ARTEFACTS FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
with youth

Editors
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Cristina Aliagas (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

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Ediciones

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1. Introduction

The chapter explores the constructs related to education held by young people in Sierra Leone. Schooling has become widely available to children in developing countries in the last few decades. The global movement Education for All (EFA) launched in 1990 has promoted the provision of education, particularly primary schooling, to all children globally. As a result, by 2014, only 10% of children of primary school age were out of school in low and middle income countries. Especially in countries affected by conflict, such as Sierra Leone, the opportunity to attend school has expanded at a striking speed after the war, which developed during the period 1991-2002. In the country, gross enrolment rate (GER) for primary schools was merely 33% in 1985 - 6 years prior to the beginning of conflict - but it rose to 104%[1] by 2004 - only 3 years after the end of the conflict (Population Census, 1985; 2004). The total number of schools (primary and secondary) also almost doubled to 5,482 in 2007 since the end of the war (World Bank, 2007; MYES, 2001). The World Bank commends the rapid reconstruction and expansion of access to education in Sierra Leone as a <<remarkable recovery>> (World Bank, 2007: 2).

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1   This number surpasses 100% because children older than the official age group of children tend to be enrolled in schools in African countries including Sierra Leone and GER is calculated as the ratio of total enrolment *regardless of age* to the population of *the age group* that officially corresponds to the level of education.

While achieving an unprecedented expansion of access to primary education, the EFA movement has also brought great imbalances in the education sector. The lending to education as a whole has not increased much (World Bank, 2017). Therefore, the greater support for basic education through EFA has led to neglect the support for other types of education such as senior secondary, vocational or higher education (Heyneman, 2010). This has severe practical consequences: while many have access to basic education, only a tiny minority has the chance to acquire an advanced level of formal education. This means that many children end up dropping out of schooling at one level or another. In the case of Sierra Leone, while 69% of primary education pupils are expected to reach Class 6, the completion rate for Junior Secondary School is 47% and for Senior Secondary Schooling it is as low as 20% (UNESCO, 2021).

This chapter explores what schooling means to the generation of young people that has experienced the rapid expansion of basic education after the war in Sierra Leone. I will show in the chapter how formal education plays a key role in the construction of social hierarchies in which the majority of young people feel marginalised. I will do so by focusing on a rigorous analysis of data from drawings. Another purpose of the chapter is to show the usefulness of drawing in research with disadvantaged children and young people, both as a tool and a source of data. Drawings are simple and familiar artefacts even in a conflict-affected country like the case of this study and yet they allow young participants, regardless of literacy and learning abilities, to communicate abstract concepts that they hold but are difficult to verbalise. By doing so, they also promote more active engagement of disadvantaged groups of children and young people in research.

2. Methodology

Data in this chapter are drawn from seven months of fieldwork in Sierra Leone in 2009 in which I explored young people's perspectives and experiences of education and the possibility of re-occurrence of conflict there (Matsumoto, 2011, 2012). Most data were collected in Makeni town in the Northern Province. Three groups of young people with different educational experiences were the main participants in the study: 1) a group of students in Senior Secondary School (SSS) (15 participants); 2) a group of youths who were in a Technical and Vocational Education and Training

programme (TVET) (15 participants); and 3) youths who were out of school (10 participants). I met with each group once a week (sometimes dividing one group into two) for three months and, depending on the themes we tried to explore in the session, I employed different research tools, such as focus group discussions, individual interviews, and task-based activities, including drawings. It is important to note that not all participants were present in each session (the continuous, committed participation is something very difficult to achieve, especially in these fragile contexts). Therefore, for instance, the drawing data I will share in this chapter were not collected from all the 40 participants.

2.1. Participants

I selected three different groups based on educational categories because I anticipated differences in these young people's socio-economic profiles and future prospects (perceived and actual), and in their views about other groups with different educational experiences. The group of SSS students was solicited from Makeni Christian Secondary School (MCSS),[2] which fits many criteria of a *typical* school (Stake, 1995). Most of the secondary schools in Makeni are mission-based, either Islamic or Christian missions. Similarly, it is a mixed school and has both Junior Secondary School (JSS) and SSS, although it did not run a double-shift like the majority of schools in the locality. For a group of students in alternative education (TVET), I solicited participants with the help of the teachers from the Technical and Vocational Institute of Makeni (TVIM). I approached Masonry and Home Management courses taking into account gender balance as well as the fact that the teachers in those courses were very keen about my research. In Masonry, except for one female, all students were male; while in Home Management all were female. For the solicitation of out-of-school young participants, the main approach I took was to work with an organisation involved with this group of people. I chose one initiated and organised by disadvantaged children and young people and supported by an international NGO: the Forum for Empowerment of Children and Young People (FECYP). After a meeting with the group leader, who himself had completed Senior Secondary Schooling but had no prospect of continuing onto college, we came to an agreement that

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2   For ethical reasons, I use pseudonyms for institutions I worked with as well as for names of participants.

the group would select 10 participants for my study. However, there was a concern that I might bias my understanding from just interacting with FECYP participants: they are a particular group of young people interested in engaging with social action. Furthermore, the male members of the group could speak in English better than some of the participants who were in SSS level. Therefore, I eventually recruited two so-called *Okada* bike-taxi riders as participants. These young men provided an essential transportation service in Makeni. Many of the riders were considered to be ex-combatants in the period immediately after the war (Peters, 2007), and many of them were characterised as <<dropouts>> or were pupils at secondary schools (MCSS teacher, informal interview, 6 July 2009). The two *Okada* riders, Mohamed and Amadu, joined the study but in a different manner from the others, only having one-off individual interviews.

A total of 40 young people participated in the study. 22 participants were male, 18 were female, and among the girls at least three of them had children. They were in the age range between 16 and 30, the trainees at TVIM being slightly older than other groups as the institute only accepted students above 17 years of age. The educational background of those in the training centre and those out of school varied greatly from no schooling at all to completing SSS. The two main ethnicities identified were Temne and Limba as they are the major ethnic groups in the North of Sierra Leone, but the participants on the whole, especially trainees at the TVIM, were a diverse group of people in terms of ethnicity and geographical backgrounds, as some came from other parts of Sierra Leone.

