

Understanding the Diverse Forms of Learning Valued by Children in Conflict Contexts

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A caricature of the education quality debate in conflict contexts would place on one side the reading enthusiasts—those that are narrowly focused on ensuring children learn fundamental reading skills—and on the other the well-being enthusiasts—those that are focused on the range of psychosocial and other benefits of schooling for young people. While exaggerated, this scenario is not far from the discourse in policy circles. In a meeting with policymakers on education and conflict, I once witnessed a very similar discussion play out between a representative of a multilateral donor and a representative of a bilateral donor. One argued that in the early post-conflict period the focus should be on rapid restoration of learning of formal, core subjects (e.g., language, history, and math), and the other argued that a focus on learning outcomes was not important; instead, schools should focus on expressive activities and other forms of psychosocial support.

This chapter argues the need for a more nuanced understanding of education quality in conflict contexts, one that connects the multiple dimensions of quality by drawing on the insights of children themselves as to the values they place on learning. As Jackie Kirk and I have argued previously, literacy and numeracy skills greatly augment children's and young people's survival and life skills (see Chapter 7). For example, being able to read medicine labels, signs, newspapers, and registration or identification cards is an important and useful skill for navigating a new and shifting environment. The perception of learning well, even if in fact children are learning very little, also supports their psychosocial well-being. The belief that

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they are on the path to a brighter and better future, through the knowledge they are gaining at school, especially at the primary level, is a powerful force in helping children cope with difficult environments.

This chapter deepens the exploration of primary students' own perspectives on learning in the three conflict settings (in Afghanistan, Eritrean refugee students in Ethiopia, and Liberian refugee students in Sierra Leone) presented in Chapter 7 of this volume. To understand and conceptualize the different ways that children express the importance of learning, the study draws on a framework informed by Habermas's theory of knowledge (Habermas, 1971; Winthrop, 2008). Methodologically, the chapter draws on data collected in 2004 for a study of the International Rescue Committee's Healing Classrooms Initiative (see Winthrop & Kirk, 2008, and Winthrop, 2008, for a complete review of the study methodology).

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE FORMS OF LEARNING

How to conceptualize and understand learning has been much debated in educational philosophy and theory. In this study Habermas's delineation of technical, practical, and emancipatory learning is adapted to help clarify how learning is understood by students participating in schooling in contexts affected by armed conflict. Habermas's theory of knowledge constitutive interests is used here as a heuristic, and the intent is not to reflect upon or critique the theory itself.

In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas (1971) elaborated three distinct forms of knowledge: (1) the *technical*, which relates to knowledge directly used in shaping or mastering one's environment, (2) the *practical*, which corresponds to knowledge supporting one's expanding understanding of self in relation to others, and (3) the *emancipatory*, in which knowledge fosters critical consciousness aimed at overcoming social dogma and domination. His theory of tripartite human interest was quickly taken up by a range of theorists and educators to further concepts of ways of knowing and learning. Most notably, Jack Mezirow (1981), often referred to as the father of transformational learning theory, uses Habermas's three interests to develop a theory of adult learning focused on the development of critical consciousness. Mezirow's theory of adult learning, along with Habermas's theory of human interests, has been taken up by scholars, such as Cranton, who seek to translate the theory into practical guidance for educators working with adults (Cranton, 2006; see also Furth, 1996, for an example of how Habermas's theory of tripartite human interests has been used to explore issues concerning the social development of young children). In this study, the concepts of technical, practical, and emancipatory learning provide a useful tool for analyzing the place of learning in the debate over schooling and well-being. This tripartite model has been critiqued for drawing clear distinctions among three forms of learning, when

in practice they manifest more as multiple, overlapping dimensions (Castagno, 2006). I recognize that, in practice, learning is complex and that an individual at any given time may be multitasking in terms of more than one interest. Nonetheless, as a heuristic, the model allows for an analysis across a range of learning forms, which will help clarify the ways in which conflict-affected children view school-based learning.

