Education in Troubled Times

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A Global Pluralist Response

Edited by

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8602-2
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8602-4

I dedicate this book to all the young girls and women of Afghanistan and those in similar circumstances whose education has been interrupted or even lost because of international conflicts and proxy wars, political turmoil, traditions, and customs and, above all, because of having been born female. In many parts of the world, the female gender is the only factor that makes women subject to unequal treatment at home, at educational institutions, and in the larger society under the excuses of various narrow-minded interpretations in the name of culture, tradition, and religion.

This is written while hoping for the day when the female gender, to which human existence is tied, will be respected as much as men. Every man knows that he exists because a woman was there before he was born, and that woman gave birth to him and taught him how to talk and walk. And hoping for the day when women of Afghanistan and others around the world may live a peaceful life, free from violence and discrimination.

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It was October 2019 that I began to think of developing a book proposal under the title of *Education in Troubled Times*. The idea for the book emerged in early 2018 when I wrote a conference paper, 'Navigating Education in a Troubled Time: A Critical Pluralist Discourse', for the second Oxford Symposium for Comparison and International Education (OXSCIE), *Uncertainty, Society, and Education*, 19–20 June 2018. While I was thinking of writing the proposal, Ms. Rebecca Gladders, Senior Commissioning Editor at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, sent me an email with a special invitation to be a Guest Editor of a collection in my chosen area. The email pleasantly surprised me because it came at a time when I was thinking of writing a book proposal. After a few email exchanges, we agreed on the subject and title of the book and other technical details. By sharing this brief history behind this book, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Rebecca for inviting me to be a guest editor for this volume.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges over the past two years, the direct and indirect effects of which have also been felt during the completion of this book. Soon after Rebecca and I agreed on the book's details in the second half of February 2020, the pandemic began to spread across the world and disrupted all aspects of our lives. Some of our authors and their family members contracted the virus, while some others also experienced the loss of their loved ones. Another friend and colleague of mine had to withdraw her contribution because of a sudden and severe illness for which she had to undergo an operation amid the pandemic. After months of little physical activity and spending more time sitting at my desk at home, I developed muscle stiffness and then severe pains in my lumbar spine and both legs for which I had to attend urgent hospital treatment, followed by weeks of video physiotherapy. It was important not to put pressure on our authors because each of us had to cope with many challenges. Meanwhile, the book project had to be also completed within a reasonable timeframe. Appropriately, Rebecca and Clementine Joly (former author liaison officer for this book), offered their full support to this book and our authors. They always spoke of flexibility and of giving authors more time to complete their chapters. On behalf of all our authors, I wholeheartedly thank Rebecca and Clementine Joly, as well as the technical

team at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, for their unwavering support during these troubled times.

Also, I would also like to thank all our chapter authors for their commitment to this volume and their contributions during such a time of pandemic.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Russell Harris, Enayat Baiza and Wahed Baiza for their kind support.

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INTRODUCTION

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Education in Troubled Times: A Global Pluralist Response is a scholarly conversation about education in troubled times. The book is the collaborative product of scholars, researchers, and practitioners in various fields of education and across a wide range of geographical locations, cultures, and political and economic situations. The concept of troubled times in this book refers to situations of serious challenges and/or crises that affect the education of an entire community, nation, or the globe and that require extraordinary efforts and interventions to mitigate their impacts on education and society, and possibly turn them around as soon as possible. The individual chapters examine such situations of serious concerns that affect the education systems and educational opportunities of learners at various levels, from the community and national to global. The contributors critically examine the relationship between education and the challenges they identify in their respective geographical and temporal contexts and demonstrate how challenges of various types and scales affect the established education systems and the educational opportunities of learners; how education functions in such circumstances and, in certain cases, in a perpetual state of crisis; and how state and non-state organizations intervene to address those challenges and crises, mitigate their impacts, and possibly turn them around to bring positive developments in the intervened education systems. The authors also offer their suggestions as to how to respond to situations of troubles, conflicts, and crises.