2.2. The research tools

Given the context of Sierra Leone as a post-conflict country, various issues were taken into account in the selection of and development of research tools. I had anticipated that many participants —due to their experience during conflict or as a consequence of the responsibilities they have been obliged to take on— would have developed particular social and cognitive skills to an extent perhaps greater than their peers elsewhere. At the same time, the deficiency and paucity of service provision in conflict-affected areas may hinder their cognitive and social development (Hart and Tyrer, 2006). Ethnographic studies have clearly demonstrated that children and young people in such contexts can and do reflect on their own experiences, but they suggest that their competencies might be dif-

ferent from adults or from children and young people in other contexts and emphasise the importance of understanding these competencies and finding appropriate ways to research their experiences and perspectives (Boyden and de Berry, 2004; Punch, 2002). Given this, I had prepared in advance a range of participatory, child-centred tools, from which I could select and adjust as the research proceeded and I got to know the participants (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Hart and Tyrer, 2006).

I had tried out some tools in a pilot stage with a group of Junior Secondary School students. Also, I consulted about the research design and tools with a few local teachers, workers of the NGO to which I was originally attached as well as a few young people. As a result of this, for the main data gathering, I used mostly focus group discussion, individual interviews, and some simple written and visual methods as stimuli (which were followed by individual interviews). I also predetermined a series of themes to be covered although, of course, it evolved as the research progressed. In that sense, engagement of the participants in the study was rather shallow (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995, p. 1669) and it was difficult to maintain committed, continuous participation. The turnout of the pilot group towards the end of research became particularly poor. I believe that participants had an expectation of direct benefits that the study could not meet although I was transparent from the beginning about the nature and aim of the research and the benefits and rewards as I sought written consent from each participant. In the main study, I made it even clearer from the beginning, specifically mentioning the type of gifts that I would give at the end of the research process, as well as clarifying the limitations in the benefits otherwise. At the same time, I opted to set the agendas and tools on the whole, and in that way even if some missed the sessions we could still generate data (indeed, some of the out-of-school participants ended up not turning up regularly to the research sessions, and I used different formats to catch up with those who missed the sessions).

In addition, I conducted 49 interviews with key adult informants in three social roles: 1) key informants in the understanding of the relationship between education and society before and after the war at the national level (e.g. policymakers, representatives of Teachers Union, journalists); 2) informants who work closely with children and young people on a daily basis (e.g. teachers, NGO workers); and 3) informants who experienced secondary schooling immediately before the war. I also collected documents, such as statistical data on examination results and enrolment, newspaper articles related to education/schooling, educational policy

documents, reports and census data.

Both with adult and young participants I conducted the research in English, with the exception of a few youths who did not feel comfortable with English and responded in Krio, the lingua franca in the country. In these cases, I asked another participant to help translate, especially at the beginning of the fieldwork, but as I built a basic understanding of the language during my stay, I began to conduct interviews alone. For all cases, I have transcribed the interviews in English, respecting their expressions as much as possible.

2.3. Use of drawing in the research

In some sessions I used drawing as a stimulus, as an ice-breaker and to help stimulate reflection on particular themes. I had anticipated that young people, especially those who had little or no educational experience might not be able to express their ideas with traditional methods that relied on direct verbal accounts (see Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Hart and Tyrer, 2006). Drawings are considered to be useful in generating data with a greater cross-section of young people (Veale, 2005; Hart and Tyrer, 2006; Boyden and Ennew, 1997), offering an opportunity to express themselves independently of their language or learning ability (Mitchell, 2008; Pauwels and Mannay, 2020; Sandow, 1997). It is also well established that drawings are useful tools in understanding the symbolic notions children attach to social topics and issues as they reveal them in their drawings (e.g. Raty and Snellman, 1997; Raty, Komulainen, Skorokhodova, Kolesnikov, Hämäläinen, 2011; Sandow, 1997). There have been studies, for instance, that explore children's images of teachers (Weber and Mitchell, 2002), notions of an intelligent person (Raty and Snellman, 1997; Raty *et al.*, 2011), or perceptions of illness (Williams, 1998). Compared to other visual methods, the simplicity and accessibility of drawing as a research tool (essentially just needing a pencil and paper) is also recognized in researching with children and youths in contexts where the available or familiar resources to the participants are limited, such as in developing countries (e.g. Mitchell, 2011; Veale, 2005).

In my study, drawings were particularly useful in approaching the constructs related to education that the young people held. I asked each participant to draw <<habits>> (at first I used the word <<image>> but it was difficult

for them to understand) of <<educated person>>, <<uneducated person>>, and <<teacher>>. I also asked them to make a list of characteristics of each person along with their drawings. I decided to use drawing as a tool after I had difficulty exploring the implications of being educated orally with a few TVET trainees. It was difficult for them to understand what I was asking and it was difficult for me also to formulate questions. I gave a sheet of paper (A4 size) to each participant to draw <<habits>> of an educated person and an uneducated person on one occasion, and on another occasion, I asked them to draw <<habits>> of a teacher. Then, with each participant I conducted an individual interview, asking them about what he or she had drawn.

The method was inspired by a well-being exercise (Armstrong, Boyden, Galappatti and Hart, 2004; Hart and Tyrer, 2006), a method that elicits features that participants associate with well-being. Although they did it collectively, having a FGD, in my research, I have used an individual interview as a follow-up to the drawing activity. In the pilot stage, I used FGDs on many occasions, and it was useful to get a general understanding about issues and the context that surround the young people there; but I was not able to get in-depth insights on them, including their personal experiences or perspectives. Therefore, in the main stage I used individual interviews–including as a follow-up to the drawing activity–more than FGDs.[3]

Another visual method that was useful but I did not develop much was a social map exercise in which participants drew and wrote down people and places they visited regularly (Armstrong *et al.*, 2004; Hart and Tyrer, 2006). I wanted to understand how schooling or training centres and people associated with them–e.g. teachers, administrators, and friends from school, etc.–fitted into their lives. I did not conduct an interview using the map they created as the direct prompt although I asked them orally or in writing about what they did before and after school/training separately.