Inspired by work in using these three modes of knowledge to analyze teachers' learning (Castagno, 2006), this study understands these three forms of learning in the following way. *Technical* learning is an instrumental process in which the knowledge acquired holds value because it enables the learner to directly manipulate or control elements in his or her life or environment. For example, learning proper hygiene practices is valued because it can be applied to learners' daily routines for health improvement. *Practical* learning is a social process in which the learner acquires knowledge and understanding related to social norms and expectations and reflects on his or her role within them. For example, learning acceptable patterns of behavior with important members of a social network, such as elders, is valued because it gives learners the confidence and capacity to engage appropriately. *Emancipatory* learning is a critical process in which knowledge acquired is valued for its ability to demystify or transform social conditions, as in students developing literacy skills in order to teach and empower other, illiterate members of their community. Here the form of emancipatory learning is adapted to include the development of social consciousness, such as the understanding that an individual can contribute to and shape society, not just be shaped by society. This adaptation allows for the inclusion of socially conscious perspectives on learning that children in crisis may exhibit.

With this explanation of the framework, I now turn to its application. The following section describes the findings from analyzing student interviews, focus groups, and surveys in relation to these different forms of learning.

DIVERSE FORMS OF LEARNING VALUED BY CHILDREN

What do students mean by learning and how do they envision learning leading them toward a bright future? For students in this study, learning is conceived as sets of skills, knowledge, or social conventions that go beyond the school subjects in the curriculum. When they refer to learning helping them to have a bright future, they often describe how they believe that the knowledge, skills, or social conventions they learn, help them to be, to have, or to do something good or useful today or in the future. The most frequently cited knowledge and/or skills that students deem especially important are literacy (e.g., reading, writing, and speaking properly) and social norms (e.g., proper behavior with elders). In Ethiopia, 33% (16/48) of students interviewed specifically cited literacy as important, while 50% (19/38) in Sierra Leone and 40% (6/15) in Afghanistan did as well. Learning

a range of social norms was identified by 21% (10/48) of students interviewed in Ethiopia, 50% (19/38) in Sierra Leone, and 73% (11/15) in Afghanistan.

Students, especially in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone, emphasize the importance of technical learning. Focusing on literacy, numeracy, and other skills acquired in school, they describe the ways in which they can use learning in their current and future lives for a range of purposes. They are not focused on engaging with others in their world but rather on their individual abilities, capacities, and actions. They describe technical learning on two levels. First, they discuss the way in which learning enables them to take *instrumental action* to benefit themselves, now or in the future, such as using numeracy skills to count money. Second, they describe how learning can help their *personal development* by cultivating desired personal characteristics, such as being clever or wise.

Practical learning is also very important, especially to students in Afghanistan. They describe the ways in which learning enables them to enter into and play a role in the social world. They appreciate how their learning helps to identify and understand important social norms and to fulfill social expectations. They discuss practical learning on three levels. On the *normative* level, they emphasize the importance of learning social norms that help them behave appropriately with others, such as treating their elders with respect and deference. Students are also interested in learning because it helps them achieve an important *status* in their communities by, for example, being respected for knowing how to read and write. Focusing on *altruistic* aims, they discuss how learning can help them help others, such as enabling them to take care of their parents after they graduate.

Table 8.1. Technical, Practical, and Emancipatory Forms of Learning

Forms of Learning	Levels	Examples
<i>Technical</i>	Instrumental Action	Communicate in daily life (literacy)
		Count in daily life (numeracy)
		Use healthy personal practices in daily life (health education)
		Become a professional in the future (e.g., teacher, doctor)
		Earn money in the future
Personal Development	Develop wanted personal characteristics (e.g., clever, wise, not easily tricked)	
<i>Practical</i>	Normative	Behave properly with others (e.g., respect elders, do not fight with peers, wear clean clothes)
	Status	Become important in society (e.g., respected)
	Altruistic	Help family, relatives
<i>Emancipatory</i>	Social Consciousness	Contribute to social change in community, tribe, country

Less prevalent is students' focus on emancipatory learning. Students in all locations, but especially in Ethiopia, do discuss learning as a means of transforming the social context in which they find themselves. Here they focus on *socially conscious* aspirations such as using the literacy skills they learn in school to educate illiterate members of their community and contribute to the "liberation" of their tribe.