The idea of editing a book on education in troubled times emerged in 2018 when I was developing a paper for Oxford's Second Symposium for Comparison and International Education (OXSCIE), titled *Uncertainty, Society, and Education*. The conference was organised jointly by the Department of Education and St. Antony's College (Oxford University), the Aga Khan Foundation, and the Global Centre for Pluralism. It was held at Keble College, Oxford, on 19 and 20 June 2018, and my paper, *Navigating Education in a Troubled Time: A Critical Pluralist Discourse*, became one of the OXSCIE essay contest winners.

The fact that we live in troubled times does not necessarily mean that we need a philosophical eye to see the troubles. The troubles, the crises, and the uncertainties are all around us. They are often caused by humanity's advancements in science and technology, as well as our greed for the monopoly of power and wealth. It is not unreasonable to say that rapid technological advancement and change, as well as crises on a regular basis than one could never imagine, are the striking features of our modern world. Modern technology and scientific explorations have enabled us to penetrate areas of science and parts of nature that not long ago were viewed as a distant dream, and just a couple of centuries back unimaginable. These range from space travel, artificial intelligence, and digital science to advancements in various areas of medicine, especially in pathology, aetiology and cures. For example, back in the 1980s, when science knew relatively little about what the human genome might contain, it seemed impossible to determine the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) sequence of the entire genome, estimated to be about 3 billion base pairs in length. Despite these uncertainties, scientists did not give up hope. Rather, as Francis S. Collins says in *The Language of God* (2006), flashlights did shine after years of painstaking research across several laboratories in the most advanced universities in the world. Hence, as a result of these developments, on the one hand, human life in many parts of the world, especially in economically advanced countries, has never in history been more comfortable than in the current era. On the other, humanity has been encountering and dealing with more and more crises on a regular basis. Most of these crises have been closely intertwined with our advancements in science and technology, increasing greed for wealth and power, expressions of intolerance and acts of violence, environmental changes and increasing natural disasters, infectious diseases, wars, migrations, and economic recessions.

The advancement of modern science and technology has enabled us to enter a new era of communication and commerce, known as globalization. Without making any prolix attempt to define what globalization is, a simple reading of the term in various genres of literature shows that it is often associated with the idea of global-to-local and local-to-global, the global village, and global city, to name but a few. As a result, one could describe globalization as a process of a technological and not geographical compression of time and space. The modern means of communications, for instance, have made it possible for people, goods, and transactions to cross the barriers and space at a much faster speed than ever before. Moreover, to better comprehend globalization, it is important to view it from multiple dimensions. Three dimensions will be briefly mentioned here. Firstly,

globalization is intertwined with the practice of economy and enormous advances in modern telecommunications, medicine and space technologies for example. Secondly, globalization involves ideological and political formulations that combine neoliberal ideology and its political doctrine, particularly its economic politics, with the market economy. This dimension of globalization is a source of concern not only for this author but also for analysts in the fields of education, politics, cultural studies, and economics (Baiza, 2018, p. 14). Thirdly, globalization can have a positive impact on education. For instance, three universal declarations of Education for All (EFA) in 1990, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2012 are outcomes of the globalization process. However, the flipside of their positive elements, as will be discussed, shows serious concerns, such as that of creating a "one-size-fits-all" uniform set of visions, missions, goals, objectives, and practices for all nations around the world.

Progress on these global declarations is monitored by the wealthy nations and financial institutions to which they are the creditors and the controlling authorities. The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, formerly known as the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, is responsible for monitoring global progress in education. It operates within (and its mandate was to monitor progress towards) Goal 4 – Quality Education in, the SDGs framework. The MDGs Monitor is responsible for monitoring and reporting progress on MDGs. While Google and Cisco fund the cost of the monitoring programme (MDG Monitor, 2022), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) directly monitored the global progress on MDGs. In addition, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) tracks, oversees and monitors the progress and effectiveness of the SDGs, set to be achieved by 2030. The progress report is discussed and reviewed biannually at the UN High-Level Political Forum (Sustainable Development Goals United Nations, 2022; United Nations, 2020; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2016).