There were two considerations that I took into account in using visual methods. One was the participants' level of comfort with drawing. Lack

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3   Perhaps counter-intuitively the <<impersonal>> and collective nature of FGDs was rather useful in getting the participants' perspectives on sensitive issues (i.e. about commercial sex work or their views regarding the recurrence of conflict in the country). Although I did not plan to have a FGD on commercial sex work, in one FGD session with the TVET trainees in Home Management, the discussion started to touch on it and developed. I suppose that the combination of the collective nature of the FGDs and the established rapport with me and between them helped the participants feel safe talking about the issue in a general way, without the need to relate the discussion to their personal lives.

of a sense of artistic competence was anticipated and did in fact restrict some of the participants from freely expressing themselves. This seemed to be related to the educational level of participants, as females who were out of school or in TVIM yet with little previous schooling expressed their discomfort with the method. Nevertheless, in the end, all who were at the session with drawings have done it. The second consideration regarded the analysis and interpretation of the visual products. I anticipated a possible difficulty to interpret and analyse participants' visual works as stand-alone pieces of data (Veale, 2005). Without additional information, drawings are more <<open>> than language-based data and there is a risk of over- or mis-interpretation by the researcher (Literat, 2013). It is more so in the case when the cultural background of the participants is different from the researcher, as in this study (Literat, 2013). Therefore, I conducted follow-up interviews; I asked participants to produce verbal accounts of their visual representation, not leaving the visual works as the only data about the themes I explored. Finally, I have analysed the generated data both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, I have coded the features that appear in the drawings following the method by Raty and Snellman (1997) and Raty *et al.* (2011). I have also looked at the drawings qualitatively, putting them in the context and circumstances of the participants and analysed alongside the interview data and (when available) the written data.[4] I further corroborated my interpretations with other interview data generated in another session; for instance, in relation to the implication of being educated, I asked what they could do with education and what they could not do without it, etc. in another session. Engaging with participants from fragile socio-political settings such as Sierra Leone in the aftermath of civil conflict, it was important to triangulate their accounts not only through different methods but also on different occasions. It took time and effort to build rapport and get authentic accounts as there are great risks of getting false or exaggerated accounts without it (Hart and Tyrer, 2006; Utas, 2004). Indeed, this was the case in the study. For example, a couple of female participants (Zainab and Binta) told me in the initial individual interviews with them that it was their parents who paid their fees for the school. However, towards the end of my fieldwork, as I walked home with them after a regular research session, they told me that it was their boyfriends who paid their fees (Fieldnote, 12 November 2008).

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4   As writing depends on the participants' literacy levels and English abilities, for those who did not feel comfortable in writing (even in the form of making lists), I asked the same questions orally.

3. Constructs related to education held by young people in Makeni

I will show below how, on one hand, young participants described formal education as the <<key to success>> and how, on the other hand, formal education is found to play a key role in the construction of social hierarchies. The division created by formal education was sharply visualised in the drawings participants produced in the research process. The drawings of an educated person reveal how participants perceive the educated as of a high social status, depicted with formal clothing, while those who are not educated were visualised without decent clothes or shoes. The study also reveals how the majority who do not reach this level of education feel marginalised in society.

3.1. Background

The Republic of Sierra Leone is a small country on the coast of West Africa with an estimated population of a little over six million (World Bank, 2016). The civil war that raged in 1991 by a rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), had lasted a decade and left a catastrophic effect on the country. It is still classified as a low-income country by development agencies and ranks as the 179th country out of 187 countries in the latest Human Development Index (UNDP, 2016).

Makeni is the capital of Bombali district and has a population of 125,970 according to the 2015 Population Census (Statistics of Sierra Leone, 2016). After the conflict many children who were deeply affected by the conflict, especially ex-combatants, remained and still reside in Makeni and in surrounding towns in the Northern Province. Historically, the Northern Province has been a deprived area and this includes the provision of educational services. As Makeni is the largest city in the Northern Province and the fifth largest city in Sierra Leone, young people from rural areas came to Makeni seeking educational and other opportunities before the conflict and continue to do so afterwards. The population in Makeni is ethnically diverse, with the largest ethnic groups being Temne and Limba in contrast to the Southern Province that is predominantly occupied by the Mende ethnic group.

Most of the participants belonged to large families with little education. Many of them had four to six siblings, while some had more. For

instance, Mohammed, one of the bike-taxi riders, had 14 siblings. Most belonged to the first generation to receive formal schooling. Even among their brothers and sisters, some were not attending school, having dropped out of the system or had not been enrolled at all. In the case of Mohammed, three younger sisters and one brother were in school at the time of fieldwork, while other older brothers and a sister had left school at primary or JSS levels, except for one older sister who went on to college. A similar case is Musu whose parents made a deliberate choice to focus their resources on sending their eldest son to Fourah Bay College −the most respected university in Sierra Leone−, while the education of their other children, including that of her, was neglected. Musu had to stop schooling at Class 6 as her mother told her there was no more money for her education.

All the participants had some familial responsibilities as well as some time for leisure. Among those attending the SSS or the TVET institute, most of them did some domestic work earlier in the day −such as washing dishes, sweeping, and fetching water (there was no running water or electricity in Makeni at the time of the fieldwork)− while some of them went out afterwards to do or find a part-time job to earn some money or just to be able to eat something that day. Among the out-of-school participants, some grew vegetables in their gardens or on farms, some sold goods at markets, and some females were in charge of getting ingredients at market and cooking for the family. For their leisure time, the young people spent time playing or watching football, going to the cinema, meeting with others at an *ataya-base* (rough shelters where young people, many unemployed, sit around and drink Chinese herbal tea known as *ataya*), or spending time at a friend's house. For many, religious activities such as going to church or to the mosque appeared to be an equally significant part of their lives. These places −mosque/church, a friend's house, market, *ataya*, cinema, football field, etc. as well as schools or TVET centres for those who attend them− were captured in the social maps I asked them to draw at the initial stage of our encounters. For example, a social map drawn by Fanta, a female TVET trainee, captures mosque, market, football field, and garden as well as her house and the TVIM, as essential places for her (see Figure 1 below).
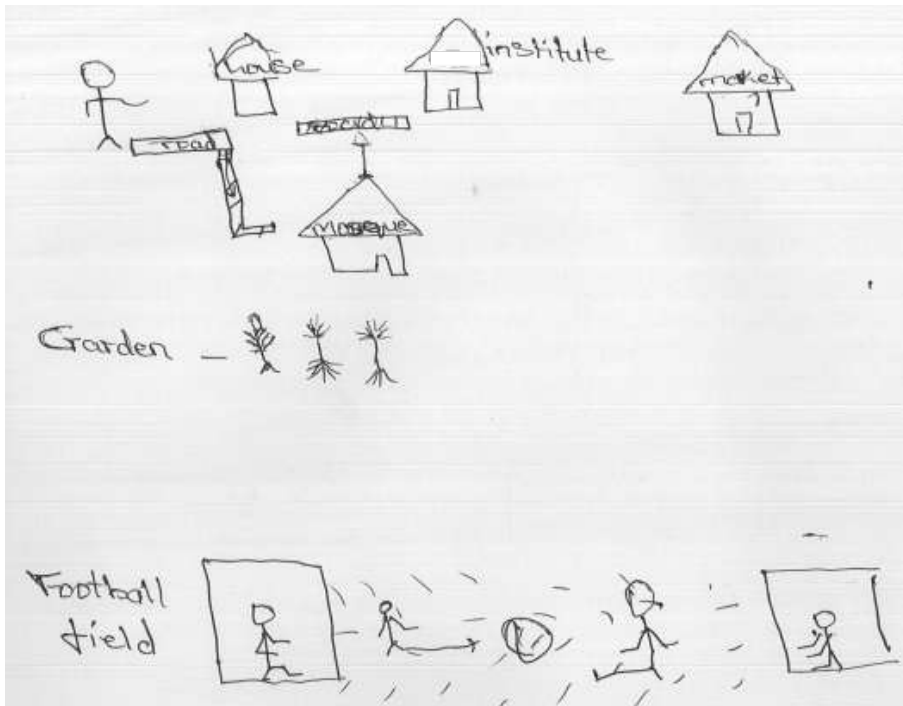
Figure 1: Social map drawn by Fanta, a female TVET trainee

