The Political Economy of Education Research
Research and Practice Fellowships in Political Economy of Education

The PEER Network

Education reform in the context of conflict or instability is complex, with different regions experiencing specific and distinct challenges. Provision of education is often highly politicised, with a range of internal power dynamics at play for control of resources and curriculum content. This can lead to decisions which negatively impact on social cohesion and inclusion, and ultimately result in unequal access to education and distribution of education resources. Political Economy Analysis can play a critical role in helping to unpack the political and economic interests underpinning educational policies and interventions, and can ultimately help to inform decisions made by local, national and international actors who are responsible for delivering education and support the development of socially just societies.

The PEER Network is a three-year initiative led by four universities (Ulster, Cape Town, Nazarbayev and Sussex) aimed at improving the quality of Political Economy Analysis of education in partnership with academics, policymakers and practitioners in conflict-affected countries. The PEER Network recognises and aims to address problems with current approaches to Political Economy Analysis, such as the reliance on international consultants whose assessments of education provision lack sensitivity to local history, politics, culture and knowledge of power-relations. There is also a tendency to ignore the impact that international agencies have on national policies and practices, and the different political circumstances that operate in different parts of a country. There is often a reluctance to raise critical questions about education provision because they are too sensitive or may challenge vested interests. These severely limit the potential of analysis to improve the planning and development of socially just education systems.

The core objective of the PEER Network is to develop a critical and locally grounded approach to Political Economy Analysis (PEA) of education that will help national, regional and global level policymakers and practitioners make socially just decisions about investments in education that benefit children in contexts of conflict and crisis. The PEER Network will seek to democratise and redress the North/South imbalances in the current knowledge base and practices of Political Economy Analysis. One of the ways that we will work towards these aims is by providing training for early career researchers that will inform and facilitate effective political economy analysis of education in these contexts. The Network will hold training workshops in the two hub regions (Central Asia and Africa) aimed at advancing conceptual and theoretical understanding of PEA and training early career researchers in the practical elements of applying for research funding.

Building cohorts of early career researchers in the political economy of education

The PEER Network is inviting applications for **Research and Practice Fellowships** in the Political Economy of Education from organizations/individual researchers based in conflict affected contexts in Africa and Central Asia. These Fellowships will include participating in a structured PEA focused training programme and joining a new cohort of researchers working on issues of education, conflict and crisis through a critical political economy lens as part of the wider PEER Network. The fellowship aims to advance conceptual and theoretical understandings of the Political Economy Analysis of education and provide training and mentorship on applying for research funding. This will be achieved through two in-person workshops, online mentoring and the opportunity to apply for development funding. Participants in the programme must be available to attend the workshops in November and February (either in Cape Town for participants in the Africa-hub cohort or Nur-Sultan for participants in the Asia-hub cohort). The timeline for the programme is as follows:

Week commencing 08.11.21 Week commencing 22.11.21	- A 3-day workshop on PEA theory and methodology – The University of Cape Town - A 3-day workshop on PEA theory and methodology – Nazarbayev University
08.12.21	- Applicants submit short abstracts on potential project ideas and receive feedback
Week commencing 10.01.22	- Half day online sessions to share ideas and abstracts across cohorts in the two hubs.
February 22 (dates to be confirmed)	- A 3-day workshop to support participants in developing the abstracts into full research proposals (including development plans)- The University of Cape Town - A 3-day workshop to support participants in developing the abstracts into full research proposals (including development plans)-Nazarbayev University - Participants to submit development plans
11.03.22	- Development funding awarded to successful participants
01.04.22 To 30.09.22	- Development activities carried out in support of larger grant application (funded cohort) - Mentorship and support sessions online (all cohort)

We anticipate 16 participants in each hub cohort. Funding for in-person participation will be available

for successful applicants (flights/train fares within the relevant region, accommodation and subsistence for the duration of the workshops).

Background: PEA Education
Political economy encompasses a range of approaches, theories, and ideologies, and PEA tools reflect, either explicitly or implicitly, political economy traditions. The PEER Network has produced a background paper that provides a critical review overview of existing tools, both those focused on PEA more generally and those specifically relating to education and conflict. The aim is to indicate some ways in which PEA has been applied in context and encourage reflection on how to undertake PEA in terms of content and process. Applicants are encouraged to refer to this paper in their expression of interest.