In the case of MDGs, the Declaration had its positive and negative sides. Their positive side, as Waage *et al*. stated, contributed to encouraging global political consensus, providing a focus for advocacy, improving the targeting and flow of aid, and improving the monitoring of development projects. However, many weaknesses were detected on the flipside of the MDGs' positive elements. Some of the major problems with MDGs' conceptualisation and execution arose at the goal, target, and indicator levels. As Waage *et al*. further add, some of the key goals, such as peace, security and disarmament, and human rights (2010, p. 7) including women's

rights, were never included in the MDGs. On peace and security, Peggy Antrobus also stated that:

> when the five permanent members of the Security Council are among the countries that are the chief manufacturers of weapons and the apparatus of war, we have to wonder whether the UN's highest councils can ever help to bring about peace.
>
> (Antrobus, 2006, pp. 1374-75)

As an example, she referred to the Iraq war as to how the case for war was generated by the United States (*ibid.*, pp. 1375). Security is the most cross-cutting element for the attainment of local, national, and global goals and targets. Lack of security only exacerbates poverty, jeopardises economic growth, prevents children's and especially girls' access to education, increases all forms of violence against women, and deteriorates health situations and access to basic health facilities. Hence, in the absence of a genuine intention for peace and security, Antrobus (*ibid.*, p. 1371) described MDGs as the most distracting gimmicks.

There were also problems with the MDGs' targets and their indicators. One specific example is that MDGs 2 solely focused on the achievement of universal primary education. Without even speaking of the exclusion of secondary and post-secondary education from the declaration, the logic of the targets set for universal primary education itself were questionable. Waage *et al*. stated that the targets of MDGs 2 could be met without achieving their full intent. For this goal, ensuring that all boys and girls could complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015, only the net enrolment ratio was consistently measured, because other ratios were more difficult to assess. However, this measure not only entailed a very narrow view of primary education, but the indicator could also lead to a misleading success. For example, enrolment in education, even in the last grade of primary, can mean little more than having one's name recorded in an enrolment register. The ratio does not indicate regular attendance, participation in learning opportunities, or the achievement of learning outcomes that are useful, relevant, or enduring as the child develops into adolescence and adulthood. Similarly, the target did not pay attention to key stakeholders in education, namely teachers, the supply of qualified teachers, provision of teacher education, language policy reform, curriculum reform, and provision of learning materials, to name a few considerations (2010, pp. 10-11). Studies have shown that progress towards achieving the goals was slow and uneven across the world. For example, United Nations (2012) and Overseas Development Institute (2010) reported that, due to extreme global

poverty and hunger in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa, many countries did not have the facilities to meet the targeted two-thirds reduction in child mortality by 2015. Even if some of the developing economies could meet the larger targets, United Nations Development Programme (2003, p. 3, 16 and 19) acknowledged that ethnicities and minorities, as well as girls and women, suffered ethnic and gender biases in accessing schools, public services, and employment opportunities.

Moreover, there are concerns about the political approach and ambition behind these global declarations and projects. The SDGs' slogan of "Leave No One Behind," for example, is a reminder of the "No Child Left Behind (NCLB)" education policy in the United States. Both slogans are commendable. In the case of the latter, it was initiated and informed by right-wing think tanks and business organizations. The NCLB Act 2001 officially declared that its key vision and mission is "to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice" (Congress of the United States, 2001). Critics, however, say that the Act, along with three other initiatives, namely Chicago's Renaissance 2010 project, educational rebuilding in Iraq, and educational rebuilding in New Orleans, facilitates typical backdoor privatization. They argue that NCLB makes impossible demands for continual improvement from schools that are set up for failure. When these schools, as expected, do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), they become subject to punitive action by the federal government, including the potential loss of formerly guaranteed federal funding (Saltman, 2009, pp. 30-31). According to numerous studies, the NCLB's strategies are more political than educational and are designed to bring a kind of market reform to education (Karp, 2004, p. 55; Meier and Wood, 2004). By transferring the decision-making power from local and state governments to the federal government, and changing the nature of democratic education, the Act not only undermines democratic education but, as Deborah Meier states, it also undermines the tradition of democratic education in the United States (Meier, 2004, p. 67). To reverse the situation, Alfie Kohn calls upon community members to rise up and take an active role in the affairs of their school systems (Kohn, 2004).