3.2. Education as the <<key to success>> only available to those who have <<an opportunity>>

Young people perceive education as essential to economic and social mobility, often using the expression that education is <<the key to success>>. For example, Musa, who completed SSS but had no prospects of going to college stated: <<Education is the light and key to success... you need to learn before, then you will be lucky to have a job>>. Many SSS pupils believe that they can achieve their lofty dreams with a university degree, such as becoming a lawyer, a doctor, a bank manager, and an NGO worker. Young people also perceived the advantages of educated people through the experience of the war. For instance, Musa's father used to be a rich businessman, going to trade in Guinea, but most of his properties, including his machinery and cars, were destroyed or raided by the rebels. Now the family lives in poverty without any prospect of restarting the business. Musa said.

<<If [my father] had been educated, after the process, let me say, he can go to any institution to apply himself, and maybe he can have a job and then be able to cater for us, but now just look at him. He doesn't have enough money to further my education. That is why people who are educated are better than those who are not educated>>.

Musa felt that the reason his father was unable to find a job after the war and his family is facing poverty is because the father lacks education. Whether or not this is a realistic view is a different matter, however, considering the scarcity of employment in the present Sierra Leone.

At the same time, the young people consider that education is only available to those who have <<an opportunity>>. The young participants –both those who are in schooling or training and those who are out of school– expressed that only those who have <<an opportunity>> can go up the ladder of the academic stream. Ibrahim, when asked about friends who are out of school, answered.

<<I don't feel good, because I am coming to school every day but they don't have that opportunity. They want to educate [get educated] but because of financial reason or [not having] somebody to help them [they can't come to school]>>.

This idea is related to the conception of <<being educated>> in the country equalling getting a <<paper>> or tertiary level of education degree. For instance, James, an SSS student in the commercial stream, described how, <<[by] getting a paper from college, you are considered to be educated. People are fighting for this paper>>. The SLTU President further elaborated on the meaning of <<being educated>> in Sierra Leonean society.

<<[It means] graduates of university, first degree. Having second and third degree are additional one. [It means] having higher positions, being lecturers. Those who have teaching certificate (TC) are not considered. HTC is middle… The WASSCE level are just considered as those who know how to write your name, but not considered as educated. That makes a big difference. That is why all the brothers fight to get there. Educated means you went to a university>.

These comments suggest that to reach the status of <<being educated>> one would need to get a university degree, and the young people in the country prefer to stay in the formal education track, not TVET. Indeed, the majority of the young people in the study did not want to go to TVET even if they cannot continue formal education (Matsumoto, 2018). Partly, this is because of the lower status that is associated with TVET in Sierra Leonean society. Another linked problem is that many have an excessive expectation

that one day they will be able to get a higher level of education. This was observed in the lack of alternatives to not getting the higher level of education, despite the very limited access to tertiary institutions in the country (see the following section). When asked about alternatives, young people's most frequent responses were that they would work as a teacher or find another job as a temporary alternative (or <<as a waiting room>> in their words) and save money to be able to go to college later on. Most pupils did not look beyond educational credentials into such options as starting a business. Out-of-school young people as well, except for one female, expressed a desire to go back to formal schooling or proceed to college.[5] Only those young people who were receiving TVET mentioned that they wanted to start a business or find a job with the skills they had learned. This does not mean that all of the trainees have disregarded the option of furthering their education if an opportunity becomes available; some did mention to me that they wanted to go back to formal schooling or proceed to a college (see Matsumoto, 2018).

Behind the concept of <<being educated>> equalling a university degree in Sierra Leone are scarce employment opportunities for those without it. Mohamed and Amadu, two out-of-school young men who participated in the study, exemplify the reality of the country where scarce employment exists without tertiary education qualification. They are so-called *Okada* bike-taxi riders. Both failed the WASSCE twice. Mohamed has been working as a motorbike taxi driver ever since he entered JSS in order to fund himself to continue schooling. Mohamed wants to go to a college to read for a Higher Teaching Certificate to be qualified to teach at secondary levels, but explains that this would only be possible by bribing a lecturer with 300,000 Leones (75 USD), which he does not have. Like Mohamed and Amadu, without at least being qualified to enter tertiary education, opportunities for employment and engagement in society, beyond jobs like driving a motorcycle taxi, remain limited for young people. A number of adult respondents shared the concern for young people like Mohamed and Amadu who have not achieved sufficient qualifications and thus have limited employment prospects. The President of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) commented.

> <<One thing it does is that it makes people not too qualified or not too skilled to be employed at offices where they would love to work, but then they are

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5   Aisha, who does not want formal schooling, told me that she was a <<big person>> to go back. Instead, she wants to receive skills training if an opportunity arises. She was 18 years old at the time of the fieldwork and had a son.

left to labour or manual jobs, which they don't earn much or not even much available>>.

