

## Original Paper

# Emancipation Education Thanks to a Mobile Digital Device

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### **Abstract**

*Within the remote and isolated Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps of Northern Iraq, the needs of IDPs go beyond that of basic humanitarian aid, as clearly expressed in the Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment Report in August 2014. We have carried out an anthropologically oriented critique and have noticed a gap between what is acknowledged in the report and the effectiveness of humanitarian aid action in the field. Regrettably, the report shows intentions that leave IDPs alone with their concerns, especially regarding young people's future. Where is the opportunity to reconnect with the world while in these camps? This article identifies problematic issues in relation to education and humanitarian aid in the camps and discusses a response to this critique by developing an emancipation through education project for disinherited youths living in hostile IDP camps. The purpose is to evaluate how such an NPO project could provide an answer by combining both a technological and a pedagogical approach. Following the wishes of the IDPs, a two phase program is designed, based on praxis and emphasizing emancipation that privileges autonomy, a situated pedagogy, an oral transmission culture and creative transmission through theatre in order to fulfil the information and education needs of these youths.*

### **Keywords**

*Anthropological approach, Communication Solution, Disinherited Pupils, Emancipation Education, Learning by doing*

### **1. Introduction**

This article presents the culmination of research, fieldwork and observations carried out by the NPO NDM Cineaction in the IDP camps in Kurdistan, Iraq. Throughout this work, the question was raised as to whether the disinherited youth who are living in these camps can realistically conceive of their own

life project in terms of professional career development. They are limited by their nationality and the genocides they have experienced. Moreover, humanitarian aid builds schools but it does not go any further in developing a functioning and cohesive school system. Based on 20 years of experience established in the field, following a research-action, NDM-Cineaction considers that what is needed is a project to encourage emancipation through education which could give the youths in these camps valuable skills they require and can adapt, to beneficially contribute to the contingencies and needs of their communities. IDP camp teachers would be called upon to actively motivate and energise these disinherited youths through the use of media and scientific popularisation based performances, combined with the fundamental educational practice of *learning by doing*.

### 1.1 The Context

Over one million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are living in the five Northern Governorates of Iraqi Kurdistan alone (Sept. 2014), half of which have sought refuge in the Dohuk Governorate. The needs of refugees and IDPs in these remote areas go beyond basic humanitarian aid such as food, shelter and health care. In fact, IDPs have clearly expressed their need for communication and information, as documented in *Understanding the Information and Communication Needs Among IDPs in Northern Iraq*, the Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment Report compiled in August 2014. According to the report, the overall priority information needs among displaced people living in camps and outside camps are:

*Home:* Information about family members who were unable to flee ISIL-controlled territories or who may have been kidnapped by ISIL; the security situation back home; and the status of their property. This was a common concern for both women and men.

*Aid:* How to access services, including criteria and procedures for registering for assistance and the exact locations to receive aid. This was also a common concern for both women and men.

*Future:* Many men indicated that their priority was to find out how to seek asylum and/or receive assistance to resettle to another country (“United States of America or European countries”).

The report underlines that “Communicating with Communities (CWC) work in Iraq and globally, needs to aim at fulfilling the right that people have to know, ask questions and participate in their own relief and recovery” and lists the following as key recommendations:

- *Increasing information flow*, dialogue with displaced communities and the capacity of responders to listen to those affected,
- *Supporting existing communication channels*, including local media, and establishing new platforms where necessary.

Approximately 7,400 youths are living inside Domiz Refugee Camp. Refugees in their own countries, IDPs are confronted with linguistic barriers due to the limited mutual intelligibility between Sorani, Kurmandji and Badini languages (with Arabic becoming the *lingua franca* as a result), isolated from the rest of the world because the camps are set up in remote areas, and furthermore restricted in their freedom of movement. Given these dire circumstances of isolation, what kind of solution could be

developed to engage the whole IDP community, add value to its occupants' lives and bring about a sense of reconnection to the rest of the world?