There have been similar concerns about the EFA's, MDGs' and SDGs' declarations. Like NCLB, which was initiated by right-wing think tanks and business organizations, the MDGs, for instance, as Basir Amin stated, were primarily promoted by the United States, the European Union and Japan, co-sponsored by the World Bank, the IMF, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Amin, 2006). Despite having aspirational goals, the MDGs' approach was top-down and cared more

about its sponsors' objectives than the goals themselves. Creditor countries, especially the G7, as Joseph Stiglitz states, dominate the IMF, in which the United States has the veto power. In general, the G7 countries control the decision-making (Stiglitz and Schoenfelder, 2003, p. 3). The officially declared missions and slogans for global social justice remain contentious. In concert with Amin, Patrick Bond stated that the goals were generated non-transparently by the United Nations, itself simultaneously moving to embrace the Washington Consensus on the one hand and drifting away from serving the interests of poor people by playing into the hands of global neoliberal power on the other (Bond, 2006, p. 339, 349). As happened with the EFA's and MDGs' goals and targets, there are many countries that are set up for failure and have no realistic chance of meeting the SDGs by 2030. They may face certain interventions under the banner of "Leave No One Behind," and time will tell what those interventions may be.

In these global agendas, it is the wealthy states and global corporations and industries that dictate their visions of the future to the rest of the world. Offering global opportunities to eradicate hunger, promote access to education and gender equality, health, and reduce child mortality and infectious diseases, are certainly noble ideas. However, the unspoken opportunities for the wealthy nations and global corporations are those of creating new geographical spaces for the circulation of capital, incorporating the non-industrial nations into the new global capitalist economy, as well as the standardization of the future generations' education, ways of thinking, behaviours, desires, and wishes in a manner that would be understood and influenced, if not controlled. In this process, education is the best target through which every individual and society can be reached. Even though the prospect of achieving such opportunities has always varied from country to country, in the case of EFA, for example, Jacques Hallak stated that the relatively wealthy and peaceful societies achieve the objectives much more easily (Hallak, 1991, p. 2). The same was true for the MDGs and it is so for the SDGs. However, looking at the current state of world affairs, there is a reasonable fear of the fact that, as Zygmund Bauman (2011) puts it, no one is in control and that is the major source of contemporary fear.

Not being in control is, at least, to a great extent driven by our advances in modern technology and science, and the desire of applying them toward the monopoly of power and wealth. Uncontrolled globalization and the state's market-oriented policy, aligned with neoliberal ideology and its political doctrine, can be detrimental to the purpose and practice of education. As I have already written in my *Navigating Education in a Troubled Time*, there

are worrying elements in the growth of a heavily market-centred neoliberal ideology that concern the present and future development of education around the world. In its relationship with the state, the neoliberal political doctrine encompasses the marketization of the state itself. The state is no longer an entity whose main objective is the wellbeing of its citizens. The idea of the nation-state changes into the market-state as if there is no alternative discipline outside the market economy. The neoliberal economic politics of the privatization of the public sector and the reduction of social politics spending (Bloom, 1987; Clarke, 2005) create a sense of insecurity and uncertainty among the population. As has already been mentioned in the case of NCLB, Chicago's Renaissance 2010 project, educational rebuilding in Iraq, educational rebuilding in New Orleans in the United States, or academies project in the United Kingdom, are all based on political strategies that undermine the will of people at local and national levels to facilitate the privatisation of public institutions. This is happening because of the inability of the nation-state to exercise power since power has liberated itself from political control for over a half-century now. As Zygmunt Bauman states, everything that ignores the boundaries of national sovereignty, local customs and preferences, and the will of populations, from finance, capital, trade, and information to terrorism, criminality, the arms trade, and dark (illicit) traffic, not only gets away without being punished but also becomes global (Bauman, 2011). Hence, this reorganisation of power and politics contributes to the feeling that 'nothing is under control'.