Thus, formal education is perceived to have powerful social significance in Sierra Leone. However, it is another question −and outside the scope of this chapter− whether in reality it is meeting people's expectations; in other words, if those who got the university degree in reality acquire the kind of jobs they expect to get upon graduation (see Matsumoto, 2018). It should also be noted that young people are aware that credentials alone do not determine social, economic and/or political mobility; these have to be coupled with what they call *sababu*, a connection with an influential person in society. For example, Josephine, a student at TVIM, who had worked as a commercial sex worker in the past and has a son, said: <<sometimes you may be well educated but if you don't have strong relationship they won't consider you. In fact, somebody in the office will tear up and throw away your application>>. The importance of *sababu* in getting employment was recognised, however, it was not considered as an alternative to education to achieving success. Rather, it was something to be combined with educational credentials. For example, Jamal, a student in Masonry who came to TVIM after taking WASSCE and a Limba by ethnicity, told me that even if a particular office does not take him due to a lack of *sababu*, he believes that he can get employment in other places based on the knowledge and certificate. This is because, he mentioned, education is <<inside>> him, meaning that he has knowledge that nobody can take away from him and that is not dependent on circumstantial issues, i.e. relationships with other people. He also raised a point that if somebody gets hired due to *sababu* but lacking the appropriate skills or education then he or she will not be able to do the job and hold it, like teaching. In addition, many informants suggested schooling as a way, often as a superior way, to family or ethnicity, to acquire <<good>> *sababu*. This also points to the connections between education and *sababu* and that both are perceived to be important in regard to the socioeconomic mobility of young people.

3.3. A sense of marginalisation of youths who do not reach the status of <<being educated>

<<Being educated>> as equivalent to receiving a degree from university in the country suggests that the majority do not reach this status. It

is difficult to get an accurate picture of the situation regarding access to tertiary education in a country such as Sierra Leone. However, clearly only a tiny proportion of the population reaches this level of education. Some statistics suggest that tertiary education enrollment in the whole country in the 2010-2011 academic year was 25,633 (UNESCO, 2013, p.17), and the Gross Enrolment Ratio was merely 2.1% in 2006 (DACO, 2008). This means that education is a key to success available only to a small minority and, as I will show below, the majority who do not reach the status of being educated feel marginalised in society.

The findings generated by using drawings reveal how young partici-pants, who themselves have not reached the status of <<being educated>>, devalued non-educated people. The picture of the habits of an educated person and a non-educated person and the list of characteristics of each written down alongside the drawing reveal a stark contrast between the two types of persons. The images of an educated person are perceived as of high social status, with formal clothing and with some objects related to study and teaching (books, pens, a bag). In contrast, uneducated individu-als are often viewed as farmers with agriculture related tools and objects and without decent clothes or shoes (see the Table 1 below for the quan-titative analysis of the drawings).

	Educated person	**Uneducated person**
Gender	• 14 male, 8 female, 5 indistinguishable	• 9 male, 8 female, 10 indistinguishable
Clothing	• 17 with a shirt - among them 10 drew the shirt with buttons, collars, or a tie - among them, in addition to the shirt, 12 drew trousers or a skirt • 4 with a long piece of clothing • 6 without recognisable clothing	• 10 with a long piece of clothing • 7 with a shirt and a pair of trousers or a skirt • 10 without recognisable clothing
Accessories / features	• 5 with belts • 1 with glasses • 1 with a necklace, earrings, and bracelets • 1 with a hat	• 3 with beard • 1 with earrings

Shoes	• 9 with decent shoes • 9 without shoes • 9 indistinguishable	• 12 without shoes • 1 with sandals • 14 indistinguishable
Other objects in the drawing	• 13 with books • 1 with a desk and a chair • 6 with a pen • 3 with a bag • 3 with a blackboard 6 without any object*	• 12 with agriculture related tools • 5 carrying something on head, such as wood or a container • 1 with a cigarette, a desk and a chair 9 without any objects
Specification of occupation	• 6 Teachers • 2 lawyer • 2 bank manager • 2 agriculturalist • 1 government official • 1 office worker • 18 without specification of occupation	• 10 Farmers • 2 Fisherman • 2 Hunter • 2 Trader/business-person • 1 Tailor • 1 Carpenter • 1 gardener • 14 without specification of occupation

Table 1: Quantitative analysis of the 27 drawings of an educated person and an uneducated person portrayed by the young participants[6]

For instance, Figure 2 below is a drawing by Isatu, an SSS pupil in the Commercial Stream. Her drawing of an educated person has decent formal clothing (with a shirt that has buttons and pockets, and a pair of trousers) and shoes. In contrast, her drawing of an uneducated person titled <<Illiterate>> has a long piece of clothing without shoes. The <<primitive>> image of the uneducated and its contrast to the image of the educated was most strikingly visualised in the drawing by Abdul, a male SSS pupil (see Figure 3 below); the person titled <<uneducated man>> is drawn with a scruffy beard and hair, and his face and the piece of clothes he wears looks unclean. In an accompanied writing, Abdul writes <<He [an uneducated man] may some time[s] be clean or dirty because he do[es] not larn [learn]

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6   Among the 27 drawings, 11 drawings are by SSS pupils, 9 by TVET trainees, 6 by out-of-school youth, and 1 without identification. As mentioned earlier, not all participants attended the drawing session; as a result the sample of drawings is smaller than the total number of participants. The analysis is based on the visual as well as the writing produced by the participants on the same piece of paper. Some drawings had more than one indication. Therefore, the sum of the total number exceeds the number of the drawings.

about cleaningness [cleanliness]... He dress[es] badly because he do[has] not larnt [learnt] about dressing code>>. Similarly, being dirty was commented as a feature of an uneducated in a follow-up interview by Musu, who stopped going to school when she finished her primary education. In addition, different gender tended to be assigned to the educated and the uneducated although I did not give specific instruction about this; as in Fatmata's case, an educated person was more often drawn and/or specified in writing as a man, than in the cases of an uneducated person. In four drawings, including Fatmata's, there were considerable size differences in the drawings: the one of an educated person always larger than an uneducated. It might imply the difference in status −the educated being drawn-larger suggesting the higher or better status associated with it[7]− but I did not verify this with the participants who drew them.
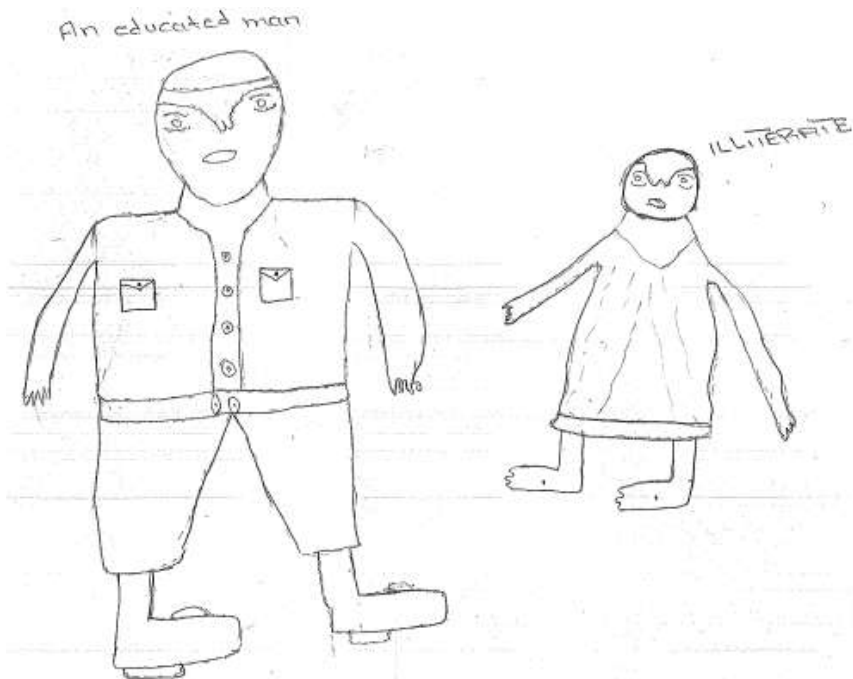
Figure 2: Drawing by Isatu, an SSS pupil, of <<An educated man>> and <<Illiterate>.