After field observations made during an explorative campaign supported by UNICEF, NDM-Cineaction presented their first project proposal based on their research, which responded to this question with a *technological solution*, which will be discussed next in further detail. Proposed and financially evaluated by UNICEF in September 2015, this proposal has unfortunately been on standby since. Its coordinator was removed by the organization and the new one focused on a Polio Special Project. This quick turn over in UNICEF representatives and the reasons for putting the NDM-Cineaction project on standby have been analyzed and will be published shortly (Raybaudo, 2017). This is a common theme that arises in assessments which analyze the gap between the intentions and the actions of humanitarian aid.

## 2. Technological Solution Proposal

Between September and October 2014, NDM Cineaction NPO (Note 1) toured some of the Yazidi refugee camps in Northern Iraq with its Nomadic Dream mobile cinema truck, providing comic relief to thousands of children and many parents in an open-air setting. It is on the basis of this emotionally moving experience that we came to realize the urgent need to set up a pioneering program, which advocated a technical solution to answer some of the needs observed in the camps. This technological and cultural project was proposed to UNICEF as a means of communication. It is called UNICEF Mobile Community Medium (UMCM) and proposes the use of a big, all weather, inflated structure which would allow audiences to be accommodated for live and recorded performances, during both day and night sessions, and throughout all seasons. The UMCM would be designed to offer a virtual and physical space that captures children's imaginations and takes them into a world where everything is still possible. It would employ a movable multi-purpose venue, going beyond the standards of a mobile cinema, and use a broad range of audiovisual material for both "edutainment" and numerous other activities. The venue would be equipped with cutting edge information and communication technology (ICTs), a multilingual website, broadband wireless Internet access as well as facilitators available to assist all users. Once equipped with an assortment ICT, this public outreach turnkey system would become an interactive Mobile Community Medium (MCM). As a multipurpose hall equipped to support learners and teach staff, the MCM would offer a space for audiovisual educational support, live performances, e-conferences, meetings and film screenings which could be set up within two hours of arrival at the camp.

This project would address some of the issues identified by the Inter-Agency report and enable CWC work to actually help alleviate tensions between IDPs and hosting communities. The multipurpose venue would bring IDPs and hosting communities together and allow everyone to sit side by side and share the same shows, sport events and movies.

UMCM would gradually be made available to the largest number of potential users through:

- Participatory online programming of the medium, equivalent to Cinema On Demand which offers its users the opportunity to contribute to a selection of entertainment programs. Users are furthermore in a position to make decisions on the strategic orientation of the UMCM according to their needs and priorities (e.g., E-university vs. NGO conferences)
- *Real-time access to e-learning platforms*
- *High usage of ICTs:* Broadband Internet, interactive website, multi lingual network and data bases, Broadband Wireless Access, dedicated social media
- *Job creation:* the implementation of this project would create jobs, which would be filled by local specialized staff.

By expressing their needs, voicing critical feedback, requesting information, expressing their wish to have age-appropriate films screened, to watch sports, to take part in educational sessions/edutainment, IDPs effectively will turn the UMCM into an Open University, an e-education centre, a conference venue, a cinema (in turn for children and adults), a concert hall, an auditorium for online music master classes and much more. The ultimate aim is that through reliable, fast and constant access to information and news, these activities will reduce tensions and frustrations in the camps and enable IDPs who feel cut off from the world, to reconnect with it.

### **3. Anthropological & Pedagogical Project through Praxis**

The parameters for the second phase of the project are based on the community needs, which were identified during the research and field observations made during the first phase of the experience. These parameters go further than those identified by the interagency report and are as follows:

- To think of a means for the transformation and the relief of traumas,
- To adapt a pedagogical project that takes into account the material constraints and living conditions (where, for instance, it is hopeless to rely on smartphone use, electric networks or on other material collective means),
- To include adults, teachers, parents, and local professionals in the education system and to give them adequate support,
- To create a culture of emancipation for youths and children by giving them access to education and information.

