Private Encroachment through Crisis-making: The Privatization of Education for Refugees

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Abstract: How has education for refugees been shaped by broader dynamics of educational privatization? This paper argues that the invoking of the 'refugee crisis' narrative has been a crucial force in facilitating the privatization of this sector. The urgency of crisis helps to naturalize private actors' participation in refugees' education as equal partners to host governments, multilateral agencies, and civil society. Consistent with Stephen Ball's (2012) distinction between privatization in and of education, the privatization of refugee education also advances through two dimensions: the creation of a new space – a new 'market' – for private actors, and the infusion of market and business principles such as 'innovation' into all aspects of education. The crisis narrative has created a new 'horizon of taken-for-granted' (Hall, 1993), where it is simply natural that private actors must participate in the assumption of the traditional responsibilities of the state in providing education for refugees.
Keywords: privatization; refugee education; crisis; discourse analysis

Usurpación privada por la invención de crisis: La privatización de educación para refugiados

Resumen: Cómo es que la educación para refugiados se ha vista transformada por la dinámica más amplia de la privatización de educación? Este articulo sostiene que el uso de la narrativa de "la crisis de refugiados" ha actuado como fuerza esencial para facilitar la privatización de este sector educativo. La urgencia de crisis ayuda a naturalizar la participación de actores privados en la educación de refugiados a nivel igual que gobiernos de países de acogida, organizaciones multilaterales, y la sociedad civil. De acuerdo con la distinción de Stephen Ball (2012) entre privatización en y de educación, la privatización de la educación de refugiados también avanza por dos dimensiones: la creación de un nuevo espacio- un nuevo "mercado"- para actores privados, y la inserción de principios mercantiles y empresariales tales como "la innovación" en todos aspectos de la educación. La narrativa de crisis ya ha creado un nuevo "ámbito de dado-por-hecho" (Hall, 1993), en la cual se considera natural que los actores privados tengan que asumir responsabilidades tradicionalmente del estado en la provisión de educación para refugiados.

Palabras-clave: privatización; educación de refugiados; crisis; análisis de discurso

Usurpação privada por a invenção de crise: A privatização da educação para refugiados

Resumo: Como é que a educação para refugiados se transformou por a dinâmica más ampla da privatização da educação? Este artigo argumenta que o uso da narrativa da "crise dos refugiados" há servido como força essencial para possibilitar a privatização de este sector educacional. A urgência de crise ajuda a naturalizar a participação de atores privados na educação dos refugiados de maneira igual que governos de países anfitriões, organizações multilateral, e a sociedade civil. De acordo com a distinção de Stephen Ball (2012) entre privatização em y de educação, a privatização da educação de refugiados também avança por dois dimensões: a criação de um novo espaço- um novo "mercado"- para atores privados, e a inserção de princípios do mercado e do comercio como "a inovação" em todas partes da educação. A narrativa da crise já formou um novo "âmbito de tomado-por-certo" (Hall, 1993), na qual se considera natural que os atores privados tenham que assumir cargos tradicionalmente do estado na fornecimento de educação para refugiados.

Palavras-chave: privatização; educação de refugiados; crise; análise de discurso

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 seeks to 'leave no one behind' in achieving inclusive, equitable and quality education for all. In the same year that this bold vision was declared, 1.8 million refugees were crossing borders to flee from violence and disasters (UNHCR, 2016a). By the end of 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are approximately 6 million refugee children and adolescents worldwide between the age of 5 and 18 (UNHCR, 2016b).[1] Even though SDG 4 does not explicitly address education in emergencies, clearly the goal of Education for All cannot be reached without addressing the urgent yet often invisible struggles of refugee children in accessing their fundamental human right to go to school.

In this context, there has been a recent global surge in attention to the refugee education crisis. Since 2010, the UN Special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown has been a key player in placing refugee education and education in emergencies on the map of global humanitarian and development actors. Development in global refugee education policies has been given new momentum by the creation of new multi-stakeholder initiatives specifically devoted to education in emergencies such as No Lost Generation (NLG) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), and a new emphasis on conflict and fragility settings within the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Such development is also remarkable for having brought together humanitarianism and international development, two fields that have traditionally been kept separate in the world of global donors.

Embedded within this global movement is a technical and emergency view of the crisis of refugee education, with the ostensibly 'neutral' solution of calling on partnerships with the private sector to solve this urgent crisis for the world's most helpless and marginalized (Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010; Versmesse et al., 2017). Indeed, recent research has found an increasing presence of the private sector in providing educational opportunities to refugee children and youths, as well as in the global humanitarian system as a whole (Malik, Mohr, & Irvin-Erickson, 2018; Menashy & Zakharia, 2017). Different from other cases of educational privatization where the involvement of private actors has been heavily criticized (Macpherson, Robertson, & Walford, 2014; Verger, Fontdevila, & Zancajo, 2016), refugees occupy a particularly marginalized position within the global political economy which produces unresolved tensions with regard to who is responsible for their education. Refugees, by definition, have crossed the sovereign border of their original nation-state and have, therefore, deprived themselves of the fundamental rights associated with citizenship. This runs into tension with the current normative agreement in the international education development world: governments are the primary duty-bearers for the education of their citizens (Tomasevki, 2003). In the case of education for refugees, this consensus is clearly inadequate. While refugees stand outside the mandate of any given nation-state, they are still human beings that are always situated somewhere and have real needs to be fulfilled (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). In practice, UNHCR has often found itself acting as the 'pseudo-state' in attempting, and failing, to fill the traditional state responsibilities with regard to the refugee population (Bengtsson & Naylor, 2016; O'Neal, Gosnell, Ng, Clement, & Ong, 2017; Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). The 'exceptional' status that refugees occupy