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7   For instance, Burns and Kaufman (1972), analysing children's kinetic drawings of family, suggest that the size of a drawing has implications in relation to a diminished or exaggerated sense of Self.

**Figure 3: Drawing by Abdul, a male SSS pupil, of the uneducated person,
titled <<Uneducated man>>**

The differences in occupations were also revealed through the writing accompanying the drawings. In some of the drawings, as in Figure 4 below drawn by Marai (a trainee in Home Management), an occupation was specified in writing. As in her drawing, the most frequently mentioned occupation for an educated person was a teacher, while for an uneducated person the most commonly listed occupation was a farmer. In line with the drawings, many young people named farmer and trader in interviews when asked about what occupations could be achieved without becoming <<educated>>. In relation to the types of occupations indicated in the drawing, many drawings of the uneducated are visualised as engaged in physical labour. They are bending knees, holding an agriculture related tool, as in Figure 4, or some are carrying materials on their heads, as in Figure 5. On the other hand, the educated person was often drawn motionless, mostly in a standing position, as in Figure 2 above, or in a few cases they are visualised as reading a book or sitting on a chair.

Figure 4: Drawing by Marai, a trainee in Home Management

Figure 5: Drawing of an uneducated person by Alpha, a trainee in Masonry

The participants' writings and follow-up interviews further elucidated the conceptual differences they built for the educated and the uneducated individuals. In addition to associating the educated with being literate and intelligent, comments related to a higher social status of an educated person were expressed: such as being <<s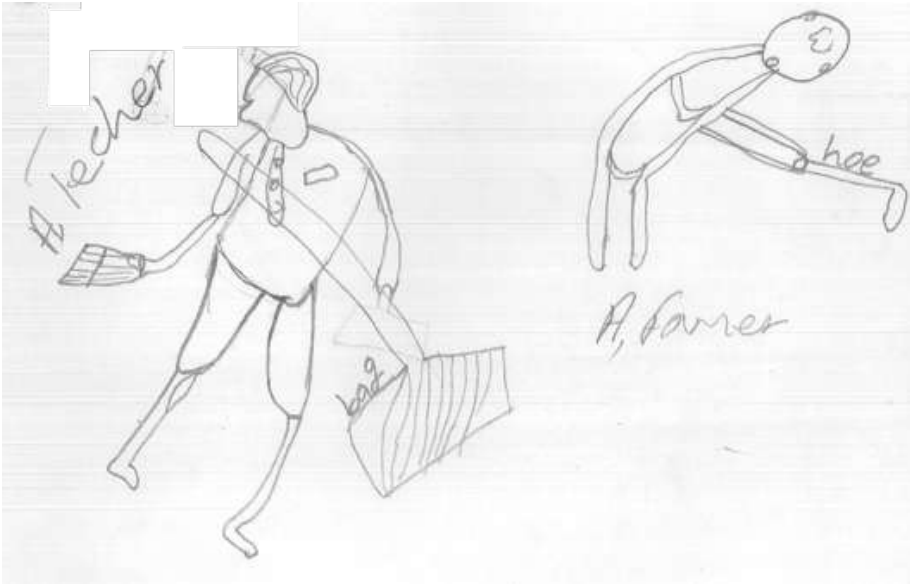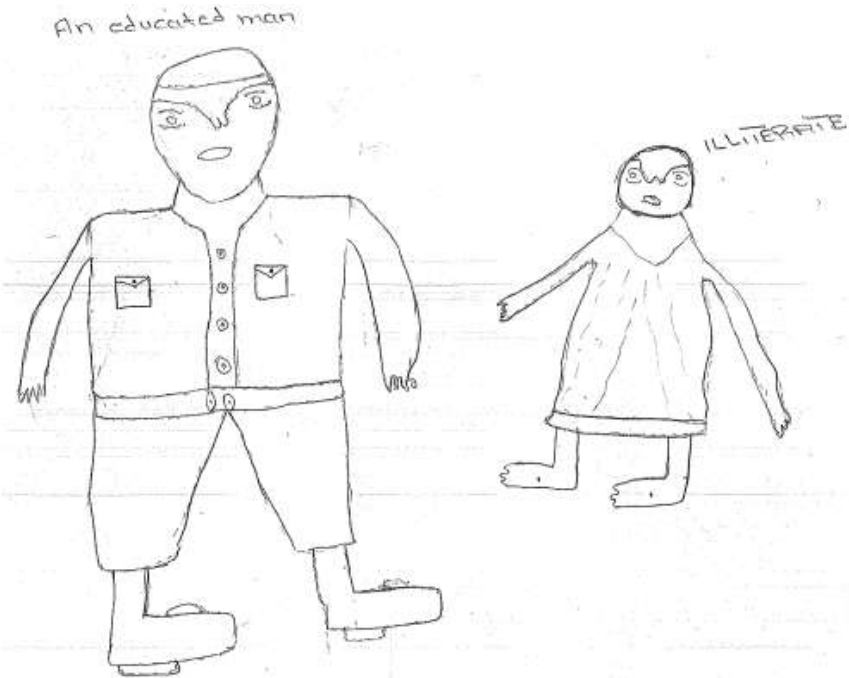uccessful>> (Mariama, SSS), <<gentry>> (Mariama, SSS), and <<famous and respectable>> (Lamin, Out of School). Many similarly associated the educated with having <<a good job>> (e.g. Henry, SSS), typically meaning office work with a salary (e.g. Yusuf, out of school). There are also many comments that associate the educated with being moral −knowing and abiding by the law (e.g. Mariama, SSS; Jamal, TVET)−, civilised −such as having good manners and solving conflicts peacefully (e.g. Isata, SSS; Zainab, SSS)−, and also associated with being a contributive member of society− i.e. helping community and nation as well as family (e.g. Mary, Home and Economics course in TVET; Musa, Out of School).

