

# From the 'Global Learning Crisis' to a 'Crisis of Violence': Understanding and overcoming the root causes of educational inequalities

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# Outline

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Critiquing the discourse of the  
'global learning crisis'

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From learning crisis to a crisis of  
violence

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Education for a new planetary  
consciousness

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Decolonizing and decarbonizing  
education systems

# The global 'Learning Crisis'

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- The term 'learning crisis' is central to current discourses about the nature and extent of educational inequalities. Popularised by the World Bank amongst other organisations (World Bank, 2018), the term is used to refer to the fact that although there has been some progress in improving access to primary education, learning outcomes (as measured in standardised tests of literacy and numeracy) remain very low in many parts of the low-income world.
- Worst affected are often learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, girls, minorities and rural dwellers. In order to address this crisis, the World Bank proposes a range of technocratic solutions, principally focusing on improving the effectiveness of teachers and teaching, the use of technology to support learning and improving accountability within education system.

- (UNESCO, 2023) Global Education Monitoring Report (Paris: UNESCO)

| SDG Indicator                    | Gender             |                   |                   |                             |                   |                   |                   |                       |                    |                           |          |                               |                    |                    |                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                                  | A                  |                   |                   | B                           |                   |                   |                   | C                     |                    | D                         |          | E                             |                    |                    |                    |
|                                  | GPIA in completion |                   |                   | GPIA in minimum proficiency |                   |                   |                   | GPIA in literacy rate |                    | GPIA in adult proficiency |          | GPIA in gross enrolment ratio |                    |                    |                    |
|                                  | Primary            | Lower secondary   | Upper secondary   | Reading                     | Mathematics       | Reading           | Mathematics       | Youth                 | Adults             | Literacy                  | Numeracy | Pre-primary                   | Primary            | Secondary          | Tertiary           |
| Reference year                   | 2021               |                   |                   |                             |                   |                   |                   |                       |                    |                           |          |                               |                    |                    |                    |
| Region                           | Median             |                   |                   |                             |                   |                   |                   | Weighted average      |                    |                           |          |                               |                    |                    |                    |
| World                            | 1.01               | 1.01              | 1.05              | ...                         | 1.01 <sub>i</sub> | 1.15 <sub>i</sub> | 1.00 <sub>i</sub> | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.93 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.14 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 1.10               | 1.02              | 0.92              | 1.07 <sub>i</sub>           | 0.99 <sub>i</sub> | ...               | ...               | 0.93 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.82 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.96 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.90 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.78 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Northern Africa and Western Asia | 1.00 <sub>i</sub>  | 1.01 <sub>i</sub> | 1.05 <sub>i</sub> | ...                         | 0.99 <sub>i</sub> | 1.32 <sub>i</sub> | 1.04 <sub>i</sub> | 0.96 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.87 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.96 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.07 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Northern Africa                  | 1.02               | 1.06              | 1.12              | ...                         | ...               | ...               | ...               | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.84 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.01 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.15 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Western Asia                     | 1.00 <sub>i</sub>  | 1.01 <sub>i</sub> | 1.04 <sub>i</sub> | ...                         | 1.00 <sub>i</sub> | 1.33 <sub>i</sub> | 1.03 <sub>i</sub> | 0.94 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.90 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.94 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.93 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.02 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Central and Southern Asia        | 1.00               | 1.00              | 1.00              | ...                         | ...               | ...               | ...               | 0.96 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.82 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.06 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Central Asia                     | 1.00               | 1.00              | 1.00              | ...                         | ...               | ...               | ...               | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>    | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.03 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Southern Asia                    | 1.00               | 1.02              | 1.01              | ...                         | ...               | ...               | ...               | 0.96 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.81 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.06 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Eastern and South-eastern Asia   | 1.01               | 1.06              | 1.12              | 1.23 <sub>i</sub>           | 1.02 <sub>i</sub> | 1.23 <sub>i</sub> | 1.03 <sub>i</sub> | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.02 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.13 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Eastern Asia                     | 1.00 <sub>i</sub>  | 1.02 <sub>i</sub> | 1.05 <sub>i</sub> | ...                         | ...               | 1.08 <sub>i</sub> | 1.01 <sub>i</sub> | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 1.01 <sub>-1</sub>            | 1.01 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.02 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.13 <sub>-1</sub> |
| South-eastern Asia               | 1.03               | 1.08              | 1.20              | 1.23 <sub>i</sub>           | 1.08 <sub>i</sub> | 1.31 <sub>i</sub> | 1.07 <sub>i</sub> | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.96 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.03 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.18 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Oceania                          | 1.02 <sub>i</sub>  | 1.11 <sub>i</sub> | 1.25 <sub>i</sub> | ...                         | ...               | ...               | ...               | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.96 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.29 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 1.02 <sub>i</sub>  | 1.06 <sub>i</sub> | 1.09 <sub>i</sub> | 1.16 <sub>i</sub>           | 0.87 <sub>i</sub> | ...               | ...               | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 1.01 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.05 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.25 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Caribbean                        | ...                | ...               | ...               | ...                         | ...               | ...               | ...               | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | ...                           | ...                | ...                | ...                |
| Central America                  | 1.01               | 1.05              | 1.07              | 1.16                        | 0.85              | 1.11              | 0.82              | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | ...                           | ...                | ...                | ...                |
| South America                    | 1.02               | 1.07              | 1.09              | 1.14                        | 0.89              | 1.12 <sub>i</sub> | 0.78 <sub>i</sub> | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | ...                           | ...                | ...                | ...                |
| Europe and Northern America      | 1.00               | 1.00              | 1.05              | ...                         | 1.04 <sub>i</sub> | 1.13              | 1.00              | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.23 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Europe                           | 1.00               | 1.01              | 1.05              | ...                         | 1.04 <sub>i</sub> | 1.13              | 1.00              | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.19 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Northern America                 | 1.00 <sub>i</sub>  | 1.00 <sub>i</sub> | 1.02              | ...                         | 1.07              | 1.09              | 0.99              | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.29 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Low income                       | 1.08               | 0.97              | 0.89              | ...                         | ...               | ...               | ...               | 0.91 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.78 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.93 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.82 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.64 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Middle income                    | 1.01               | 1.05              | 1.07              | ...                         | 1.00 <sub>i</sub> | ...               | ...               | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.92 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.13 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Lower middle                     | 1.03               | 1.06              | 1.05              | ...                         | 1.01 <sub>i</sub> | ...               | ...               | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.86 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 0.98 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.08 <sub>-1</sub> |
| Upper middle                     | 1.01               | 1.03              | 1.09              | ...                         | 0.99 <sub>i</sub> | 1.22 <sub>i</sub> | 1.00 <sub>i</sub> | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>    | 0.97 <sub>-1</sub> | ...                       | ...      | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>            | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.02 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.17 <sub>-1</sub> |
| High income                      | 1.00 <sub>i</sub>  | 1.01 <sub>i</sub> | 1.05 <sub>i</sub> | ...                         | 1.03 <sub>i</sub> | 1.13 <sub>i</sub> | 1.00              | ...                   | ...                | ...                       | ...      | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub>            | 1.00 <sub>-1</sub> | 0.99 <sub>-1</sub> | 1.21 <sub>-1</sub> |