These parameters are anthropological because not only do they evaluate what the IDPs need but also their actual living conditions and living spaces. Throughout the project we have been often confronted with a non-anthropological vision, especially in exchanges with the UN officers in charge of supporting the operation. The UN officers take figures such as the number of IDPs, children, teachers, traumas, costs, etc. more readily into account than living spaces, body space, environmental space, and so on. During our field observations, we envisioned that there are three main living spaces: the inner space, the body space and the environmental space. The inner space, or the mind, and the body space are where the trauma of the genocide has been imprinted. The environmental space could be a cold or

poorly equipped classroom for example. Taking these elements into account gives a rich anthropological basis to the project and gives us a closer understanding of what the IDPs are experiencing living in these camps. This understanding gives us a better basis to determine the potential actions that could be taken to have a truly positive and effective impact on the IDPs. All three living spaces have been taken into consideration during the establishment of the education proposal. In developing the project, it is necessary to ask whether a culture of emancipation is affordable in such miserable conditions as are present in the IDP camps. Furthermore, is learning a *luxury* where there are significantly miserable and traumatic memory conditions present among the community? The word “luxury” has not been randomly chosen here. It is connected to the notion of something that pleases the senses, that gives enjoyment and pleasure. The Latin root *lux* links the word to light. In this original sense of the word, learning could bring light and hope to one’s life where trauma has previously brought misery.

In this next phase of the experience, we are incorporating the technical solutions of phase one. Therefore the following considerations, which were observed in phase one, are still valuable to the project:

1. The expression of trauma and what to do with it-past
2. Cultural no man’s land-present
3. Resources: teachers, space, parents, local culture
4. Building a future
5. How to go on learning about the self, the community, the life time, the space territory, the world in all its dimensions
6. What are the available means?
7. Who can teach whom?
8. What to teach?

In line with the anthropological parameters previously stated, and while still supporting the implementation of the technological solution as part of the project, we seek to emphasize *praxis* as a ground to building a culture of emancipation for the youths and children of the IDP camp communities. This means that our aim is to give the youths the means to enable them to build their professional and social lives in terms of participating in the cultural, economic and social development of their communities.

In Ancient Greek, the term *praxis* relates to the notion of *movement*. In its etymology, *praxis* is a three-tiered concept: 1) the result of what is done and exists, 2) what is in action and 3) the way things are done or the action takes shape. In education, tools are used to accompany and guide the learner, giving them a sense of direction and a way to do things. It is as much the *savoir-faire* as the link between knowledge and behavior. The pedagogical *praxis* is the result of learning by doing, with a tool, in the direction of the use, and from which the *praxis* can be analyzed. Among the *praxis* consideration, we include the fact that all parts of the body can learn and acquire a habit when one part of the body

has learnt it (Dewey, 2011). In the Domiz camp, for instance, no tables, papers and pens are available. Therefore, the pedagogical *praxis* directs teachers' attention towards using bodies for learning as a language tool in conjunction with a collective technological tool such as the UMCM all-weather inflatable tent. Through the use of gesticulation in performances, theatre and sports, teachers can create and be creative in their transmission of knowledge and culture.

In this context, the *praxis* concerns the use of tools and language. A pedagogical tool is presented and the *praxis* is re-presenting the tool as a reissue of action (Goody, 2006). In the project, pedagogical tools could be educational films, theater sessions, and all the pedagogical steps that will help the youths to integrate and share the knowledge. Thanks to this learning *praxis*, the pedagogical tool mediates the action of learning and helps to change the learner's sense of direction, signification or perception (Freire, 1974). It means that the youths are going to act to learn. They will be helped by teachers to construct a theatrical play concerning, for instance, a mathematical notion such as Pythagoras' theorem, which could be understandable by younger kids.

When educators think of action and practice, they ought to anticipate what is going to work in an environment such as the Domiz camp, because the cognitive or meta cognitive and pedagogical tools are not abstract from their operational environment. Description of the learning made with a pedagogical tool in action, is a call to mental act description. This mental act has to do with imagination (Simondon, 1958/2012). We share the idea that *it is in action that lodges the sense* and that action is creative in its immanence (Lerbet-S\'{e}ni, 1994). However, imagining and creating a play about a mathematical notion in an IDP camp of Yazidi culture could be considered to be solely creative and non-assessable in terms of numbers by a UN officer. Practical learning can be considered as a ritual with its codes, its formalization and its repetitive actions because, in its "*performative practice that strains to give 'being' to what it is done or told*" (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 154), ritual is a practical *mimesis* of a natural process to be facilitated. In conceiving the educational proposition for Dohuk camp, we have designed the project from this anthropological and pedagogical *praxis* angle. However, is the pedagogical angle enough in terms of building a culture of emancipation for these youths and children considering the conditions they live in?