Table 8.1 summarizes the different levels within the three forms of technical, practical, and emancipatory learning.

TECHNICAL LEARNING

Instrumental Action

Students articulated a range of ways in which the learning they do in school can be useful in bringing them present and future benefits. They described applying their learning in daily communication, counting money, or hygiene practices; in the future they believe it will enable them to get a good job and earn money. This focus on learning for instrumental action related to personal improvement is technical learning at the most basic level. In the three study locations, students emphasized different aspects of learning for instrumental action, although in all locations they emphasized becoming a professional in the future. This desire, especially becoming a teacher or a doctor, is heavily emphasized across all students, reinforcing the focus on learning for a bright future.

In Ethiopia, 4 out of 48 children interviewed spoke specifically about how they like learning math because it helps them in their daily lives. For example, one 14-year-old boy in grade 4 said, "Maths helps me in my daily life," while a 13-year-old boy in grade 3b expanded on this, saying his favorite subject is math, "because I get it easy to understand and in addition the reason why I chose maths is because maths can help you count money." Numeracy skills learned in school are seen to be easily applied to improve students' activities outside of school.

While many students identified learning to read and write as especially important, only one student mentioned how he used the literacy skills he learned in school to help him personally. A Kunama boy in grade 4 said that school helped him "to solve my problems by myself. If I get a letter from any foreign country, to be able to read myself." Interestingly, students in Ethiopia focus mainly on how literacy skills enable them to fulfill social expectations (practical learning) or transform their community (emancipatory learning).

In Ethiopia, 6 out of 64 of the children also expressed appreciation for school because it helped them learn how to keep themselves clean, healthy, and "free from danger." Clearly the knowledge and skills learned in health education can be easily applied to improve daily routines. Given the constrained environment in which

the Eritrean refugees are living, basic life processes such as using latrines can be totally new experiences for children and their parents.

By far the most dominant way in which students in Ethiopia envision using their learning is by becoming a professional in the future. In the survey, more than half (37/64) of students said that becoming a teacher or a doctor is one of the most important reasons they come to school. Undoubtedly teachers and doctors are people who are admired in their community and whom students themselves admire. For example, in an interview in Ethiopia one 13-year-old boy in grade 4 said that what he most values about school is “to learn—to get knowledge, because I want to be either a doctor or a teacher. Other things are less important to me.” In the refugee camp, teachers and doctors are visible members of the community, working at the school and clinic to provide important social services. Children have few role models of other jobs or professions to which they may aspire.

Students in Sierra Leone talk about how much they value learning to read, write, and speak English. In interviews, almost one third of the students (11/38) specifically explained how they use the literacy skills they are learning in school to benefit themselves in their daily lives. For example, one 17-year-old girl in class 5 stated, “I am proud of my school because I am getting good learning and also I’m improving in terms of speech among my friends.” In addition to the value of verbal communication skills, written skills are valued by students. A 16-year-old boy in grade 6 explained that he really likes school because “I can read by myself a note written to somebody, comic and novel, and other history concordance without asking anybody to show me or teach me. I am out of illiteracy level my mother and father are in.” This boy especially emphasizes the importance of his literacy level given the illiteracy of his immediate family. In Sierra Leone, students make virtually no mention of health education or numeracy as useful learning in their lives, with only two boys mentioning learning math as something they enjoy generally about school.

As in Ethiopia, students heavily emphasize their desire to become a professional and have a job, such as a teacher, doctor, nurse, government worker, or news broadcaster. In more than two-thirds (15/21) of the focus group discussions in Sierra Leone, students assert that they value school because they want to get a job and become a professional, which they claim will help them in their lives. At times students connect their desire to become a professional with earning money. For example, a 5th-grade boy says, “I will like to be a teacher because teacher can get much pay.”