While the majority of the comments related to the educated connote positive features as such, there were also some negative comments about it. They were mainly related to corruption and <<being proud>>. In terms of corruption, it referred to embezzlement of funds (James, SSS) or to bribery (Mary, TVET). The word <<proud>> was used mostly with a negative connotation to describe arrogance demonstrated by some educated people (e.g. Paul, TVET; Fanta, TVET). Paul elaborated on those <<proud>> of their higher level of education in an interview.

> <<Some [educated] feel proud. He doesn't interrogate [converse] with non-educated friends. Some... don't like to pay them visit[s] or get accompanied or associated with. As soon as you have [he has] degree, he will say I am above you>>.

In addition to negative comments made directly about the category of educated persons, the study also captured a complex conception of teachers held by young people. While the idea of a teacher was presented as the epitome of an educated person by many, at the same time, the profession was only considered as a temporary alternative to a more preferable (or a better paid) job. Not only that, the study revealed instances of teachers' low professional standards, such as petty corruption, corporal punishment and sexual harassment. These were commented on in various encounters, but most significantly when I asked about the <<habits>> or image of teachers or through a drawing activity. For instance, the drawing and the accompanying writing by Peter (SSS) titled <<Mr. Pain!! A weak teacher!!>> represents the antipathetic view

of the teacher by participants (Figure 6 below). His writing shows how a teacher uses corporal punishment against him if he misses school and also the inappropriate language used towards pupils. There is no space to elaborate on the findings fully here (see more in Matsumoto, 2012), so I will just focus on the practice of petty corruption. Young people commented that teachers requested and received extra money (such as for marking their assignments and giving extra classes) or received items, such as soap and toothpaste (e.g. Dauda, out-of-school). Teachers were also seen as giving higher marks to and passing pupils in exchange for money. For example, Zainab (SSS in the commercial stream) described teachers as <<wicked>>.

> <<Now… teachers love money. In exams time if you don't make it up they ask you [for] money. If you don't have money they fail you… If your parents don't have money you suffer>>.

Teachers' low professionalism is also revealed in the study when the participants were asked about their role models. Only five young people singled out their teachers as their role models while the rest (35 participants) listed other people, most often family members who supported them. Some, when asked directly, actively rejected the idea that teachers were role models. Teachers' low moral standards were also recognised as a factor for the poor performance in the standardised examinations at secondary school levels (Gbamanja, 2010) and they also contributed to the creation of *The Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel in Sierra Leone* by Teachers Union (SLTU, 2009).

Some adult informants suggested that the negative views held by young people reflect a significant shift in the representation of teachers in Sierra Leonean society. Teachers traditionally used to be the main role models in the country (e.g. President of SLTU, Interview, 25 October 2009; District Chairman of Principals Conference, Interview, 29 September 2009; Director of a university in Makeni, Interview, 5 September 2009). The shift in the conception was attributed partly to the reign of Stevens, in which corrupt practices permeated to the teaching profession (e.g. Director of Peace and Conflict Studies at a university in Freetown, Interview, 15 December 2009). This state of affairs was accentuated by the experience of conflict; moral sensibilities were degenerated by the conflict, including those of the teachers (e.g. Interview, Director of a university in Makeni, 5 September 2009).

The drawing contains the following handwritten text:

Mr. Pain!! A weak teacher!!

3RD CHARACTERISTIC OF A TEACHER
this teacher is bad simply because he alway talk ash or bad word to school pupils, and at any time & fail to come to school at any come back - he will punish me very well

STUPID TEACHE A WEAKE TEACHER
AlSO.

I don't like him or see him at all he is ugly weaked any way.

When I beg him he cannot for give me at all unless he punish me, at that time his heart will have to cool.

Figure 6: Drawing of teacher by Peter (SSS pupil) titled <<Mr. Pain!! A weak teacher!!>>

Nevertheless, on the whole, we can say that a positive image was held about the educated person. In contrast, the comments on an uneducated person were predominantly negative. There were, as expected, comments regarding being illiterate/ ignorant, holding low social status and not having enough money. In addition, many described an uneducated person with undesirable characters, using expressions such as <<wicked>> (Samuel, SSS), <<indisciplined>> (James, SSS), <<no respect to others>> (e.g. Henry, SSS), <<no respect for the law>> (Mariama, SSS), and <<stubborn>> (elaborating what he means by saying <<I tried to show a solution but they

don't agree>> (Samuel, SSS). There was only one positive comment about an uneducated person around his/her generous nature: <<If you harvest they give them to relatives and people around them. They offer things>> (Jalikatu, SSS). Another positive feature of the uneducated, not directly mentioned as such but apparent from the drawings and their comments is that they are considered to be hardworking. As discussed above, they are visualised to be conducting physical labour, and often they are associated with being a farmer or a trader. Indeed, there was only one comment (i.e. Zainab, SSS) that stated an uneducated to be without a job and sit idle. This establishes a distinction from the status of <<dropouts>> who are often commented to be sitting idle without having any work to do (e.g. Local Unit Commander of the Makeni police, Interview, 25 November 2009).

In addition to the predominantly negative construction of an uneducated person, the study further revealed a sense of shame and inferiority assumed by the <<uneducated>> participants in the study. This partially came out when I asked participants who themselves would be categorised as such in the Sierra Leonean standards to comment on the features of an uneducated person after the drawing activity. For instance, Alexis, who completed SSS but did not have prospects to go to college, commented: <<the person is always afraid of meeting elders or dignities, because they feel like they are failures>>. Similarly, Jacob, a TVET trainee, said: <<When he or she is talking to people he fears. He or she will not be able to talk to people>>. More directly, the out-of-school and TVET trainee participants expressed their sense of inferiority responding to the question of what they can and cannot do without education. There was a long list of what they could not do. For example, Musu, who dropped out of schooling after completing primary school, stated.