In modern times, crises and uncertainties are scattered and diffused across the world. They are everywhere around us and their sources are multiple and open-ended. The twenty-first century has started with a series of global crises, from terrorism, inter-state and civil wars and subsequent migrations, and economic recessions to several pandemics and natural disasters. The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States' soil was the first shocking event of the new century. The event was soon followed by an international alliance against the Taliban regime (1996-2001) in Afghanistan. However, after 20 years of human and financial sacrifice, the Taliban re-installed themselves in power on 15 August 2021. In the current crises in Afghanistan, education and women suffer the most. While still fighting the so-called "war on terror" in Afghanistan, the United States staged the Iraq War (2003-2011), which was justified under the pretext of the development of weapons of mass destruction. Most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine (24 February 2022-present) is another major inter-state escalation of a conflict that began in 2014. These wars created disastrous man-made humanitarian crisis. Amid these man-made disasters, the 2004

Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami that killed more than 230,000 on 26 December 2004 (Reuters, 2019), and Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast of the United States on 23 August 2005, were some of the major frequent natural catastrophes in which human exploitation of nature plays an exacerbating role. It was only two years later that the 2007-2008 credit crunch that emerged in the United States created a global financial crisis, which then affected all aspects of people's lives, especially investments in education.

The Arab Spring protests in Tunisia in December 2010 in response to corruption, economic stagnation, and deteriorating conditions of life marked a new era of awakening in the Arab world. Although the protests soon spread to Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, and Bahrain, the protesters' calls for democracy did not bring the desired results. Instead, the growing political and economic instability in Iraq and Syria prepared the ground for the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, 2011-2019), calling for a Sunni Islamic state and caliphate. Subsequently, the war and violence in Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan not only interrupted the educational opportunities of millions of young learners but also led to unprecedented waves of migration, mostly to the European Union territories.

The outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2002 marked the first pandemic of the 21st century. The disease originated in Guangdong Province, South China, in mid-Nov 2002 and rapidly spread to Hong Kong and 29 countries, mostly Asian, with 8,422 cases and 916 fatalities (Cherry and Krogstad, 2004, p. 1; Chan-Yeung and Xu, 2003, p. 9). After less than a year, strict quarantining measures ended the SARS epidemic in June 2003 (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, 2020). The outbreak of Ebola virus disease in central and western African states (2013) was another complex and widespread disease before COVID-19 led to the current global pandemic. These infectious diseases have caused enormous humanitarian crises and have affected all aspects of our lives and societies, from politics, economy, climate, health, and education to personal lifestyle, social relationships, and the way we define ourselves and others.

To understand how and why our education systems and our practices of education are changing, we need to understand what causes these troubled times and how we can address those causes and possibly turn them around. To do so, we also need to ask what relationship is there between education and crisis; how we can mitigate the force and impact of the crisis on education; how governments support national education systems and the education of their citizens during troubled times, whether conflict,

migration, abject poverty or the spread of infectious diseases. While these questions raise critical points, there is no straightforward answer. The answer varies from context to context.

The Structure of the Book

Education in Troubled Times contains 17 chapters that expose the readers to a wide range of challenges and crises that have been affecting the practice of education across diverse social and temporal contexts. The chapters begin with the most recent global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ch 1), the impact of COVID-19 on education in Afghanistan (Ch 2) and Pakistan (Ch 3) and continue with an examination of the role of the private sector to provide early childhood education (ECE) in East Africa (Ch 4), ECE in the time of COVID-19 in Singapore (Ch 5), and empathy for post-pandemic education (Ch 6). The next four chapters (Chs 7-10) examine the state of education in Bangsamoro (Philippines), higher education for Syrian refugees outside Syria, education crisis in Afghanistan, and education and conflict in Egypt respectively. These are then followed by an investigation of the impact of hyper-nationalism and poverty on education in India (Chs 11-12). The next two chapters (Chs 13-14) shift the debate to neoliberalism and its impact on education, with a special focus on academy schools in England (Ch 13) and the ways neoliberal approach to education changes the higher education institution sector (Ch 14). Chapter 15 examines the role of mobile technology in literacy and assessment, and their impacts on primary education in Tanzania. The final two chapters (Chs 16-17) address structural and cultural challenges that impede women academicians from reaching senior university management posts, and the difficulties that poor families, especially those in rural areas, encounter in choosing the schools that can offer their children realistic academic and other job opportunities.

