguese for Mozambique.

This manual was used for some years in some areas in South Sudan. Although intended to be a self-help manual, it is most effective when the teacher also receives the benefit of a couple of days’ introduction by a trainer.

10.2.3 Somalia: shortage of teachers everywhere

UNESCO-PEER first worked on primary education in Somalia, where the state education system had largely collapsed since 1989. The modular SOLO *Teacher Assistance* materials were subsequently translated and, with little adaptation, adopted in the new Somalia programme as Somalia Open Learning Unit (SOMOLU) courses. The *School in the Box* also emerged in Somalia as school kits distributed both by UNICEF and UNESCO-PEER in a joint programme. Eventually, from the same sources, a team in Somaliland developed a much more substantial self-help, 40-module course called *Be a Better Teacher*, which established the now-general pattern of three ten-module courses for ordinary teachers (A, B, C) and one extra course (D) for school administrators and inspectors. A ten-module course lasted typically one term.

10.2.4 Zambia: the Spark Integrated Training Project

In Zambia in the 1990s, already rapid urbanisation was compounded by the sickness and death of large numbers of teachers from AIDS-related diseases. Teachers were dying faster than new ones could be trained. Calling back retired teachers was no longer enough.

The need to handle large numbers of children of AIDS-affected families, orphans or simply the impoverished who could not afford to stay in the government system, meant that new solutions had to be found. The Catholic Church started setting up 'community schools' in churches, halls and in one case in a night club's premises. These schools took in any and all children, but had minimal resources and so had to develop ways to speed children through the system faster than normal.

Through UNICEF and a flexible and enlightened Ministry of Education, a programme was developed to train secondary school leavers as emergency teachers for these schools. These young teachers were paid little, but turned out to be enthusiastic and innovative. As they were secondary leavers there was no need to teach them content. The *Spark Training Project* was created for those teachers, based loosely on the same principles used in the *Teacher Assistance* course. It also incorporated many elements of the *Teacher's Friend*.

An additional element was the creation of a new accelerated primary scheme of work, through which primary school could be completed in four years, instead of the official nine. The teachers were trained on this and contributed a great deal to its evolution.

The new scheme of work and the training was based on surveys of parents, guardians and pupils on what they considered important for the children to learn. It turned out that uneducated parents wanted their children to be able to communicate with the government more than almost any other thing, so letter writing and oral English were strengthened.

The emergency training was eventually linked with the provision of school kits for the community schools and access to library/resource centres. The whole kit and training were referred to as 'the Zedukit'.

10.2.5 Illustrative notes from Francophone countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad

When the *Forces Nouvelles* (New Forces) rebels took over the north of Côte d'Ivoire in 2002, the government in Abidjan promptly announced that all civil servants' salaries would only be paid in government-held areas. The result was a massive exodus of teachers, doctors and salaried civil servants from rebel areas to government-held ones. Those parents who could afford it shifted at least the boys to schools in the south, which still operated.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the former rebel areas needed something more fundamental – to start up education in huge areas that had been devastated by civil war (or by incursions of foreign troops in support of mineral exploiters).

In Chad, almost all the refugee teachers being put forward were untrained, and even those who had training had a limited and fairly old-fashioned training before they fled.

In all these three cases a French version of *Be a Better Teacher* (*Le Bon Enseignant*) was used to enable the teachers to be trained in-service. The 40-module course was adapted for each country.

Notes

- 1 Schools were either in a displaced persons site (where people of the same village were usually camped together) or were shared with an existing school, but maintained their own integrity. For example, the school buildings in which the current researcher used to teach were host to five other secondary schools and had six head teachers and six teaching staff (all squeezed into eight classrooms). Not only had the teachers moved there, but the whole school had been reconstituted administratively.
- 2 This sometimes led to a bizarre situation where at least two schools of the same name existed – one in Juba (now the official one) and one in the camps outside the country. In one particular case, a third one was reborn in its original home site during a lull in the fighting.

- 3 'Allowance' is just one of the many words the development industry uses to avoid saying 'salary'. Usually local labour laws are comprehensively flouted by giving neither salaries nor contracts.
- 4 Recognition could occasionally be straightforward, such as when secondary teachers in Somalia could be proved to have been trained at the University of Mogadishu before it closed. The Africa Educational Trust held all their graduation lists on a floppy disk!
- 5 Then 'The Sudan Open Learning Unit', part of International Extension College, Cambridge.
- 6 This was the first use of the term 'School-in-a-Box', used in later years by UNESCO and UNICEF in other countries and Norwegian Refugee Council under the name of 'Teacher Emergency Pack' (Cater, 1989).

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Manuals referred to (obtainable from Echo Bravo)

Model lessons:

Teacher's friend – for Sudan

Guide pédagogique – for Democratic Republic of Congo

Training self help:

Be a Better Teacher – originally for Somalia

Le Bon Enseignant – versions for:

- Democratic Republic of Congo (UNICEF/UNESCO and separate version for South Kivu prepared for l'église méthodiste libre du Congo);
- Cote d'Ivoire (Norwegian Refugee Council); and
- Chad (also in Arabic).