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[1] This number only includes children and adolescents under UNHCR's mandate. Palestinian refugees are under the protection of a separate UN agency, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This paper mainly discusses education for refugees who are under UNHCR's mandate, given that they are the central population discussed in the field of education in emergencies. However, it should be noted that UNRWA also engages in providing education for Palestinian refugee children and youths, and in fact devotes significantly more resources to the education sector than the rest of the humanitarian world.

within the global political structure of sovereign nation-states leaves a vacuum that, for many policy actors, requires the private sector to step in, even in this domain of education where the involvement of private actors have always been contentious.

This paper examines this issue through a particular focus on the rhetorical mechanisms through which policy actors working in the field of refugee education have justified and promoted the privatization of education for refugees. Through an analysis of key documents produced and used by the main actors involved in education for refugees, I consider the ways in which broader dynamics of educational privatization have also shaped the recent policy discourses around refugee education. This paper argues that the invoking of a 'refugee crisis' has been particularly successful in facilitating the privatization in this particular sector. Consistent with Stephen Ball's (2012) distinction between privatization *in* and *of* education, the privatization of refugee education also advances through two dimensions: the creation of a new space – a new 'market' – for private actors, and the infusion of market and business principles such as 'innovation' into all aspects of education.[2] The crisis narrative has created a new 'horizon of taken-for-granted' (Hall, 1993) where it is simply natural that private actors must participate in the assumption of the traditional responsibilities of the state in providing education for refugees, as equal partners to host governments, multilateral agencies, and civil society.

In the next section, I delve into a historical overview of refugee education policy and discuss the traditional humanitarianism-development chasm that has prevented the development of concerted efforts to respond to the lack of education opportunities for refugee children. Then, I develop the conceptual framework of crisis narratives and discuss the use of *move analysis* (Auld & Morris, 2016) to examine how policy documents rely on crisis framing and its persuasive power. This leads to a sample framing of the 'refugee crisis' – which is certainly a real and urgent crisis – that resembles the approaches taken by most global documents. I then analyze how this crisis narrative has propelled the privatization of refugee education in two dimensions: the legitimization of a space at the agenda-setting table for private actors, and the worship of the 'innovation' inherent in business practices. In the final section, I analyze the consequences of crisis narratives, specifically the ways in which this frame places suffering on a hierarchy and renders inconsequential critical discussions of root causes, obligation, and accountability.

The History of Refugee Education Policy

Education in emergencies, and refugee education in particular, is important for the same reasons that education is essential to societies in general. First of all, education is a human right that has been affirmed since the 1948 Declaration on Universal Human Rights; this alone should be reason enough for the world to invest more resources to providing quality education for refugee children and adolescents. Even for those who prefer a human capital approach to a rights-based approach to education, education for refugees would also provide them with the skills needed to participate productively in the economy of their host countries or original countries in the future. In addition, in the field of education in emergencies specifically, one can see the important 'protection' function of schooling. Schools are spaces that can help refugee children escape from the threat of violence, sexual exploitation, child labor, child marriage, and other forms of abuses (Burde, Kapit,

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[2] Ball (2012) actually discusses a third dimension of privatization *through* education, or the way that the knowledge produced by the policy, research and consultancy networks in education also work to extend privatization (Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). This paper does not use this lens because of the relative lack of studies and impact evaluations on refugee education at this point.

Wahl, Guven, & Skarpeteig, 2016; UNHCR, 2016b). Schools also contribute to the psychosocial wellbeing of refugee children by offering them a return to normalcy and routine life after traumatic experiences (O'Neal et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, up until the last five years, refugee education policy has largely been ignored in the global educational policy sphere. This is significant in that, as pointed out above, refugees do not possess the citizenship rights that would allow them to make claims on the state to meet their needs. Instead, the transnational humanitarian regime with 'migrant sovereignty,' including UNHCR, non-governmental organizations, and multi- and bilateral agencies, have been historically responsible for meeting the basic needs of refugees (Pandolfi, 2003). Yet education as an issue has been largely invisible from not only the policy agendas of national governments but also this transnational humanitarian regime.