This focus on using learning to earn money in the future appears only in Sierra Leone. Students there spoke specifically about the importance of earning money in close to one-third of the focus group discussions (6/21). For example, a boy in a class 6 focus group discussion said that he likes coming to school so he can “get a good job and get plenty of money.” One of his fellow students in a class 4a

focus group further explained by saying, “It is important for children to come to school because education pay more. When you are educated you make good money.” It is not only students who link the benefits of schooling to earning a living. Teachers interviewed frequently mentioned concerns over their rates of pay, with many expressing the desire to get advanced training so they one day could be certified teachers with job security and, it is assumed, higher levels of compensation.

In Afghanistan, students expressed limited interest in technical forms of learning. Fewer than one third (4/15) of the students interviewed focused on instrumental aspects of their school learning, often talking about their desire to be a teacher or doctor. For example, in one interview, a girl said, “In the future I should be something like a doctor or a teacher,” when she described the reasons she most enjoys school. Here too students likely have limited exposure to a range of professionals and are most familiar with teachers and doctors. While appreciative of learning a range of knowledge and skills, such as literacy, math, and religion, students did not articulate how they envisioned applying this learning in their daily lives.

Personal Development

Students in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone articulated their appreciation of another level of technical learning. The learning they do in school helps them develop positive personal characteristics, such as being clever, wise, and not easily tricked. While still focused on ways in which they can use learning to build personal capacities, students’ discussions implicitly engage their relations with others. For example, building your capacity to not be fooled by others recognizes the possibility that people whom you encounter may be trying to trick you. In this sense, this level of technical learning is nearing the border of practical learning.

Students in Ethiopia described their aspirations to develop laudable personal characteristics through learning in school. Of students surveyed, 14 out of 64 talked about enjoying their school especially because they hope it will make them clever, great, or wise. For example, in an interview a 12-year-old girl in class 3b said, “I like to come to school to grasp knowledge and to be a great person,” and another student, an 11-year-old boy in grade 4, said he comes to school “to be a wise man and have knowledge.” This focus on valued personal traits is future-oriented. Students perceive their schooling as helping them over time to develop personally so they can be or become great or wise.

Similar to students in Ethiopia, children in Sierra Leone also described how they perceived that school helps them become wise, civilized, and a good person. In interviews, 8 out of 38 students described how they believed their school learning helped them take on such laudable personal characteristics. For example, a 16-year-old boy in class 5 said, “School can make me to be civilized . . . can make me to think correctly and make wise decisions.” For some students this is

something they hope to gain in the future; for example, a 14-year-old girl in class 4b stated, "I like to come to school and learn to be a good person in the future." Here students focus on learning for personal development that helps them today as well as in the future. Being able to think correctly and make wise decisions certainly can help students better navigate their daily as well as their future lives.

In Sierra Leone, students in 5 of 21 focus group discussions emphasized the importance of learning what is "good and bad" in life so they could protect themselves and, most important, not be fooled or tricked. For example, one 15-year-old girl in class 5 said that what she likes most about school is "to learn, acquire knowledge so that nobody can fool me in the future." This imperative to avoid manipulation and exploitation is echoed in the words of a grade 6 student who explains why she finds school important: "I want to make good use of the world in that nobody can fool me and my family."

This notion of being fooled or tricked likely pertains to the types of sexual and labor exploitation that exist in the Sierra Leonean camp and its surroundings. Girls, especially, often are promised payment for school fees in return for sex, only to have the deal broken later. For students who are concerned about this, learning empowers them to protect their own interests. In the words of one 17-year-old girl in grade 5: "What I most like about coming to school is that I like to be a responsible person or woman in the future . . . [and] not to be under somebody." Students in Sierra Leone have very immediate concerns, which they believe their school learning can help them address. By developing confidence, critical thinking, and literacy skills, children and youth in Sierra Leone hope to better navigate the difficulties that lie ahead both today and in the future.