| Location/wealth                 |                   |                         |                  |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                        |                   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| F                               |                   |                         |                  |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                         |                 | G                                       |                   |                        |                   |
| Disparity in primary completion |                   |                         |                  | Disparity in lower secondary completion |                   |                         |                 | Disparity in upper secondary completion |                   |                         |                 | Wealth disparity in minimum proficiency |                   |                        |                   |
| Adjusted parity index           |                   | % of poorest completing |                  | Adjusted parity index                   |                   | % of poorest completing |                 | Adjusted parity index                   |                   | % of poorest completing |                 | End of primary                          |                   | End of lower secondary |                   |
| Location                        | Wealth            | Male                    | Female           | Location                                | Wealth            | Male                    | Female          | Location                                | Wealth            | Male                    | Female          | Reading                                 | Mathematics       | Reading                | Mathematics       |
| 4.5.1                           |                   |                         |                  |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                        |                   |
| 2021                            |                   |                         |                  |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                        |                   |
| Median                          |                   |                         |                  |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                         |                 |                                         |                   |                        |                   |
| 0.99 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.91 <sub>i</sub> | 86 <sub>i</sub>         | 92 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.94 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.68 <sub>i</sub> | 63 <sub>i</sub>         | 70 <sub>i</sub> | 0.76 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.34 <sub>i</sub> | 28 <sub>i</sub>         | 34 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | 0.61 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.60 <sub>i</sub> |
| 0.66                            | 0.42 <sub>i</sub> | 34 <sub>i</sub>         | 34 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.43                                    | 0.18 <sub>i</sub> | 13 <sub>i</sub>         | 11 <sub>i</sub> | 0.26                                    | 0.06 <sub>i</sub> | 5 <sub>i</sub>          | 1 <sub>i</sub>  | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 1.00 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.92 <sub>i</sub> | 92 <sub>i</sub>         | 94 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.96 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.77 <sub>i</sub> | 66 <sub>i</sub>         | 75 <sub>i</sub> | 0.84 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.48 <sub>i</sub> | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | 0.81 <sub>i</sub> | 0.47 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.53 <sub>i</sub> |
| 0.98 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.92 <sub>i</sub> | 89 <sub>i</sub>         | 92 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.83 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.57 <sub>i</sub> | 49 <sub>i</sub>         | 61 <sub>i</sub> | 0.69 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.37 <sub>i</sub> | 21 <sub>i</sub>         | 40 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 1.00 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.99 <sub>i</sub> | 99 <sub>i</sub>         | 100 <sub>i</sub> | 0.98 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.92 <sub>i</sub> | ...                     | 92 <sub>i</sub> | 0.86 <sub>i</sub>                       | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | 0.83 <sub>i</sub> | 0.48 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.59 <sub>i</sub> |
| 0.99 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.97 <sub>i</sub> | 96 <sub>i</sub>         | 96 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.95 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.86 <sub>i</sub> | 75 <sub>i</sub>         | 89 <sub>i</sub> | 0.72 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.25 <sub>i</sub> | 20 <sub>i</sub>         | 19 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 1.00                            | 1.00              | 99                      | 100              | 0.99                                    | 0.97              | 97                      | 97              | 0.92                                    | 0.81              | 77 <sub>i</sub>         | 81 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 0.98 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.77 <sub>i</sub> | 72 <sub>i</sub>         | 79 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.93 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.66 <sub>i</sub> | 58 <sub>i</sub>         | 61 <sub>i</sub> | 0.49 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.24 <sub>i</sub> | 16 <sub>i</sub>         | 9 <sub>i</sub>  | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 0.98 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.93 <sub>i</sub> | 91 <sub>i</sub>         | 95 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.89 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.68 <sub>i</sub> | 63 <sub>i</sub>         | 70 <sub>i</sub> | 0.68 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.40 <sub>i</sub> | 33 <sub>i</sub>         | 40 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | 0.43 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.48 <sub>i</sub> |