A large cause of this is the historical split between humanitarian and development purposes in foreign assistance and donor portfolios. Humanitarian actors have traditionally pursued the work of alleviation of immediate suffering in emergency contexts (Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010). Education, in contrast, is often tied to long-term development purposes that are often seen to be outside the capacity of humanitarian actors. The short-term temporal dimension of humanitarianism means that most efforts have been on interventions and services that can be delivered immediately, such as health care, shelter, food, water and sanitation. Furthermore, in this context of dealing with the most vulnerable population of human beings whose future is in such uncertainty, many humanitarian actors saw education as something that would only lead to disappointment because of the lack of job prospects (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). For example, education is such a low priority on UNHCR's agenda that between 1998 and 2011, this agency did not have a single field education officer working in a refugee-hosting country (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Education is also often not included in emergency needs assessment that is carried out at the onset of emergencies (ODI, 2016). When education is organized on the ground, it has been promoted on an *ad hoc* basis by the refugee communities themselves (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Edwards Jr. & Klees, 2012; O'Neal et al., 2017).

Global interest in bringing education and emergencies together emerged at the beginning of the new millennium, coinciding with the renewed commitment to Education for All goals at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar. The most positive development in this period was the establishment of the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE). INEE has been an effective transnational network of scholars, practitioners, and policy advocates interested in this emerging field. The INEE Minimum Standards framework provides the foundation for most projects in education in emergencies. The network has also acted as a coordinating body for global consultations on policy initiatives dealing with education in emergencies, providing a wide range of actors a channel for voicing their opinions.

Various forces and developments in the global policy arena since 2010 have contributed to giving more spotlight to education in emergencies, conflicts and fragile settings. First of all, there is increasing recognition that humanitarian crises were anything but 'emergency' and temporary: most have become protracted conflicts, with the current average length of exile being about 20 years for refugees (UNHCR, 2016b). As a result, actors have been trying to push for a humanitarian-education nexus in transnational governance. Secondly, refugee education is increasingly recognized as a 'global public good,' whose benefits cannot be contained within any single country (High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, 2016; Kremer, 2006). The recognition of the positive externalities of refugee education means that there is a greater conversation on responsibility-sharing in the global community to prevent under-investment in this area. Thirdly, education in emergencies has benefited from the 'leave no one behind' spirit of the 2030 Agenda. And finally, the scale, visibility and urgency of the Syrian Refugee Crisis, which has also affected middle- and upper-income countries, has prompted multilateral initiatives such as the No Lost Generation initiative to

coordinate response, and a greater conversation on refugee education at all policy levels. The global recognition of the education crisis for Syrian children and youth, and of refugee children in the abstract, has undeniably fueled much of the recent policy attempts, action and initiatives surrounding education in emergencies.

Enter the Private Actors

With the increasing spotlight on the educational needs of a growing refugee population, scholars have noted a shifting international consensus that given the scale and protracted nature of refugee situations, humanitarian responses should now look into new mechanisms that involve the private sector (Malik, Mohr, & Irvin-Erickson, 2018). As the welcoming of private actors into refugee education is relatively recent, Menashy and Zakharia (2017) provides one of the few studies examining private sector engagement in the education of refugees. Through a case study of providers of education to Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, the authors indeed found a surge in the involvement of private businesses and foundations in educational funding, development of technological education innovations, and provision of training to teachers and other educational staffs.

These contemporary dynamics surrounding global refugee education policies must be contextualized within the broader trends of privatization in education, development, and humanitarianism. While there have always been private providers of education – historically education emerged as a largely private endeavor connected to elite interests – the current phase of privatization is notable in the breadth, depth, and the emergence of private sector engagement in education and the emergence of for-profit actors (Macpherson, Robertson, & Walford, 2014; Verger, Fontdevila, et al., 2016; Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). This is deeply linked to the spread of neoliberal ideology espousing free market competition, deregulation, private sector innovation, and accountability as 'best practices' in education (Klees, 2008). While weak in evidence, privatization has only grown due to ideological and material support by dominant actors in the global educational policy arena such as the World Bank, and it is manifested in a diverse range of forms: public-private partnerships, vouchers, charter schools, low-fee private schools, private educational consulting businesses, test prep services, etc. (Verger, Lubienski, et al., 2016).

These diverse manifestations of educational privatization speak to the fact that privatization cannot be analyzed as a coherent, consistent project which unfolds through only one pathway. Ball (2012) argues for the need to distinguish between privatization *of* and privatization *in* education. Privatization *of* education refers to the various ways in which education, traditionally a public sector, has been opened up for participation by private actors, from funding, delivery, ownership, policy-making, regulation, to the production of knowledge about education. In contrast, privatization *in* education refers to the "many and complex ways in which the mentality of the business world has been injected into education" (Macpherson et al., 2014, p. 14). As this paper will demonstrate, both of these dynamics can be witnessed within recent development in global policies to respond to the refugee education crisis. Of course, these dynamics are not mutually exclusive; they are highly intertwined and build upon each other to legitimize new roles for the private sector.