The first set of chapters (Chs 1-6) on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education begins with a global overview (Ch 1). In "the COVID-19 Pandemic and Education Crisis: A Global Overview," Yahia Baiza focuses on how the pandemic has been affecting education systems around the world. Among other things, Yahia specifically discusses some of the major issues, namely educational setbacks, the gender gap, the challenges of connectivity and modern technology in education, the widening digital and education gaps between the rich and the poor, technologically advanced and left behind nations, and key issues related to teachers and the teaching profession during the pandemic.

In his second chapter (Ch 2), Yahia examines how the COVID-19 pandemic has been affecting and threatening the education system in Afghanistan. He states that the pandemic has catapulted education in Afghanistan into the world of distance education for which the country had neither previous experience nor the requisite infrastructure to support it. Furthermore, the return of the Taliban to power on 15 August 2021 has further exacerbated the state of education in the country. By closing public institutions of higher education and girls' secondary schools, and by banning women from resuming their jobs, including education, amid increasing poverty, the Taliban have undoubtedly brought about the most difficult times for education, students, and women.

The case of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education in Pakistan and the role of non-governmental organisations in assisting local educational institutions (Ch 3) is taken up by Riaz Hussain and Syed Gohar Ali Shah. The authors specifically focus on the educational institutions and the way these institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), by combining online and blended classes, home-based assignments and online teacher support, have been providing alternative modes of learning for its stakeholders. However, limited internet connectivity and television coverage (in the rural areas) and the fragmented support to school-going students, along with the lack of digital literacy among students and teachers, mounted formidable challenges that Riaz and Syed Gohar address in this chapter.

Moving from Pakistan to East Africa, Anil Khamis analyses the development of early childhood development (ECD) in Uganda in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ch 4). Anil's findings show that there are deep and structural problems in Uganda's ECD. Along with the scarcity of human resources, this chapter discusses the insufficient coordination between various sectors, wastage of resources that work against synergistic approaches, and insufficient contextualisation of programmes to respond to children's cultural and environmental factors (Elder *et al*, 2021) that hamper a meaningful development of ECD in Uganda.

In the next chapter (Ch 5), Sandra Wu analyses the state of pre-school education during the COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore. Sandra uses Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) as the theoretical frame to interrogate how Singapore has responded to the crisis through policymaking for the care and education of young children; and how the government designed and rolled out policies to enforce safety measures and provide support, funding, and resources for families during this crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet, but Charlene Tan's chapter on "empathy for post-pandemic education" (Ch 6) shifts our attention to the post-pandemic world. In this chapter, Charlene focuses on care and empathy for less privileged people, who are more prone to the pandemic's adverse effects that go beyond academic learning. To do so, she advocates an integrated concept of empathy that incorporates the cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions for the advancement of altruistic concern for others. The idea of integrated empathy in education, as she says, becomes effective when educators employ empathic pedagogy that promotes the sharing of thinking and feeling states to foster moral growth at the personal and social levels.

In the next four chapters (Chs 7-10), Anil Khamis, Kathleen Fincham, Yahia Baiza, and Sameh Fawzy examine the state of education in Bangsamoro (Philippines), higher education for Syrian refugees outside Syria, education crisis in Afghanistan, and education and conflict in Egypt respectively. Anil Khamis reflects on the current socio-political developments in Bangsamoro, officially the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and their impacts on education (Ch 7). After more than 40 years of civil strife in Mindanao, and 17 years of peace negotiations with the Government of the Philippines, Bangsamoro achieved its autonomy in March 2014. However, as Anil states, despite many positive developments, the decades of armed conflict and guerrilla warfare have complicated the situation on the ground. In this chapter, Anil addresses the question of what the prospects are for education where public, private, and self-governing autonomous religious schools (*madrasa*s) play a mediating and determining role with cognate organs of society to shape values and a vision of the future. The case of Bangsamoro provides a lens and lessons for similar cases elsewhere.