| ...                             | ...               | ...                     | ...              | ...                                     | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | ...               | 0.89 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.89 <sub>i</sub> |
| 0.97 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.91 <sub>i</sub> | 88 <sub>i</sub>         | 94 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.91 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.68 <sub>i</sub> | 63 <sub>i</sub>         | 69 <sub>i</sub> | 0.65 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.34 <sub>i</sub> | 33 <sub>i</sub>         | 32 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | 0.40 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.42 <sub>i</sub> |
| 1.01 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.96 <sub>i</sub> | 92 <sub>i</sub>         | 95 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.95 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.82 <sub>i</sub> | 81 <sub>i</sub>         | 87 <sub>i</sub> | 0.71 <sub>i</sub>                       | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 0.99 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.95 <sub>i</sub> | 93 <sub>i</sub>         | 96 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.91 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.78 <sub>i</sub> | 71 <sub>i</sub>         | 79 <sub>i</sub> | 0.75 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.54 <sub>i</sub> | 47 <sub>i</sub>         | 53 <sub>i</sub> | 0.32 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.22 <sub>i</sub> | ...                    | ...               |
| ...                             | ...               | ...                     | ...              | ...                                     | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 0.96                            | 0.93              | 91                      | 94               | 0.85                                    | 0.76              | 69                      | 79              | 0.72                                    | 0.52              | 43                      | 41              | 0.26                                    | 0.15              | 0.35                   | 0.20              |
| 0.99                            | 0.98              | 97                      | 97               | 0.93                                    | 0.82              | 76                      | 86              | 0.81                                    | 0.62              | 54                      | 60              | 0.32 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.24 <sub>i</sub> | 0.44 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.27 <sub>i</sub> |
| 1.00 <sub>i</sub>               | ...               | ...                     | ...              | 1.00 <sub>i</sub>                       | ...               | ...                     | ...             | 0.99                                    | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | 0.71 <sub>i</sub> | 0.70                   | 0.68              |
| 1.00                            | ...               | ...                     | ...              | 1.00                                    | ...               | ...                     | ...             | 0.99                                    | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | 0.70 <sub>i</sub> | 0.69                   | 0.68              |
| ...                             | 0.99 <sub>i</sub> | 99 <sub>i</sub>         | 99 <sub>i</sub>  | ...                                     | 0.98 <sub>i</sub> | 98 <sub>i</sub>         | 98 <sub>i</sub> | 0.95 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.93              | 91                      | 91              | ...                                     | 0.74              | 0.81                   | 0.71              |
| 0.59                            | 0.42 <sub>i</sub> | 25 <sub>i</sub>         | 34 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.32                                    | 0.18 <sub>i</sub> | 11 <sub>i</sub>         | 8 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.23 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.05 <sub>i</sub> | 5 <sub>i</sub>          | 1 <sub>i</sub>  | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 0.98 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.92 <sub>i</sub> | 89 <sub>i</sub>         | 94 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.92 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.73 <sub>i</sub> | 66 <sub>i</sub>         | 74 <sub>i</sub> | 0.74 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.45 <sub>i</sub> | 33 <sub>i</sub>         | 41 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 0.93                            | 0.82 <sub>i</sub> | 78 <sub>i</sub>         | 87 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.81                                    | 0.55 <sub>i</sub> | 45 <sub>i</sub>         | 59 <sub>i</sub> | 0.52                                    | 0.32 <sub>i</sub> | 20 <sub>i</sub>         | 24 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | ...               | ...                    | ...               |
| 1.00 <sub>i</sub>               | 0.97 <sub>i</sub> | 96 <sub>i</sub>         | 97 <sub>i</sub>  | 0.97 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.84 <sub>i</sub> | 78 <sub>i</sub>         | 86 <sub>i</sub> | 0.81 <sub>i</sub>                       | 0.54 <sub>i</sub> | 47 <sub>i</sub>         | 53 <sub>i</sub> | ...                                     | 0.58 <sub>i</sub> | 0.45 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.44 <sub>i</sub> |
| 1.00 <sub>i</sub>               | ...               | ...                     | ...              | 1.00 <sub>i</sub>                       | ...               | ...                     | ...             | 0.99 <sub>i</sub>                       | ...               | ...                     | ...             | ...                                     | 0.67 <sub>i</sub> | 0.71 <sub>i</sub>      | 0.70              |