As the recent literature on the cultural political economy of privatization argues, educational privatization must not only be analyzed from a political economy lens but must also pay attention to the ideas and discourses supporting this movement (Verger et al., 2016). In particular, Verger et al. (2016) argues that privatization functions as a 'policy paradigm' in education around the world which restricts how policy-makers interpret their reality, diagnose educational problems and recognize which solutions are feasible and desirable. This policy paradigm has been established by intentional rhetorical strategies and complex pathways of persuasion (Auld & Morris, 2016). It is therefore

important to pay attention to the rhetorical moves that are pushing privatization to become a policy paradigm within refugee education.

Contexts of crisis such as this crisis of refugee education have long been recognized as ideal breeding grounds for privatization and neoliberalization (Harvey, 2007; Jessop & Oosterlynck, 2008; Klein, 2007; Saltman, 2007; Springer, 2015). For example, Naomi Klein's work on 'disaster capitalism' (2007) highlights the ways in which sites of natural disasters and military conflicts can become productive sites for capitalist profit-making. Beyond the utility of actual situations of crisis, scholarship on educational policy reforms in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, has also established that crisis as a narrative form can also propel privatization (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Slater, 2015; Takayama & Apple, 2008). Framing and manufacturing certain situations as a crisis has been a highly effective strategy that neoliberal and neoconservative actors have used to promote their ideological agendas, leading to an ubiquity of crisis (Giroux, 2008; Saltman, 2007). As Roitman (2014) argues, "Crisis is an omnipresent sign in almost all forms of narrative today; it is mobilized as the defining category of historical situations, past and present" (p. 3). The world is in crisis! Education is in crisis! The refugee child is in crisis!

What are the effects of such discursive construction of crisis that paradoxically entangle both the emergency and the banal? In many ways, the reframing of social phenomena as 'crisis' pushes considerations of causality and alternative possible actions aside as humans become emotionally caught up in the urgency of the moment and the desire to 'solve human suffering now!' Given this persuasive power, crisis becomes a powerful mobilizing frame that can be used by powerful actors to propose certain policy options as the only possible and logical solutions to complex issues (Srivastava, 2010). As Auld & Morris (2016) argues, "The more compelling the crisis, the more likely a reader will accept and act upon knowledge claims that are not strictly warranted" (p. 224). The compressed temporality of a crisis seemingly takes away the possibility for deep contemplation, for stepping back and tracing issues to the root of the matter. It is for this reason that the emergency imaginary surrounding refugees has been widely critiqued for allowing a proliferation of humanitarian assistance efforts that fail to get at the roots of forced displacement: an assemblage of capitalist extraction, armed conflicts, fundamentally unequal distribution of power and resources between different social groups, and the model of Westphalian state sovereignty that by its nature allows for the arbitrary exclusion of some human beings from the protection of citizenship (Agamben, 2005; Calhoun, 2008; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010; Versmesse et al., 2017).

Research Methods

Data Collection

This paper engages in a close reading of a selected sample of global policy documents (*n*=53) surrounding education for refugees in order to see which how privatization is justified. The policy texts examined here are produced by actors deemed to be powerful in this global policy arena, identified from a literature review of education in emergencies (Burde, Kapit, Wahl, Guven, & Skarpeteig, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2011). I used purposeful sampling to narrow down documents, reports, policy briefs, and other written artifacts produced by these actors that are widely referenced within the policy network, in recognition of the constructive power of ideas in policy-making but also the politics of knowledge production and dissemination (Verger, Fontdevila, et al., 2016). Although global policy documents have often failed to promote actual action, such as those associated with Education for All, they are still resources that contribute to establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of a global regime of governance (Tikly, 2017). These documents also capture the process of change in hegemonic discourses governing policies and action surrounding refugee education. While many of the documents analyzed here are produced by pro-privatization

actors such as the Global Business Coalition for Education and consequently are already likely to promote the engagement of private sector as a policy solution, this paper is interested not in whether privatization is promoted but in mechanisms through which these actors promote privatization as a good option.

Data Analysis

To examine how these policy documents rhetorically establish the engagement of private sector to be an appealing policy solution in refugee education, I used move analysis which is a technique that examines the rhetorical goals of policy texts and how the texts were strategically written to achieve these goals (Auld & Morris, 2016; Swales, 1990). Auld & Morris (2016) previously used this method to uncover rhetorical strategies employed by diverse policy entrepreneurs in comparative international education to produce educational "best practices" and highlighted five core moves: strategic framing, establishing expertise, restricting the analytical focus, drawing recommendations, and qualifying recommendations. Like essential elements of a persuasive narrative, these core sections are also present in most policy texts that seek to establish best practices in order to guide the audience toward the desired interpretation of reality. For this research project, I focused in particular on the first move of strategic framing in order to see how a strategic framing of a situation as a crisis can lead to certain logics of action.

I first read through all of the policy documents and wrote analytic memos detailing my response as an audience to each of these texts, especially with regard to what I was being persuaded to think and support after each document. Then, in the second read through of the documents, I coded for what each text identified as the problem, how the problem was presented, and the solutions offered, and afterward established the common themes in the strategic framing of the refugee crisis in these documents. In the third round of analysis, I conducted a close reading of passages previously coded as elements of the strategic framing in order to examine how smaller units of the passage (e.g. word choice, transition, sentence order, etc.) also operated to persuade the audience. I then read through all of the texts again to identify what was missing in these policy documents as they discussed the refugee situation.