PRACTICAL LEARNING

Normative

Students describe a range of ways in which the learning they do in school helps them understand social norms and behave appropriately with others. They discuss learning proper ways to interact with others, such as elders and peers, and to behave as students, including how to dress appropriately. This focus on learning social norms is practical learning at the most basic level, and students focus heavily on it across study sites, particularly in Afghanistan. Students emphasize different aspects of learning social norms.

In Ethiopia, 10 out of 48 students interviewed appreciate the social norms they learn at school. They focus on advice they get from their teachers on how to interact with friends in a "peaceful" way. For example, one boy in grade 1a says his teacher often counsels his class that "we should never fight with our friends." Students cite teachers' advice and admonishment on getting along with friends,

especially during recreation and sports activities. Students also talk about a range of other behaviors that they are encouraged to display. For example, a 13-year-old boy in class 3b says about his teachers, “They don’t allow us to spend our time in bad places that are found in town, but they allow us to play at school as we wish.” Encouraging students to come to school regularly, to spend time studying with friends, and not waste time also are cited by students as good behaviors they are encouraged by teachers to take on. Students appear to appreciate this counsel because it gives them confidence that they understand what is expected of them and they are then able to engage with others accordingly.

In Sierra Leone, students also value learning good, proper behavior and ways to interact with others. In interviews, half of the students (19/38) discussed a range of social norms that they appreciate learning. They described teachers’ guidance on respecting elders, interacting peacefully with peers, dressing properly, and not having sex. For example, a 13-year-old girl in class 5 says her teacher “directs me how to behave in public—out of school there is no other help.” Here she implies that she is not receiving this type of guidance or orientation to social norms from other sources besides her teacher. A 15-year-old girl in class 6 is more specific about the advice her teacher gives about public behavior, saying, “My teacher help . . . encourage me not to move with bad company like going to night dance.” Students also talked about learning how to interact with peers and elders. For example, a 10-year-old boy in class 3a said his teacher “help me to learn good behaviors, like when I make a quarrel with my friend, she can encourage me to know what is good or bad,” and a 17-year-old girl in class 5 said, “My teachers . . . help me to respect elderly ones.” Like students in Ethiopia, students in Sierra Leone appreciate learning that enables them to understand social norms and hence have greater confidence in interacting with others and fulfilling social expectations.

In Afghanistan, this level of practical learning is the most heavily emphasized by students out of the range of different learning forms. Students are much more detailed in their discussions of learning social norms than in the other two study locations. Students in more than two-thirds (11/15) of our interviews discuss the importance of learning social norms in school. Many of these students cited learning manners as one of the aspects of school they enjoyed the most. For these students, learning manners goes beyond acquiring a set of social norms, which one would expect they could learn in other places such as the home, and is directly connected to their attendance in school and hence identity as a student. Good manners are a way of displaying good moral character, which is very important in Afghan culture, and are reflected in teacher and community expectations of education and schooling. The concept of *tarbia* is essential to understanding students’ focus on manners. There are four especially important aspects of good *tarbia*: good and clean language, respect for elders and parents, bodily cleanliness, and hospitality.

The intimate setting of the home-based schools, along with the trust that parents place in teachers to be able to educate and develop their children, certainly shape students' school experience. In this environment and cultural setting, learning good manners is a highly valued part of school. Teachers interviewed talked about the responsibility that the community had given to them to guide and support the children's intellectual as well as social development. Teaching *tarbia* is seen by teachers as an important aspect of their position in the community. In interviews with several parents, this expectation of schooling—that it has an important role in the social development of their children, especially by learning *tarbia*—was reinforced.

Displaying the range of behaviors associated with *tarbia* is important to children; however, *tarbia* from their perspective would seem also to be closely linked to their student identity. As discussed in Chapter 7, students in the study are especially concerned with being identified as school students by community members. They discuss how the way children behave in public and interact with others can be a signal indicating whether or not they are schoolchildren.