### 3.1 Emancipating with Autonomous Pedagogy

In order to realize our pedagogical vision about learning adapted to individual, social and environmental conditions, we have added the emancipation vision to this project, where new generations of youths and children are given a chance to experience better living conditions than the ones they are living in at the moment. Why is it an emancipation vision? According to Paulo Freire, there is a universal ethic of human beings which is linked to "*an ontological vocation to be emancipated, to be plus, which constitutes himself/herself as a social being and none as an a priori of History*" (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 36). Even though every human being is conditioned by their genetic, cultural and social environment, it does not mean that they are "*determined, programmed*" (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 37).

Two fundamental approaches are favorable to emancipation through education:

1. To teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 40).
2. Who teaches learns to teach and who learns teaches to learn (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 41).

The virtue of these two fundamental approaches is that they allow for continuous improvement of the educational experience. We know that learning comes before teaching. Therefore, we know that learning happens even if there is no educational project going on in the camps. Nevertheless, an educational project can give more than what learning alone can give in terms of developing the curiosity and creativity necessary for emancipation. Autonomous pedagogy is about completing the virtuous circle: by learning or teaching, “*we participate in an utter experience: directive, political, ethical in which beauty finds its place together with decency and seriousness*” (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 42). The idea of being autonomous and emancipated belongs to a pedagogical vision where educators “*think right* in the sense that *one of the beauties of our way of being in and with the world, as historical beings, is the capacity of knowing it by intervening in it*” (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 45). In this spirit, the pedagogical project in the Dohuk camp is about trying to create a *necessary closeness* between what it is necessary to know as part of a school curriculum, and the social experience of the youths and children in the camp. The educators’ role should be to awaken a permanent curiosity in their pupils, starting with an ingenuous curiosity confronted with criticism as a questioning concern, in order to build from a naïve to a rigorous critical view beyond the esthetic (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 49). To use the body as a learning tool allows for movement, thereby finding a congruency between *thinking right* and *doing right*. According to Paulo Freire, the notion of *thinking right* is the result of a process that produces confidence in argumentation.

Another side of emancipating with autonomous pedagogy is the need to accept and express feelings such as anger, sadness, joy or impatience. In a collective learning space, various relationships are built. As social and historical beings, taking responsibility for one’s feelings can build up cultural identity. For people who have experienced conflicts it requires a level of *self-assumption* (Freire, 1996/2013, p. 59), which is created and permitted in the educational space. In fact the physical educational space has a pedagogical effect. In the first phase of the project, a decent educational space was negotiated with UNICEF.

### 3.2 *Emancipating with Situated Pedagogy*

Autonomous pedagogy gives direction to teaching and a cultural basis for respecting and adding value to the existing culture(s) in IDP camps. Next in order to organize the learning environment, it is necessary to evaluate the curriculum levels that the youths and children will be streamed into for each item of learning. Situated pedagogy helps to evaluate the academic levels based on two criteria: motivation and competence. An educator does not have the same relationship with the learner. The table below identifies four situations in which a situated pedagogy can be adapted:

**Table 1. Observing the Relationship between Motivation and Competence**

	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3	Observation 4
Motivation	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Varies</b>	<b>Strong</b>
Involvement	Enthusiasm Learning Desire, with hopes Optimism	Disincentive Discouragement Frustration Confusion	Hesitation Self-criticism Looking for opportunities to train	Recognition from Others Confidence Inspiration to others Pro activity
Skill	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Increase of skills</b>	<b>Good Level</b>	<b>Good Level</b>
	Unconscious Incompetence Inexperience	Effort to understand and to use them.	Worthwhile contributions Objective evaluation of <i>savoir-faire</i>	Expertise/ Proficiency Observable level of competences by others