These policy documents indeed followed similar structures and methods to introduce and frame refugee education issues. The next section provides a sample framing that includes the common elements identified in these policy texts.

Framing the Crisis: By the Numbers and by the Stories

Humanitarian crises are made visible to the public through both enumerative and vernacular accounts (Benton, 2012). The production, manipulation, and presentation of numbers provide a way of 'seeing like a state' (Scott, 1999), useful in fostering the desire and commitment to solving the urgent problems identified. Yet as these problems are with fundamental needs that all human beings share, vernacular stories are also essential in order to provide a human face to suffering so as to evoke the 'instinct to care' that we all share (Keltner, 2004). Together, enumerative and non-enumerative accounts work to reframe a situation as an 'exceptional' problem that deserves collective attention and action (Benton, 2012).

All advocacy documents and global policy reports include the staggering numbers of the current scope of the refugee crisis. Currently, there are 6 million refugees between the age of 5 and 17 officially under the mandate of UNHCR and more than half of them are out of school (UNHCR, 2016b). About 50% of refugee children and youth have access to primary education, 22% to lower secondary education, and 1% to higher education. One must also keep in mind that there are likely millions of refugee children who are not registered in UNHCR's database, and the incomplete

nature of data means that these statistics are overestimates of the current situation (Malala Fund, 2016).

The Syrian Refugee Crisis enjoys particular spotlight, which is perhaps understandable given the sheer scale of forced displacement. Documents produced by the No Lost Generation initiative, collectively branded as #NoLostGeneration, provide numbers about the children and youths affected by this specific crisis. Of the 4.8 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, 35% are of school age. Their gross primary enrollment rate in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan are 39%, 40%, and 70%, respectively (No Lost Generation, 2016).

In addition to these staggering figures on the scope of the current refugee crisis, figures of funding available for refugee education are also provided in order to provoke a deep sense of injustice. In absolute value, funding for refugee education has increased since 2005, but at a rate nowhere near able to meet the exponential increase in demand (Education Cannot Wait, 2017b). Humanitarian funding on education represents below 2 percent of total humanitarian appeals granted (Education Cannot Wait, 2017a). Furthermore, this amount only reaches about 12 percent of refugee children in need of education (Education Cannot Wait, 2016). A Save the Children report delivered this scathing critique of humanitarian funding for education: "Education in emergencies funding is not traditionally targeted at this front end, systems strengthening-type support but instead acts like the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, providing support after the fact, when a situation is overwhelming, if not, beyond help" (Nhan-O'Reilly & Mason, 2015, p. 14).

Yet the urgency of the crisis is also constructed via narratives. In the Preface to the Education Commission's (2016) report *The Learning Generation*, UN Special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown opened with this passage: "Bloodied bodies in ambulances. The faces of kidnapped schoolgirls. The tiny lifejacket washed up on shore. Little hands taught to hold weapons. Tired limbs walking halfway around the world" (p. 2). This is part of what allows him to conclude "we cannot accept another year or decade like this" (p. 2) and to call for the mobilization of more resources from all actors.

Or consider the profiles of refugee children sprinkled throughout UNHCR's recent report building the case for investment in education, *Missing Out – Refugee Education in Crisis* (UNHCR, 2016b). Eight-year-old Ivorian said, "When I grow up I want to be a doctor to help my family and all of the sick people, so I have to study a lot to become a big woman" (p. 7). Sixteen-year-old Syrian refugee Mohammad Koushak said, "You must learn and study to have your place in society and to have knowledge about everything because we will need to rebuild Syria, one day" (p. 12). These vernacular accounts from arguably the most vulnerable population in the world – refugee children – are what drive people around the world to agree with UNHCR's call: "Refugees face two journeys, one leading to hope, the other to despair. It is up to us to help them along the right path" (UNHCR, 2016b, p. 7).

There is nothing inherently wrong with these crisis narratives and mobilizing frames. In fact, they are powerful tools that transnational advocacy actors can use to galvanize action in a contemporary world that seems so marked by apathy. What is problematic, however, is when the frame of crisis is used as a 'shock factor' to manipulate emotional responses while eliding more critical perspectives to the issue and limiting the boundaries of possible action. In the next section, I will describe the ways in which the dominant crisis framings embedded in influential global documents on refugee education have enabled the encroachment of the private sector in this arena.

The 'Right' Solutions to the Crisis

Privatization *of* Refugee Education

Various influential global declarations on the urgency of investing in refugee education make the case for a more flexible and inclusive aid structure that welcomes the participation of private donors. Article 15 in the most recent global declaration by political leaders, the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, expressed an invitation to the private sector and civil society to "participate in multi-stakeholder alliances" to support governments in meeting the needs of refugees (United Nations General Assembly, 2016). This welcoming attitude to the private sector has been adopted by UNHCR as well, as it calls on businesses and individuals to "fund education and help design innovative and sustainable solutions to support refugees' particular educational needs" (2016b, p. 6), acting as partners to host countries and donor governments.