# From the 'Learning Crisis' to a 'Crisis of Violence'

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- As has been argued elsewhere (Paulson and Tikly, 2023; Tikly, 2020; Sriprakash et al., 2019) there are several problems with how the idea of the learning crisis is currently framed in dominant global discourses:
- The idea focuses on a narrow range of cognitive outcomes linked to an instrumentalist view of education as contributing principally to human capital development. It stands in contrast to approaches that consider education in terms of promoting a wider set of capabilities that can contribute to the realisation of social, environmental and epistemic justice within peaceful, democratic and sustainable societies (Tikly and Barrett, 2011) or to the realisation of peace and transitional justice (Bellino et al., 2017).
- The focus is on a narrow set of inequalities. For example, inequalities relating to 'race' and ethnicity (language) are typically not considered, although they are powerful predictors of inequality. Other markers of inequality such as class and caste are treated simplistically in terms of wealth disparities rather than as structural and relational features of capitalist societies.
- Finally, by focusing on technocratic solutions dominant discourses about the learning crisis elide the profound effect of different forms of violence – direct, structural and cultural - in limiting the capabilities of learners. **That is to say that the narrow focus of contemporary discourses about the learning crisis mask a much deeper crisis that blights our educational systems, namely a crisis of violence.**

# Defining Violence

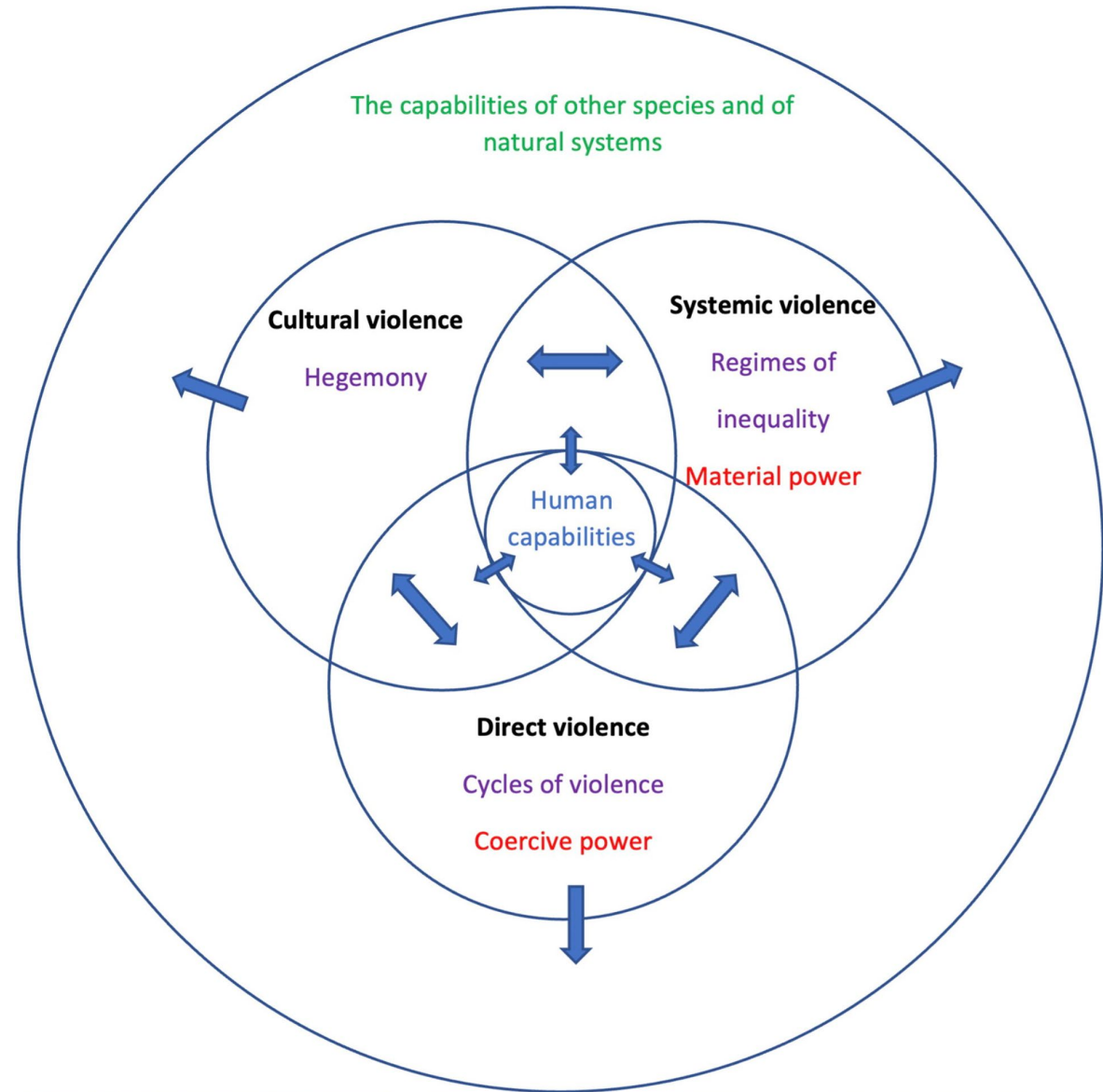
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- Much existing scholarship on violence and education focuses on forms of direct physical and psychological violence. For example, in their recent analyses of violence in education UNESCO (2019) in keeping with UNICEF (2015), define school violence in terms of instances of physical violence, psychological and sexual violence.
- Following Galtung as well as other recent scholars of violence (e.g. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgoise, 2004; Tripp, 2021) we adopt a more expansive understanding that attends to the multiple forms of harm inflicted by violence and includes systemic, cultural and environmental as well as direct violence.
- Our definition also foregrounds the role of power both as a cause of violence but also as a means to render some forms and effects of violence invisible.
- We, therefore, offer a broad definition of violence as: *any act of power, whether directly or via systemic and cultural forms, that results in physical, psychological, emotional, environmental or spiritual harm and that has the effect of limiting the capabilities (opportunity freedoms) available to individuals, groups, other species and natural systems.*