Teachers, students say, also encourage schoolchildren to be good people and respect their elders. They tell students how to behave with others when they are in public; for example, if they run into elders, they must show respect, say *salaam*, and not fight in front of them. One girl who is learning in a mixed boys and girls class says her teacher tells his students that they should not hug each other when they are outside in public. Learning these social norms is an important aspect of *tarbia* and gives students confidence that they know how to act with others, especially in public spaces.

Wearing special school clothes and being clean are other behaviors that students describe as distinguishing themselves in the community as schoolgirls and schoolboys. When asked about their daily routines, students in several interviews spontaneously started talking about the clothes that are only for school.

Status

In addition to learning social norms, students in Sierra Leone value learning in school because of the status it gives them in their communities. Almost a third (11/38) of students interviewed described learning as one of the most important aspects of school because it helps them, now or in the future, to become important and respected members of society. For example, a 13-year-old girl in class 5 says:

I feel proud because I am learning international languages, I am important in the community, I can read and write in English. I know as a girl, when I learn well and finish well, I shall be important among my friends.

This girl specifically identified her peers as a social group from which she seeks to gain respect. Other students simply articulated their vision more generally, as a 13-year-old boy in grade 5 did when he explained that one of the reasons he values school is because “I know I will become somebody in the society tomorrow.” This idea that learning can bring respect, importance, and status to students recognizes the importance of schooling for children’s relatives, peers, and community members. Children likely see others who are educated, such as doctors and UN workers, being treated as “somebody” and important in their community.

Altruism

For students in both Ethiopia and Sierra Leone, learning in school is greatly valued because it enables them to help their families and relatives. While in this level of practical learning the focus is still very much on how learning helps students fulfill social expectations, students’ desire to help and support others implies a level of awareness of others’ needs that brings it near the border of emancipatory learning.

In Ethiopia, 17 out of 48 students interviewed describe enjoying school because they perceive it enables them to help others. This altruistic motivation appears to fulfill social and family expectations: Students describe wanting to help their parents, siblings, and relatives. For example, a 12-year-old girl in class 3b explains that one of the things she likes best about school is “to get knowledge and to be clever student, to improve my ability after that to help my parents.” A 16-year-old boy in class 4 focuses on his desire to help his siblings, saying that what he most enjoys about school is “to get knowledge, to help my little brother and sister, to lead them.” Clearly, for students, school learning is connected with being a support for their families. Learning well in school makes students feel more confident that they will be able to take on this important responsibility.

In Sierra Leone, students also recognize being able to help their families as an important responsibility that schooling can help them fulfill. Almost a third (11/38) of students interviewed discussed this as one of the reasons they most value and enjoy school. Students talk about their parents, their siblings, and their friends as especially important people in their lives whom they hope to support and help. For example, “School helps me to assist my parents in times of need,” says one 12-year-old boy in grade 4. Another student, a 16-year-old boy in grade 5, explained in more detail how learning enables him to help his parents, saying, “School can . . . help me to help my parents. That is, I sometimes get the challenge of writing letters for my parents, and I can do so.” Being able to contribute to and assist their families today and in the future gives students a sense of pride and purpose underlying their focus on learning.

EMANCIPATORY LEARNING

Social Consciousness

Students in Ethiopia, out of all the study locations, were the most focused on how the learning they are doing in school could enable them to change the social context of their community. Of the students interviewed, 11 out of 48 girls and boys, both Tigrigna and Kunama, envisioned themselves sharing the literacy skills they learned in school with others, particularly the younger or next generation and their tribe. Many students talked of school helping them to fulfill personal goals to eradicate illiteracy in their communities, demonstrating an underlying conception that they are learning not just for themselves but on behalf of their families and tribes. For example, a 14-year-old boy in class 5 said the reason he most likes coming to school is “to get knowledge and to complete my education without interrupting. And to teach my little brother as I was learning and to make illiteracy disappear from my tribe and my country.”