The general perception shared by all of the actors I analyzed is supportive of the private sector stepping up and providing more funding to the refugee education sector. This aligns with the current trend of prioritizing issues of funding and financing in the humanitarian-development world. The global consultation that INEE organized in 2015 and 2016 in the lead-up to the establishment of Education Cannot Wait as a common platform for global response to education in emergencies made it clear that most actors wished for a solution to the persistent funding gaps in humanitarianism and development more broadly (Anderson, 2016). Major NGOs involved at the global policy advocacy level have produced writings aimed at calling for more donor commitment to refugee education, such as Save the Children (Nhan-O'Reilly & Mason, 2015) and Norwegian Refugee Council (Wilson, Majewski, & Tebbe, 2015). All documents see the private sector as a promising source of new funding.

In particular, tools imported from finance, impact investment, and venture capitalism have drawn particular excitement from policy actors. It cannot be a coincidence that Gordon Brown first articulated the case for a common platform to dealing with education in emergencies in Davos at the 2015 World Economic Forum (ODI, 2016).While the new triad of financing mechanisms in international education – ECW, GPE, and the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) – all argue for increased domestic expenditure and donor governments' investment in education, it almost seems as if this is only lip service and that they have given up on getting more funding from governments and the public sector. As the proposal for IFFEd argued,

> The [Education Commission]'s proposed financing plan is based on the principle that the primary responsibility for financing pre-primary, primary, and secondary education lies with domestic governments. *But even* assuming increased domestic resource mobilization in line with the *ambitious* recommendations of the Commission, and greater allocation of domestic funds to education to almost 20 percent of total public spending, *the need for a major boost in international support still exists.* Despite this need for more external financing however, analysis by the Commission shows that support has been lagging - education's share in total Official Development Assistance (ODA) has declined from 13 to 10 percent over the past decade. (Education Commission, 2017, p. 2, emphasis mine)

The use of words and phrases such as 'but even' and 'ambitious' already suggests that relying on domestic government resources is unrealistic and futile, and when 'a major boost in international support' is suggested as a possible solution, it is immediately dampened by the evidence of declining ODA. Moreover, in the immediate next paragraph, this document established, "ODA will have to play a critical role in delivering on the compact, but *it alone will not be enough…* The proposed IFFEd

would help to bridge these gaps" (p. 2). The progression of the rhetoric here naturally builds up the innovative mechanism of IFFEd as the right solution. What this tight argument does not discuss are other options that can also increase funding but may not be politically feasible or ideological appropriate, such as forcing donor countries to commit 0.7% or more of their GDP to development aid.

Moreover, the discourses embraced at the highest level, such as the New York Declaration, appear to support a more expansive vision for the role of private actors than just funding. For example, a report by the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (the equivalent to the Education Commission in education development), argued:

> Beyond governments, the humanitarian community must harness the power of business to deliver its key skills and capabilities. Business is still a modest factor in humanitarian activities, yet has the creativity and capacity at scale to provide new solutions to risk management, support aid delivery, create jobs, and modernize transparency and accountability. (High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, 2016, p. vi)

The language that appears on this document, which has set the course toward the 2016 New York Declaration, presents an invitation to the private sector to bring to multi-stakeholder partnerships not only its financial resources but also technical expertise. This accepts *a priori* the idea that the private sector should have a voice in agenda-setting in education, a notion that is certainly contentious given the traditional association between education and the public sector (Macpherson et al., 2014).

So far, the private sector has certainly responded enthusiastically to this invitation to participate, not only at the field level (Menashy & Zakharia, 2017) but also as a legitimate partner in Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the most significant multi-stakeholder partnership in education for refugees. The Global Business Coalition for Education (GBCE) has been a highly enthusiastic player in ECW. Not only has GBCE contributed $100 million at the launch of ECW at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, but it has also engaged in research and advocacy. This stands in contrast to the hesitant stance that the private sector has adopted within the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), a more long-term development-oriented multi-stakeholder partnership (Menashy, 2016). What is notable about GBCE is that it explicitly advocates for the inclusion of for-profit sector in educational policy-making, arguing that the humanitarian-development community needs to prevent a narrow partnership with only companies motivated by philanthropic interests and not those that are interested in expanding to new markets with their products in education innovation (GBCE, 2015). It must be questioned whether GBCE's strong support of ECW and the education in emergencies sector in general would also normalize this particular perspective on the role of for-profit actors.

Thus, these developments in the field of global response to refugee education, namely the invitation of private actors as a player in agenda-setting and the introduction of financial tools, can be seen as attempts to carve out a new industry that private actors can enter for profit. Yet this process of privatization *of* education also requires private actors to have acquired 'private authority' in education, or a consensus that they are legitimate actors (Biersteker & Hall, 2004; Menashy, 2016). This requires the encroachment of the logic of private sector inside educational policy-making as well, or the process of privatization *in* education.