# An Ontology of Violence

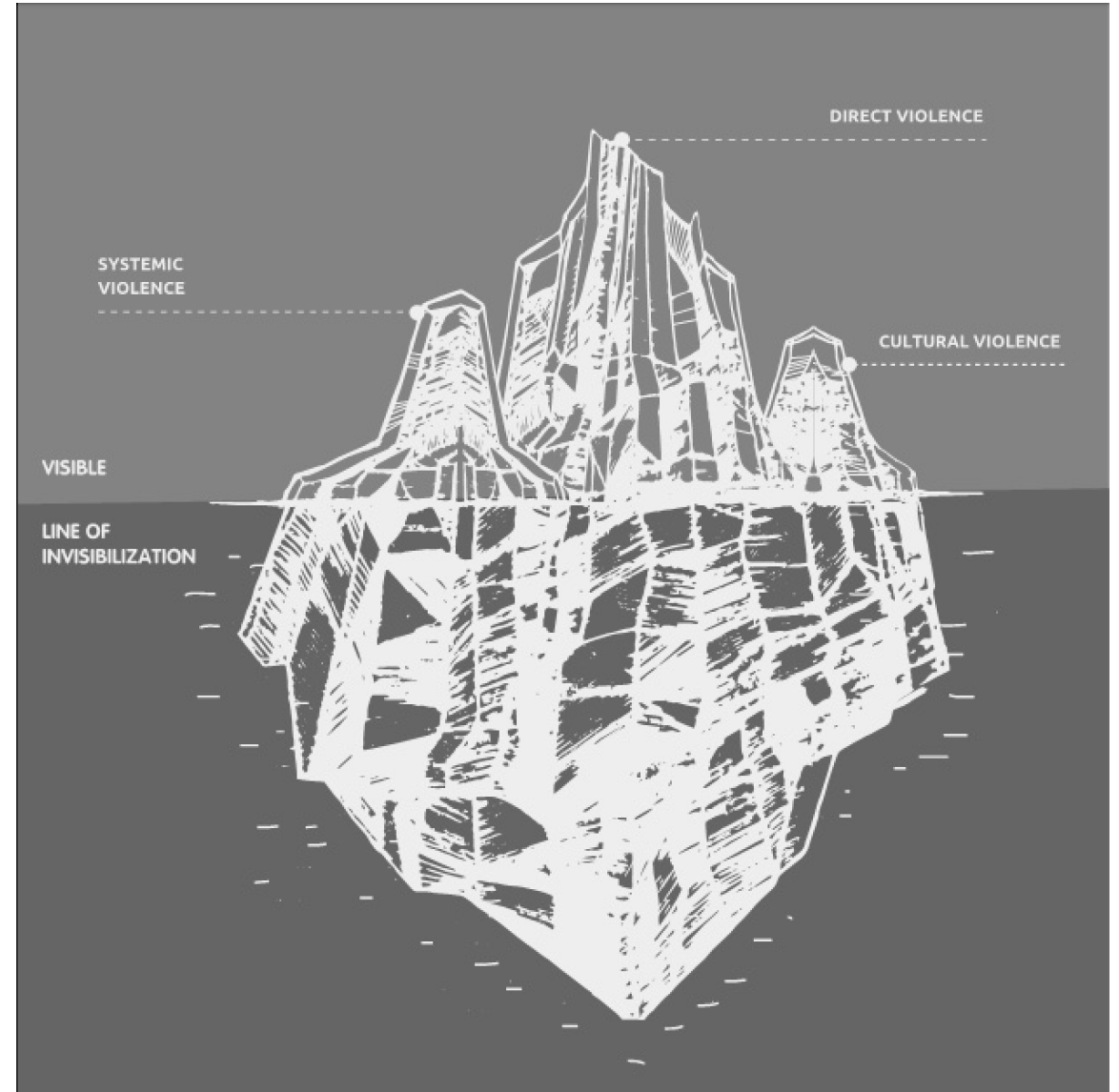
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- Source: Paulson, J. & Tikly, L. (2023) Reconceptualising Violence in International and Comparative Education: Revisiting Galtung's Framework, *Comparative Education Review*  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/726372>



# The Visibalsation and Invisibalisation of Violence

- Source: Paulson, J. & Tikly, L. (2023) Reconceptualising Violence in International and Comparative Education: Revisiting Galtung's Framework, *Comparative Education Review* <https://doi.org/10.1086/726372>