In this educational project we would like to focus on the pedagogical coaching and guiding of the youths and children in the IDP camps. However, a diagnostic evaluation has to be organized in the refugee camps before any teaching can begin. This diagnostic evaluation can be associated to a prognosis evaluation. The prognosis evaluation would potentially establish a kind of pedagogical contract with the young learner in order to reach the next level. The young learner is the one who agrees and commits themselves to the tracking of the proposed learning. According to the different levels of the learners, the pedagogy won't be the same, as shown in the table above. For pupils in the first column, the pedagogy will be more directional, giving direction to the learning process and the action, and allowing the learner to acquire *savoir-faire*, knowledge and application. For the second column, the teacher is going to direct their work towards more support for the learner by giving a direction to the learning. At this stage the individualized support is really favorable. For pupils in the third column, support, recognition and confidence in themselves are important. The teacher keeps in mind that the learner can afford autonomy and can decide what they have to improve. By the fourth column the learner becomes a resource for the teacher. In this case, skilled learners are able to teach others or to at least answer their doubts.

In maintaining the aim of emancipating a young population through education, the situated pedagogy is helpful for the following reasons:

1. It helps teachers to adapt their pedagogy;
2. It helps to identify learning barriers, such as personal trauma or socio-cultural influences, and to regulate the learning levels;
3. It helps young populations to self-evaluate where they are regarding their skills and knowledge,



to learn self-evaluation and to express their learning desires and scopes;

4. It helps to create a collective intelligence by involving the most skilled and gifted learners in teaching others, recognizing that they could be skilled and gifted in certain areas, but not in others;

5. It helps to involve the community in the learning process.

### 3.3 Orally Transmitted Culture

The first phase of the project is based on an alternation between a live performance (Note 2) called “How to get Yazidi camp children to smile again” and animated educational videoconferences from all over the world by experts in scientific popularisation as a way of introducing knowledge contents. On this basis, the local teachers can evaluate how youths integrate with certain knowledge issues. In the second phase of the project, we suggest that these youths could become the ones that transmit knowledge to the younger ones. As we have already discussed in regards to creating a decent study space, there are significant issues associated with written learning that need to be addressed, such as finding various supports, i.e. tables, papers, books and pens.

In envisioning a culture of emancipation, we have taken into account the impact of written culture on oral culture (Goody, 2007). With the advent of writing, our way of thinking changed (Goody, 1979). In primitive societies, ideas travelled through oral and collective processes. While with writing or reading activities an inner voice develops, there is no inner voice with orality. Where there is no writing, orality becomes a social link vector for law, morals, memory and codes that are collectively transmitted. The individual is enrolled in the group and there is no individual thought (Goody, 2007). Through speech, the community joins in the narration even if the narration progresses. With writing, independent thinking emerges as well as individual consciousness. The limit of oral transmission alone is that the oral form is ephemeral and makes it difficult to expose differences “*that force us to see contradictions*” (Goody, 2007, p. 96) in content that cannot be examined in detail, split up into elements or manipulated in all senses. The attention focuses on listening and watching, therefore the *skeptical thoughts* are not at the disposal of the individual “*in order to be meditated privately*” (Goody, 2007, p. 96). The written word is less concerned with action because it breaks away from action and speech stream. What is fixed by writing motivates the critical mind expression and there is less involvement in action.

To take advantage of the collective function of oral transmission and to minimize the lack of written expression in the IDP camps, we suggest introducing theater transmission into popular education. The collective function of oral transmission gives back a participatory education. In the first phase of the program this oral transmission is warranted by scientific popularisation through videoconferences as well as audiovisual shows. In the second phase of the project we advocate transmission of knowledge through theatre.

## 4. The Pedagogical Project: Teachers and Learners on Stage

The project will do three things: provide schools with a good environment for learning through the technological solution of the inflatable tent, provide experienced and evaluated entertainment shows,

and create an intellectual emulation through video conferencing with researchers and thinkers from all over the world. The results of this experience will be witnessed among the learners through a sense of dignity and decency developing among them, children returning to a smiling childhood through laughing therapy, learners and teaching staff being supported with audiovisual resources and e-conferencing.