The idea that any amount of education is valuable and can be shared, which is reflected in many of the teachers’ perspectives toward their own teaching, comes through in students’ expressed desire to share their school learning with others. In this context, students literally are learning on behalf of others and in all likelihood will be a crucial link to the modern world for their family, community, and tribe. This can help explain students’ discussion of the “darkness of illiteracy” or, in one Kunama boy’s words, why “having no education is like being blind.”

Students in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan focus much less on this type of emancipatory learning. In Sierra Leone, 4 out of 38 students interviewed mentioned wanting to help their country or the next generation learn as they did, while only 1 out of 15 students interviewed did so in Afghanistan. In these two countries there is not the same focus on eradicating illiteracy as there is in Ethiopia. Instead, students talk generally about their desire to help develop their country. For example, in Sierra Leone a 17-year-old girl in class 5 said that one of the most important reasons she comes to school is because “I want to help my country.”

RE-ENVISIONING QUALITY EDUCATION IN CONFLICT CONTEXTS

The children in this study clearly articulated a vision of learning that provides much-needed nuance into the debate on quality education in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In essence, students in these contexts told us that neither of the policymakers described at the outset of this chapter had it right. For them, learning is not only essential, but it takes on multiple forms. It is important, but not sufficient, to ensure that core subjects are taught well. Many other forms of learning,

such as learning important skills to help navigate daily life as well as social norms, are seen as equally important by the students.

A major implication of this study's findings for education in conflict contexts is the importance of learning for students' well-being. Children's perspectives show that concerns about their well-being in school and their learning experiences in school should not be seen as separate issues, but rather as one and the same. Education programs that aim to support students' well-being by ensuring that they restore normalcy—by providing for children to regularly attend school, socialize with peers, and have access to psychosocial support or safe spaces in which to share their feelings—are all likely to be positive and to help children, yet may fail to emphasize a central element of their school experience that contributes to their well-being, namely, learning. At the same time, any program that takes a narrow view of quality learning, such as literacy or numeracy only, will be missing an important emphasis on the diverse forms of learning that students find valuable.

This careful balance of ensuring that students are supported across multiple forms of learning has particular implications for teacher support and practice in these contexts. In addition to school providing a forum for children to spend time with peers and interact with caring adults, students appreciate peer and teacher relationships that facilitate and support their learning, and become frustrated at those that limit or block it. Children discuss how much they appreciate their peers' support in doing homework, understanding class notes, and studying. Students are appreciative of what they perceive as teachers' support of their learning through useful pedagogical techniques such as storytelling and illustration, willingness to repeat explanations, and take questions after class.

Equally, students describe how they appreciate teachers who help them learn culturally appropriate social codes. Students discuss how much they appreciate learning how to do such things as dress appropriately, greet elders, treat peers in public spaces versus in school or in the home, be a good student, and identify and avoid harmful activities. As discussed, this type of mastery of appropriate behavior is classified as the normative level of practical learning.

Students also value other levels of practical learning, particularly as these relate to opportunities for altruism. Here, students especially appreciate what they learn in school because it will help them fulfill social expectations or personal desires to help their families and relatives. Being able to better understand, navigate, and enter into the social world is seen as a valuable outcome of school learning by students. This learning usually comes from teachers' guidance and advice and is seen by students as equally important to the subject lessons on which teachers also focus.

In practice, education programs in conflict and especially post-conflict contexts can place heavy emphasis on school construction and establishing safe learning environments, both of which are important. But perhaps the most important element is ensuring that good teachers, who know the community and cultural

context of the children, are regularly in place and supporting children's multiple forms of learning. This is undoubtedly difficult given that trained teachers are frequently lacking and teachers rarely are compensated regularly for their work. Rapid teacher preparation courses should be sure to incorporate an awareness of the different forms of learning children value in these contexts. Ultimately, children in this study show that they are keenly aware of when they are learning and when they are not, and they have strong opinions about what they find most helpful in their lives. Education practitioners in these contexts would do well to listen to them.