# Direct violence

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- A recent report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (2020) found that more than 22,000 students, teachers, and academics were injured, killed or harmed in attacks on education during armed conflict or insecurity between 2015-19 with more than 11,000 separate attacks on education facilities, students and educators.
- The number of countries experiencing attacks on education has also increased in recent years, with 93 countries experiencing at least one reported attack on education between 2015 and 2019. GCPEA found that women and girls were specifically targeted.
- Besides the physical and psychological damage inflicted on children and young people caught up in this violence, armed conflict in general has devastating effects on school enrolments with an estimated 28 million children out of school in conflict affected countries (UNESCO, 2011).
- Pregnancy from rape, the health consequences and stigma of sexual violence, the risk of early marriage, and the privileging of boys' education over girls', all make it particularly difficult for girls to return to school (GCPEA, 2020).

# Direct violence

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- Corporal punishment is a widely occurring form of direct violence that is regularly researched but less regularly discussed alongside sweeping diagnostics of 'learning crisis' (e.g. UNICEF, 2015; Gershoff, 2017; Heekes et al., 2020). Corporal punishment remains legal in 69 countries where its prevalence is high. Although it is prohibited in 128 countries, its use often goes under-reported and remains widespread across the globe. It is correlated with poor academic and emotional outcomes.
- Bullying is a major source of school based violence; according to a recent UNESCO report (UNESCO, 2019), almost one in three students (32%) around the world have been bullied by their peers at school at least once in the last month, including via physical, sexual, psychological and cyber bullying.
- Other types of direct violence are more likely to be 'invisibilised'. For example, data relating to the prevalence of sexualised violence in education is limited, although the data that does exist suggests that it is widespread both in the global North and the global South yet often goes unreported (Crawford and Hares, 2020; Parkes, 2015a; Parkes, 2015b).
- The same is true of homophobic bullying and violence based on gender identity/ expression (UNESCO, 2016). Data relating to some forms of violence including disablist and racialised violence including anti-Black, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic bullying are even more limited and often confined to a handful of countries where these data are collected. Much of this violence now occurs online in the form of cyber bullying. These processes of invisibilisation feed into and are reinforced by systemic disparities affecting marginalised groups and endemic forms of cultural violence in our education systems, as discussed below.

# Structural violence

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- Clive Harber's (2004) work on schooling as violence offers a reminder that the history of the development of modern mass education systems is directly violent, in its evolution in industrialising Western Europe and its extension via the European colonial project to "discipline bodies as well as to regulate minds" (p. 9). The compulsory, coercive nature of mass schooling, Harber argues, make it a "bully institution" (p. 9) of discipline and punishment.
- Scholarship over many years has emphasized how schools both reflect and reproduce inequalities based on social class and on caste through operating primarily as a filtering mechanism for access to higher education and to labour markets. Class and caste-based Inequalities have been exacerbated by the increasing privatization of education.
- Inequalities in class and caste have been exacerbated by the digital divide exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2022)

# Structural violence

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- Feminist scholarship has shown how schools are both shaped by and reproduce patriarchal norms and values and gender disparities in society. Recent scholarship on gender-based violence in education links sexualised violence with wider gender-based inequalities in society (see for example, Parkes, 2016; Parkes et al., 2013).
- Scholarship has also shown how schools reproduce racial disparities (Tikly, 2022). Angela Y. Davis (2003) connects schools and prisons, arguing that schools in poor communities of colour in the United States are repressive, militarized institutions that “replicate the structures and regimes of the prison” placing a greater emphasis on discipline and security than on personal growth and development. These schools serve as “prep schools for prison” (p. 16) and are institutions of racism and repression.
- Vally et al’s (2002) work on the prevalence of corporal punishment and other forms of direct violence in South African schools explicitly links the prevalence of violence with the authoritarian nature of the apartheid regime. There is a need to deepen and extend this kind of analysis to other contexts so as to critically explore the role of direct violence in perpetuating systemic violence and vice versa.

# Cultural violence

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- Cultural violence is inherent with the framing of the so called learning crisis. Children, including up to 85% of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are framed according to what they lack – including “age appropriate skills” and the ability “to read or understand a basic story” (Save Our Future, 2020: 12). They are, ‘learning the least’. This deficit framing ignores the knowledge, skills, resilience and agency that children do have – including for navigating violence in their daily educational experiences – and frames them against their failed future productivity (World Bank, 2018).
- “Hundreds of millions of children” are framed as reaching adulthood “without even the most basic of skills” and unable to “build a fulfilling career” (World Bank, 2018). In failing to contribute to the human capital of their nations, these learners (often treated as an undistinguishable mass rather than as individual children) are made disposable (and futureless) via the learning crisis discourse.