#### *4.1 Reintegration through Popular Education*

After having evaluated the curriculum levels for the youths and children according to their ages (6 to 13 and 14 to 17 years old) with the help of the local teachers, the second step will be to organize groups according to their level. A referent teacher will be attributed to each group. We advocate associating a group of children with a group of teenagers as the group of teenagers will be a resource for the children.

The second step involves each group working through traumas using metaphors in storytelling. Metaphors (Grove, 2004) work as interfaces between traumas and storytelling. Metaphors look like traumas but reactivate the traumas less than factual story telling. There exists a method of questioning that can help metaphors to emerge. Helpers, social workers and teachers can easily be trained in this way of questioning. Metaphors, especially in a child's world are creative and rich. This creativity and richness can be channelled in dramatic play. Lots of metaphors contain symbols that include as much cultural content as archetypal content. They allow transformation. Through experience, we have noticed that metaphors include more than the trauma. They are wider in that within a metaphor representing a trauma, there are many creative ways for transformation to occur. Even though the metaphor cannot be drawn, it can be expressed and represented thanks to tools, objects and natural things such as stones, plants, etc. The material representation of the metaphor (which represents the trauma) helps the expression and helps to relieve emotional traumas, pressure and stress.

From the knowledge available, teachers and reference adults have to decide for each group what could be the main objectives and topics. The vision is to be discussed and clarified continuously: what kind of transmission are we dealing with, who is going to transmit what to whom?

After these decisions are made, the third step is to set up theater plays. This step requires organization and refers back to the theory basis we have mentioned before: emancipating via autonomous and situated pedagogy, using mainly oral transmission in addition to a recording of the theatrical creation. A video recording could be affordable in place of someone recording the production in writing. Ideally, educational plays would then circulate inside the IDP camps for the purpose of learning *by acting* and could contain several learning levels making it a type of theater with multiple levels.

Through these three steps, each actor (pupils of all ages, teachers, parents, extended families and communities) participates in enriching the culture and the level of knowledge of the whole community. They are developing a disposition towards learning and the ability to critically reflect outside of the *traditional* or *western* way of learning. It is through what we call *Popular education* (Wiggins, 2011) that reintegration can occur. We hypothesize that the worst war traumas isolate actors from social links,

as they have to deal with their own pain. Popular education allows reconnection to the social system, at the same time improving it as each actor improves himself.

### 5. Conclusion: The Predicted Results

As a solution to the gap between UN intentions and actions relayed by UN officers, and according to the intentional discourse written in the official Communication with Communities Report (2014), we are promoting an educational project based on anthropological observations and considerations. This educational project tries to adhere to the environmental, social and cultural factors present in IDP camps and to direct pedagogy towards the emancipation and welfare of these populations. This educational project, originally oriented towards youths is now aimed at all ages and levels in IDP camps. As well as a technical solution that can move easily from one camp to another in order to reach a great number of youths in the form of a mobile multipurpose venue hosting audiovisual and other equipment, our recommendation is to propose the participation of intellectuals from all over the world who could interact through digital means as well as integrating knowledge through the youths' creative theater sessions and their *learning by doing* experiments. The presented pedagogy would represent a model of collective cultural action and exploration (Freire, 1974) as well as all facets of popular education. In this sense, popular education is a result of emancipation pedagogy, mainly based on oral transmission where all aspects of a culture and not just the mainstream academic culture are admitted, acknowledged, valued and considered worthy of being shared throughout the community. The most educated persons share their knowledge with others. This allows others to develop the ability to express themselves in their own way, to live together, to compare ideas and to share community life. The participation of each actor is necessary and helpful for the whole community culture and for the consciousness of the whole group. In this sense, popular education provides empowerment instead of withdrawal.

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#### Notes

Note 1. H.G. Raybaudo was President of the NDM-Cineaction (NPO) for more than 20 years. He is now President of the Iraq NPO. M. Ouvrard-Servanton is the current NDM-Cineaction President (NPO based in France).

Note 2. Supported by UNICEF, the first entertainment campaign took place a year and a half ago in a Yazidi camp. Retrieved from [https://www.ndm-cineaction.fr/sites/default/files/report\\_yazidi.pdf](https://www.ndm-cineaction.fr/sites/default/files/report_yazidi.pdf)