Privatization *in* Refugee Education

The concept of 'innovation' is ubiquitous in recent global documents discussing education for refugees. UNHCR (2016b) explicitly portrayed innovation as the solution to crisis, "In view of

the great need and the daunting task of getting nearly 2 million young refugees into secondary education, it is clear that more creative ideas are required" (p. 25). GBCE also sees innovation as a fundamental strength that the business sector can bring to education in emergencies (GBCE, 2016).

The most enthusiastic actor about 'innovation,' however, at least as shown through their written discourses, must be the Education Commission. According to the logic of the Education Commission, the private sector must be given a weightier role in educational policy-making because it is already driving innovation on the ground, "Around 70 percent of innovations [in low- and middle-income countries] were being delivered by non-state actors (mainly NGOs and some private actors" (Education Commission, 2016, p. 85). As discussed in the previous section, the Education Commission is also particularly enamored with innovative financing tools from other sectors, based on the argument that education must learn from the success of the global health sector in utilizing these tools to mobilize more resources. Of course, there are many problems with this approach of uncritical policy learning given the major differences between health and education, the most fundamental being that no one has agreed on a 'cure' for educational problems (Chabbott, 2015).

Some scholars have critiqued the particular 'innovative' practices recommended by the Education Commission's report (Klees, 2017; Stromquist, 2017). However, this paper wants to engage with the broader discourse of 'innovation' as a whole. What effects does this discourse of 'innovation' engender from a cultural political economy standpoint? One cannot discuss the idea of innovation in an ahistorical, technical manner. Historically, innovation has always been intrinsic to capitalism (Andonova & Carbonnier, 2014). As Scott-Smith (2017) argued, "Innovation in business is part of the cut and thrust of capitalism, the cycle of competitiveness and creative destruction that has been the key to its dynamism and success" (p. 2232).

The innovation of the private sector embraced within these documents is consistent with the turn to 'innovation' in humanitarianism and development as a whole (Ball & Olmedo, 2011; Olmedo, 2017; Scott-Smith, 2017). The innovation turn is associated with the faith that technology is the panacea in contemporary social imaginary. Inventions such as the LifeStraw®, a water filtration device that allows the individual to create their own source of clean water anywhere, have propelled arguments for an increase in humanitarian businesses, or companies that explicitly create products to respond to human suffering (Redfield, 2016). Yet these inventions also offer a 'celebration of life beyond the state,' where there is no need for a public infrastructure of water treatment (Scott-Smith, 2017, p. 2237). This implies a shift in the mission of humanitarianism-development: from providing people with basic social services to producing people as productive laborers and consumers free to engage in life as a *homo economicus* (Scott-Smith, 2017).

In practice, a recent study on education for Syrian refugee children and youth by Menashy and Zakharia (2017) found that nearly half of private actors involved in Syrian refugee education are supporting a wide range of educational technology projects, from digitalizing textbooks to providing educational apps (p. 11). For the proponents of educational technology, this is a form of 'fast solution' that can reach a massive audience of refugee students. Of course, there are critics of this blind obsession with technology. One participant in Menashy and Zakharia (2017) raised the question, "If you don't have the resources to build latrines or pay teachers, I mean… investing in technology isn't well placed" (p. 13). Yet UNHCR is partnering with Facebook in a project to bring Internet connectivity to refugees worldwide; such initiative points to the normative strength of technology as the ultimate solutions.

In addition to the logic of innovation and technology, New Public Management is another discourse that is entering education for refugees, consistent with its growing presence in education and humanitarianism as a whole (Utting & Zammit, 2009; Verger & Curran, 2014). It contains assumptions that managerial techniques in the private sector must also be used in the public sector to increase efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, which means a deeper involvement of

private actors in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies (Edwards, 2009; Olmedo, 2017). Their new 'methods' of policy purport to be 'smart' development and humanitarianism, focusing on strategic investment and results-based financing (Andonova & Carbonnier, 2014). There is a great focus on streamlining and making current processes of educational responses for refugees more efficient. The new private actors on the global policy-making stage argue that they are only responding to the failures of development thus far: the failure of the public sector for not guaranteeing the wellbeing of its people, of civil society for not coordinating and scaling their intervention efforts, and of the 'old' philanthropic actors for not using business principles to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in aid delivery. Yet the nature of failure in neoliberal times is that even as it fails, it fails forward (Peck, 2010). In other words, past failures only provide a stronger basis for arguments about the positive roles of business management principles, donor-controlled interventions, and lessons learned from venture capital investment (Lipman, 2014; Saltman, 2007).

This, then, is how private actors have acquired 'private authority' and a normalized status within the global refugee education policy space. They have combined a critique of past failures and an alignment with society's obsession with technology and innovation to portray the private sector as the one with the most expertise to contribute to contemporary social problems. It contributes to strengthening the belief in the superiority of private market-based solutions to development, the neoliberal ideology that has been sustained for more than a quarter of a century (Klees, 2008).