The PEER Network has also provided reviews of the evidence on conflict drivers and their intersection with education in the African and Central Asian regions. As the papers highlight, the countries in the regions of focus experience a range of pressures. Some countries face similar demographic, social, economic or political challenges, though these manifest in different ways in individual contexts. At the same time, some pressures, by their very nature, spill over country boundaries across the regions. They include shrinking space for civil society; management of natural resources; uneven infrastructure development; conflict-related displacement; land and water disputes; large youth demographics; influence of religious radicalism; exclusion of certain groups from peace processes; challenges of social cohesion in highly diverse (in terms of ethnicity, religion, language) populations; shortages in food and water supply; different gender norms and expectations; and social norms related to violence.

In the education sector in developing contexts, there is a strong recognition of the important role that political economy analysis might play in better understanding and addressing the obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in conflict affected contexts where the challenges are greater and contexts more complex. Yet while education research has long recognised the education system's relationship to economic growth and to issues related to equity, it has been less focussed on issues related to conflict, war and peace.

Since 2000, this has shifted, and there has been a growing recognition of both the importance of working in conflict-affected contexts and the detrimental effects of conflict on educational access and quality (Davies, 2009). As a result, the literature on education and conflict has expanded greatly (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Smith 2003; Davies 2004; Novelli and Lopes-Cardozo 2008) and this can be roughly categorised into three major areas of inquiry.

The first is the effect of conflict on education. Work in this area explores the cost (both in terms of human lives and of infrastructure) that war and conflict can inflict on educational opportunities, actors and institutions. Recently there has been notable work to monitor this more systematically through a series of UNESCO funded publications (O'Malley, 2007; O'Malley, 2010; UNESCO, 2010 and later reports). This work demonstrates the variety of ways that education opportunities, actors and institutions can be negatively affected by conflict.

The second major area of research inquiry has been to explore the way education, depending on its nature, content and delivery can be a catalyst to conflict (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004). This work has demonstrated the complex ways that education can serve as a catalyst of conflict through

educational policies and practices that exclude or humiliate minorities, exacerbate ethnic, religious, class and gender differences and indoctrinate students through a war or hate curriculum (Davies 2004). Conversely, there are also longstanding literatures that promote the power of education as a tool for peaceful co-existence. Education is often cited as a mechanism for peace building, human rights promotion and the defence and protection of democracy (UNESCO 1998; Uwazie 2003; Kaur 2006; Bekerman and McGlynn 2007; McGlynn 2009). This dualistic potential of education to promote both justice and injustice has led to an increased interest in going beyond mere educational access towards understandings of content and curriculum and the governance of education systems (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000, Novelli and Smith, 2011).

Thirdly, there is a burgeoning policy literature relating to the governance and policy of delivering education in conflict and post-conflict zones, which comprises of toolkits, minimum standards guidelines, and working papers that seek to guide and spread good educational practice in countries affected by conflict and for international agencies that fund, coordinate and deliver educational services in these regions (see INEE website).

In their experience of PEA research in the context of conflict and crisis, members of the PEER Network have championed the need to put greater focus on education's potential to address inequalities and prioritise interventions that favour the promotion of social cohesion and reconciliation. Yet there is often a disconnect between education's potential to contribute to broad societal change and narrowly defined education policies and programs. As a result of this mismatch, education policy and programs are sometimes framed within technical parameters that bypass pivotal peace-related issues in post conflict societies, including the rectification of economic, political, social, and cultural inequalities within and between groups. More comprehensive approaches require a context-sensitive approach that builds on the specific political economy and conflict dynamics of each country, and on the ways education might support broader societal goals.

The 4Rs framework recognizes that working toward 'positive peace' (Galtung 1976, 1990) requires working on both the drivers of conflict – and their educational links; and the legacies of conflict – and the need to build processes of reconciliation in and through education. This 4Rs framework combines dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation, and reconciliation to explore what sustainable peacebuilding might look like through a social justice lens. The call for PEA research applications will not be limited by the 4Rs framework, but it can provide indicative areas of research that may emerge:

Redistribution concerns equity and non-discrimination in education access, resources, and outcomes for different groups in society, particularly marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Indicative themes might include: Quantitative analysis of existing data to examine vertical and horizontal inequalities relevant to education inputs, resources and outcomes; Analysis of macro education reforms or policies to see if they are redistributive, e.g. how decentralisation, privatisation, teacher education policies impact different groups and affect conflict dynamics.