# Cultural violence

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- Curricula and pedagogy are still influenced by colonial education structures, often failing to represent or undermining Indigenous knowledge systems and prioritising Eurocentric understandings of what constitutes valuable knowledge and skills (see for example Huaman, 2022; Tikly, 2020). The coloniality of modern education systems is also evident in the rigid structuring of the school day according to Western, linear conceptions of time, the predominance of teacher-centred, top-down, and authoritarian approaches to pedagogy.
- Curricula contribute to and maintain historical narratives that silence, erase or devalue the experiences, memories and meaningful figures and events of minoritized groups, contributing both to the maintenance of structural ignorance and to the exclusion of learners' lived realities (Sriprakash et al., 2020; Paulson, 2015; Mills, 2007).
- Discussions of the learning crisis pay limited attention to the epistemic injustice in what and how many learners study. For example, European languages imposed during colonialism which may not be the same languages that learners speak at home are the primary or indeed only language of instruction in many contexts (Erling et al., 2021; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2014; Phillipson, 1996).
- Educational technology was used during the pandemic as a means of surveillance over teachers. Big data and the use of AI have contributed to racial and gender profiling (Williamson, 2019; Williamson et al, 2022; UNESCO, 2023)

# Just Transitions to Sustainable Futures

The concept of 'just transitions' is a way of conceiving how and in whose interests transitions to sustainable futures might be realised. Swilling (2020) defines a just transition as

*a process of increasingly radical incremental changes that accumulate over time in the actually emergent transformed world envisaged by the SDGs and sustainability. The outcome is a state of well-being founded on greater environmental sustainability and social justice (including the eradication of poverty). These changes arise from a vast multiplicity of struggles, each with their own context-specific temporal and spatial dimensions. (Swilling 2020: 7)*

# Education for a New Planetary Consciousness

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- According to Mbembe, addressing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, including climate change, inequality, the threats posed by global pandemics such as COVID-19 and the opportunities and risks associated with the rise of new technologies, requires the development of a new planetary consciousness. By this, he means a way of thinking that recognises the interconnectedness of all living things and the need to protect the planet for future generations. This new consciousness would require a shift away from the current focus on individualism and competition towards a more collective and cooperative approach.
- It requires the development of a new kind of intelligence that is more holistic and interconnected and that must emerge from paying attention to three sets of relationships, namely, our relationships with nature, with technology and with each other. Underpinning each must be an ethics of care based on a recognition of our 'all-worldness' as human beings. According to Mbembe, 'Living together on the same planet means ...learning to take care of it; learning to repair it and, above all, to share it. Care, repair and sharing are... the very conditions of its sustainability and ours' (Mbembe, 2023: : 6).
- Crucially for Mbembe, developing such a consciousness requires breaking with Western-centric models of development and instead drawing on all of the 'archives of the world'. This means moving away from a Western-centric view of knowledge and instead embracing diverse knowledge systems, including IK systems that have been neglected and marginalised through colonialism. Mbembe identifies Indigenous Knowledge systems as having an important role to play .

# Reimagining Education for Just and Sustainable Futures

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- Rethink how we conceive of education systems to incorporate both formal institutions/ structures and processes of social learning in communities. The emphasis should be on developing learning pathways throughout the lifespan that can equip communities with the capabilities required to realise more just and sustainable futures.
- Conceive of learners both as knowledge takers and as knowledge makers. There is scope to co-create transdisciplinary knowledge between formal educational institutions and communities to address the 'wicked' problems of unsustainable development..
- Defend and expand access to the knowledge commons to include diverse knowledge systems and languages. Challenge data capture and enclosure by private corporations. Use big data and AI to support learner progress.
- Decolonise the curriculum through decentring the Eurocentric bias of the existing curriculum, integrating non-Western and traditional knowledge systems, encouraging 'pedagogical border crossing' and promoting plurilingualism.
- Decarbonise the curriculum to focus on sustainability and planetary well-being. Education should go beyond traditional academic disciplines and explicitly integrate sustainability-related knowledge and values. This includes environmental awareness, ecological stewardship, responsible consumption, and understanding the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental systems.
- Tackle all forms of violence in education, recognising their distinctiveness but also interconnectedness.