(De)Constructing the Crisis

Thus, dynamics of privatization that have been observed in education generally can also be observed in the emergent global policy arena of refugee education. Discourses of 'partnership,' 'innovation,' 'efficiency,' 'results-based financing,' are all mobilizing frames that have been used to justify an enlarged role of the private sector in education. However, these policy solutions can only be put forward as part of the recommendation package after a crisis has been established. Education and the public sector have an intricate relationship, not only for the social benefits of education but also for the political role of schooling in nation-building and the responsibility of the state to provide for education as a right (Kaplan, 2006; Tomasevki, 2003). It is therefore much more difficult for the private sector to encroach upon education compared to other sectors less embedded in politics, power, and control. This is where 'crisis' comes in. "When crisis is posited as an *a priori*, it obviates such accounts of positive or practical knowledge" (Roitman, 2014, p. 41). The construction of a crisis of education for refugees make urgent, technical, participative solutions obvious and beyond questioning, even if it involves private actors. Success in making a social issue a 'crisis' can "radically alter long-term development trajectories" (Carbonnier, 2016).

The irony is that refugee crises are 'normal' – they have been a feature of the modern world since the end of World War II, and forced displacement must have always accompanied human warfare. The Westphalian system of state sovereignty also depends upon the continual existence of refugees as the 'exception that proves the rule.' As Gill (2010) argued, "The legitimacy of the worldwide system of nation states is itself bolstered by the simultaneous objectification and abjection of those unfortunate enough not to belong to a nation-state community" (p. 626). Under the current system of sovereignty and international law based on nation-states, refugees need the recognition of states if they want to claim their fundamental human rights. Unfortunately, they have instead been recognized by the private sector as the source of lucrative profits. Would one not argue then that it would be to the benefits of the private sector to sustain, perhaps even enlarge, refugee populations, given that they represent new niche markets for exploitation and accumulation?

However, one common feature of these global policy documents discussing the educational needs of refugees is the lack of attention to the root causes of displacement. As an example, a policy

brief for the Education Cannot Wait mechanism begins by establishing the following four challenges: "worsening crises are disrupting children's opportunities to learn for longer periods," "education is a priority for children and families, but not prioritized in humanitarian action," "we need an extra $8.5 billion annually to deliver education to every child," "the current response is fragmented and lacks the capacity to coordinate efforts." From there, it moves into establishing the importance of education and what Education Cannot Wait would do: "Education Cannot Wait is leveraging new resources to address short-term, unpredictable funding and assuring accountability and transparency. This includes engaging the private sector by opening up new pipelines and innovative financing mechanisms" (ECW, "Why education cannot wait"). The decision to highlight 'engaging the private sector' rather than other sources of new funding speaks to the extent to which privatization is now a priority.

To argue simply that the unprecedented scale and scope of the current refugee crisis, as framed by these actors, can only be addressed with the participation of private actors is to ignore the myriad critiques against the privatization of education that have been consistently voiced by actors at all levels (Macpherson et al., 2014; Education International, 2017). This invitation of private actors into the field of refugee education builds on a simple, technical, commodified view of education as something that can be produced, delivered and consumed. Furthermore, it perpetuates the image of education as the magical bullet to solve any social issues, despite the multilayered marginalization that the refugee population have to face even if education is already in place, such as lack of legal protection or inability to gain employment due to their status (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2018). It is doubtful that an emergency approach to education can actually provide refugee children and youths with the experience that they need and deserve in order to gain an equitable position in society.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates how narratives of refugee crisis, in particular with regard to education, are always intertwined with policy recommendations that propel privatization of a policy arena in which nation-states have refused to be the primary duty-bearer. In other words, the refugee crisis is a powerful mobilizing frame for the privatization of education for refugees. This encompasses both the process through which private actors gain a larger role in refugee education and also the process through which neoliberal logic of conduct becomes embedded in education. In particular, narratives surrounding refugee crisis create a new 'horizon of taken-for-granted' where private actors are accorded the same authority as nation-states in the provision of education for refugees.

Perhaps if considered through only an immediate temporal lens, the needs of refugee children do constitute a crisis that require resources that at the moment are best mobilized from the private sector. However, the problem is that the global refugee crisis is being skillfully managed so as to promote only privatization as the answer even though in the long run, privatization may only exacerbate marginalization and social injustice, as have been found in other contexts (Macpherson et al., 2014). The market is perhaps best placed to respond to urgent needs, but the market also has no incentive to tackle the long-term transformations needed to address the root causes of human suffering. Should the suspension of normalcy that is embedded in crises also suspends our commitment to combating the negative effects of private encroachment in education?

The refugee crisis is a normal consequence of a world capitalist system based on exploitation and a Westphalian state sovereignty system based on exclusion. If we have recognized that an educational crisis currently exists for refugees, then we must truly commit to solving it rather than perpetuating the marginalization of refugee children and youths through a refusal to recognize root causes. This requires a fundamental, radical, transformational rethinking of our world.

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