Next, Kathleen Fincham explores the case of Syrian refugees' access to higher education (HE) (Ch 8). The Syrian civil war is considered one of the worst humanitarian crises of modern times. Using a gender lens, Kathleen critically examines the extent to which HE is enabling male and female refugees to achieve their desired functioning and capability sets related to what Al-Fattal and Ayoubi (2013) describe as 'self', 'social' and 'souk' (market), as three dimensions of needs and motives for students. Kathleen remains critical of the donors' and policymakers' approaches to HE for refugees, with a focus on 'efficiency' (educate the largest number of refugees at minimal cost) and 'effectiveness' (educate refugees for a particular purpose), and assuming that one size fits all.

Moving from Syria to Afghanistan, Yahia Baiza focuses on the education crisis in Afghanistan (Ch 9). His thesis is that education in Afghanistan operates in a perpetual state of crisis. Frequent regime changes and changes of political systems have paved the way for successive crises. Each political regime structurally changed the mission, vision, and objectives of education. Curriculum frameworks, textbooks and teacher education programmes have lost their educational character and education has been reduced to fragmentary and episodic programmes. Consequently, education neither receives due attention nor does it recover from one crisis before it enters a new one. To address the crisis, among other things, Yahia suggests that the way forward, first and foremost, is to recognise and acknowledge the existence of the crisis. This is because no crisis will ever be resolved until and unless it is recognised and acknowledged as a crisis.

The next chapter (Ch 10) moves the debate of education and conflict to Egypt, where Sameh Fawzy discusses the squabbles between the state and Islamists, with a particular focus on the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*), founded in 1928 by a schoolteacher Hassan al-Bana (d. 12 February 1949). Sameh examines the tension between the state's education policy and the Brotherhood's Islamist agenda. In his criticism of the state, he suggests that the state's approach to Islamists is inconsistent, and that its policies do not go far enough. For example, when Islamists penetrated the educational system in the 1980s and 90s, the government tightened its control over education, by removing extremist ideas from textbooks, and imposing strict surveillance on school activities. Although these measures were able to track extremism in education to some extent, they were reactive and lacked sustainability. Sameh explores and addresses these and similar issues in this chapter.

The next two chapters (Chs 11-12) focus on the impact of Hindu nationalism and poverty on education in India. In "India and Me" (Ch 11), Laila Kadiwal, Lotika Singha, Swati Kamble, and Ketan Dandare examine how the politicisation of religion and culture, and the xenophobic hyper-nationalist discourses in today's India, are suppressing tolerance and democracy and creating a crisis across all aspects of society, especially education. The authors argue that India urgently needs an education programme that engages a critical mass of people in discussions about India. The authors approach their critical education programme from below, from the perspective of the oppressed and marginalized groups in society. They build their proposed programme for critical change on three theoretical concepts of critical consciousness/the third eye, intersectionality, and identity and othering. By combining different theoretical approaches, the

authors' proposed critical education programme for change speaks from the perspective of the oppressed and marginalised segment of society.

Manasi Pande examines the impact of poverty on the lives of young carers between the ages of 11 and 16. In this chapter (Ch 12), she enters the complex world of work and school of young carers to give them a voice and highlight the challenges they face and aspirations they cherish. She states that to support their families, the children of many poor families, who live in slum areas, drop out of school and take on caregiving activities for their families. As a specific example, Manasi uses the narrative and the case of a 12-year-old girl from the slums to give a deeper insight into the experiences of young carers.