Exemplar: How has the language of instruction impacted the educational, economic and social outcomes of minority linguistic groups?

Recognition concerns identities in education structures, processes and content, in terms of gender, language, ethnicity, politics, religion, culture, and ability. Indicative themes might include: The impact of language of instruction policies on conflict dynamics in South Sudan; politicisation of history and citizenship, recognition of cultural diversity in the curriculum, influence of religious identity on the education system in each region.

Exemplar: How have humanitarian agencies, and their commitment to neutrality and impartiality, changed students' experience of schooling in the context of an emergency?

Representation concerns control of and participation in decision-making re allocation, use, and distribution of human and material resources at all levels of the education system. Themes might include: Control of education by non-state actors; Analysis of political control and representation through the administration of education; Impact of conflict on school governance, inclusion of minority and vulnerable groups; Extent to which formal and non-formal education systems support fundamental freedoms.

Exemplar: How has decentralisation shaped education provision in the context of contested spaces?

Reconciliation involves developing new relationships of trust, dealing with past events, helping new generations understand the legacies of conflict within their society, and preparing for the future. Themes might include: How does education address historical and contemporary injustices that underpin conflict; how does education contribute to social cohesion or separate development?

Exemplar: What role has education played in the formation of community and national identity?

The type of research projects we want to encourage:

We are keen to support early career researchers to create projects that:

- contribute to enhancing capacity for Political Economy Analysis of education in conflict and crisis;
- are ethically informed. In the context of the PEER network this requires consideration of the political economy of knowledge production and inequalities in education that are based on socio-economic status, caste, gender, race, ethnicity, language, disability etc;
- are based on principles of 'co-creation'. Projects that bring different academic and non-academic stakeholders together to tackle real world problems are encouraged;
- are based on interdisciplinarity and are inclusive of local and indigenous knowledge.
- recognize that gender equality requires an approach that 'ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

Applications can be made by a research active organisation (e.g. a University, Research Institute, an NGO, government department, business, school, community group social enterprise, arts or cultural organisation) who wish to nominate a member of staff to participant in the programme. **If you are an independent researcher who wishes to apply please contact the PEER team to discuss your eligibility.**

Nominees for this programme should be early career researchers within their field. We consider early career researchers to be individuals who have less than 6 years of research experience. Both academic (within a research institute) and applied (within an organisation with research capacity) experience is valid. These durations exclude any period of career break, e.g. for family care or health reasons. We do welcome applicants with a range of backgrounds and experience so please contact us if you wish to discuss your suitability on info@peernetworkgcrf.org.

Central Asia Hub

Applicants to the Central Asia Hub programme should be focused on one or more of the following countries; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyztan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. There are no restrictions on the location of applicant. However, the PEER network seeks to support scholars from Central Asia to carry out research on the Political Economy of Education, and therefore we strongly encourage academics **located in** or **from** Central Asia to apply.

Africa Hub

Applicants to the Africa Hub programme can be focused on conflict-affected African countries, some examples of which are South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, South Sudan, Liberia, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone. Applicants should be located in the Hub region.

Application process and timeline

Central Asia hub and Africa hub

30/09/2021	Applicants submit an expression of interest form
01/10/2021-08/10/2021	Expressions of interest reviewed by PEER Network
11/10/2021	Successful Applicants informed

Guidelines for submitting an expression of interest for participation in the programme:

Interested applicants must first complete an expression of interest (EoI) **in English**. The EoI form can be downloaded from the website. The completed EoI application form must be submitted to info@peernetworkgcrf.org by:

Applicants to the Africa hub - 5pm (UK time) 30th September 2021
Applicants to the Central Asia hub - 5pm (UK time) 30th September 2021.

Please submit forms as early as possible to allow us time to assist with technical issues. If you have trouble accessing or using the form, please email us at info@peernetworkgcrf.org. The EoI requires summary information on the following topics:

- Overview of submitting organization
- CV and Bio of proposed participant(s)
- Country/region of focus for potential research project (if known)
- Statement of commitment to participation in both workshops from nominating organization