In chapters 14 and 15, Jeff Tan, and Nekpen Okhawere together with Sarah Eyaa shift the debate to neoliberalism and its impact on education. In "Academy schools in England" (Ch 13), Jeff Tan examines how neoliberal policies created vast profit opportunities by transferring decision-making away from local authorities to independent Academies while at the same time increasing control by the central government through the introduction of performance metrics. Jeff Tan also states that the Academies are part of a wider global trend in the privatisation of schools where private companies are subsidised by the state to take over local authority or state schools. He further adds that the Academies, by claiming to improve school performance and to turn around badly performing schools by engaging them with business partners as sponsors (Eyles, Machin and Silva, 2017, p. 121), take the decision-making power away from the representatives of the local authority, parents, and teaching staff, who traditionally served on the school's board.

Similarly, Nekpen Okhawere and Sarah Eyaa (Ch 14) explore how the neoliberal approach to education is changing the higher education institution (HEI) sector from a social to a business-oriented 'stakeholder' organisation. They state that the neoliberal view of education as an economic instead of a social institute has forced HEIs to engage in marketing and reputational building activities to source private funds such as student tuition fees. Practically, students have become customers. This may imply the delivery of better education, but it also has implications for how students are attended to, especially during unprecedented events like the recent pandemic. To address the situation, they recommend the re-positioning of HEIs back to their initial purpose of community well-being and, if implemented, HEIs can find themselves better placed to respond in future complex situations and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

How far mobile technology can improve literacy at the primary education level in Tanzania is the key question that Musa Saimon and Fredrick Mtenzi explore in chapter 15. They argue that the current conventional paper-pencil assessment leads to low literacy levels. This in turn hinders students' future career growth, participation in democratic activities nationally and globally and, since language is the medium of instruction, it affects students' comprehension of other subjects. To address the situation, they recommend the use of mobile applications because this enables learners to access online libraries and increase their comprehension of other subjects. However, they consider technical, cultural, policy and financial issues as major challenges to making this happen. Hence in addressing the dilemma of language literacy between paper and pencil, and the proposed use of mobile technology, the authors know that their recommendation works only when the state intervenes through providing the necessary infrastructure, training programmes for teachers and students and the active promotion of the use of computer technology in education.

Next, Gulnar Adebietqyzy Sarseke analyses gender equality and the representation of women at senior university management level in Kazakhstan (Ch 16). The case of women's leadership in Kazakhstan's higher education system is not much discussed in the literature. Apart from reports that are either produced by the state or international organisations, which mostly provide statistical data on gender, not much is available on Kazakh women in higher education. This chapter provides a vital insight into the subject. Gulnar Adebietqyzy Sarseke's study focuses on women's representation in three senior management positions, namely vice-chancellor/rector, deputy vice-chancellor/pro-rector and dean. Her research findings show that women in Kazakhstan have been underrepresented for too long and continue to face multiple challenges to reach top management positions. She examines a number of these major challenges to find out their impacts on women's progress in senior university management posts in Kazakhstan.

The final chapter (Ch 17) of this book takes us into the complex area of school choice in Pakistan. In this chapter, Stephen M. Lyon and Fatima Ahsan focus on the challenges that poor families face in making an informed schooling decision in the current landscape of Pakistan. The authors state that while parents may be clear in their preferences of language, levels of religious content, and private or public education, they remain at the mercy of an under-regulated educational market and, crucially, the volatility of an economy that is beset by regional instability and global geopolitical capriciousness. Despite the existing challenges, the authors view a positive

development in the overall state of education for poor families, whose children are no longer locked into the choices available when their parents were born.

These chapters together demonstrate how education operates in troubled times and circumstances. The scale, depth and breadth of the challenges and crises examined, and their impacts on education vary from one another, depending on the nature of the challenge and the crisis, as well as the factors that cause their emergence and the situations into which they emerge, and also the depth and quality of the measures that address them. Some have global impacts, like COVID-19 and neoliberalism, while others are limited to a specific location or specific group of people, especially those in low-power positions, be they women, religious groups, or the financially poor cohort of society. Taken together, these chapters offer unique insights into the complex relationship of varying influencing factors and the practice of education across troubled times and geographical locations.

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