> <<I won't be able to help others and can't play a role in the family. I can't talk to colleagues and other people with confidence... Just have the fear that maybe if you talk to somebody who is educated they won't listen to me... [or] not interested in talking with me without education>>.[8]

This list appears to include basic things that one should feel one is able to do as a member of society, such as talking to others with confidence. Furthermore, when I asked the out-of-school participants what they do every day, they often replied to me saying that they do <<nothing>>. For instance, Dauda said <<nothing. At times I am at home, go out. During weekend,

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8 This interview was partially interpreted from Krio to English by Alexis, another participant in the study.

go for watching film or football games. I go to mosque five times a day>>. These comments seem to suggest that they feel they are not doing anything <<meaningful>>, that is education or work. There was another occasion that drew my attention to how society may be marginalising children and young people who do not reach the status of an educated person, perhaps even without intending to do so. This was when I joined a radio discussion on the importance of education hosted by the Forum for Empowerment of Children and Young People (FECYP) to which some out-of-school participants in the study belong. This organisation held a weekly radio program trying to educate children on different topics, including how to prevent and treat diarrhoea and I had attended several recordings of the programme as an observer. A community worker at the radio station joined the discussion on the importance of education, but in doing so she made the comment that he or she is <<nothing to the community>> if a person is not educated.

In summary, despite the fact that very few people manage to proceed to university level, the conception of <<being educated>> only encompasses those who have received a <<paper>> from a tertiary institution in Sierra Leone. This is an understandable phenomenon in view of the scanty employment opportunities in the country; because the opportunities for employment are so scarce, one needs to have exceptionally high credentials to seize the opportunities. Nevertheless, the problem is that such representation of <<being educated>> is found to result in socially marginalising the majority of young people. That is, those who are not able to climb the education ladder to the tertiary level are considered to be mere dropouts. The study revealed the stark contrast, especially through the drawings, between the constructs of an educated and an uneducated person in this context. Further, it demonstrated the sense of shame and inferiority felt by young people who do not reach the status of being <<educated>>.

4. Reflections on the use of drawings as part of a participatory methodology with disadvantaged children and youth

Drawing has added important value to the study in two ways: as a tool and as a source of data. As a tool, it functioned as a stimulus, promoting participant's reflection on abstract concepts which were difficult to explore verbally directly. This was most evidently demonstrated in the exploration of the constructs of <<an educated person>> and <<an uneducated person>> held by participants. As mentioned, when I tried to ask

questions on the subject verbally, participants did not quite understand what I wanted to ask, but everyone understood the simple instruction to <<draw the habits of an educated person and an uneducated person>>. The concrete nature of the task of drawing helped participants to think through the constructs they have around <<being educated>>, regardless of the visual outcome of their thinking. Therefore, even when they were asked orally in the follow-up interview about the drawings, they were able to share their constructs more completely and deeply. In short, the task enabled participants to share their constructs around being educated with me in different ways, visually in drawing, in writing and/or through oral explanations.

As a result, the drawing activity promoted more active engagement of participants in the project. If we follow Shier's model (2001) to gauge the degree of collaboration, we can say that drawing helped bring up the level of participation in study; from Level 1, <<Children are listened to>>, to Level 2 where <<Children are supported in expressing their views>> (p. 111). In Level 1 children and youth are listened to only when children take the initiative to express a view in the research or intervention project in which they are involved. Level 2 requires that researchers or workers take positive action to enable children or youth to express a view, removing the barriers that may be hindering them to do so. In this study, drawings were one of the essential tools that helped remove barriers, enabling young people to share their constructs around education with the researcher.

As a source of data, the drawing generated through the research process also adds important value to the study. Raty *et al.* (2011) remind us that <<a picture is worth a thousand words>>. Drawings provided visual evidence that expressed young people's conceptions more powerfully and clearly than their verbal accounts. Abdul's drawing (Figure 3) exemplifies this: his drawing of the uneducated person strikes the reader with the primitive image drawn, in a sharp contrast to the civilised image of the educated person drawn by him (not represented in the figure). Also, the objects drawn in the pictures contributed to a more systematic understanding of the constructs in the context around an educated person, an uneducated person, and teacher. As analysed quantitatively, the presence/absence of certain objects −such as the presence of artefacts related to agriculture and lack of shoes for the uneducated while the presence of books and decent shoes in the images of the educated−, substantiate the stark difference in the status between the educated and the uneducated in the context of Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, in combination with other types of data sources, drawing data helped approach participants' perspectives multi-modally across a greater cross-section of young people. The project generated three kinds of data on the same topic: visual (through drawings), oral (through the follow-up interviews), and writing (through the accompanying writing). This meant that, on one hand, the participants were able to share in the drawing what they may have found difficult to express orally or in the form of writing (such as the holistic image of the educated, detailing the type of clothes, artefacts etc.). On the other hand, they could describe orally or in writing what they could not express in the drawing (e.g. profession).

The study therefore concurs with the claims in the existing literature that we should work with drawing in combination with complementary interviews and/or writing (Mitchell, 2011; Literat, 2013; Veale, 2005; Punch, 2002). In the study, the combination allowed not only active engagement of young people and generation of multi-layered data sources on the same topic, but also helped counter the drawbacks that drawing can have as a research method. One risk is that the drawing data could be misinterpreted, particularly when the researcher has a different cultural background from that of the participants. For instance, the distinction of gender was difficult if we just relied on the visual image. However, the participants' accompanying writing or oral accounts clarified the issue in various cases.

The other drawback that has been countered through a follow-up interview and/or writing is when the produced drawing was not very informative as a visual source of data. For instance, there were cases where the drawing of an educated and an uneducated are practically the same. For example, the only difference between the drawings made by Henry of the educated person and the uneducated person is what they have in their hands (see Figure 7 below): while the educated individual seemingly holds a book, the uneducated individual looks to be holding a kind of a tool. However, his complementary writing describes different features of the two images. While the educated person has a good job, speaks good English and supports the family (feeding, and reading and writing), he describes the uneducated person as someone who does not have <<big money>> because he has a practical job and always depends on an interpreter because he cannot speak English. There were also cases where the drawings were not well developed and could not be interpreted. This was especially the case with the participants who had no schooling (or very little), such as Kadiatu. However, having a chance to talk with participants afterwards gave them the opportunity to verbally explain the images they

had drawn - more importantly, the images they wanted to draw. As discussed above, even if the drawing as a visual artefact was not very informative the task of drawing was effective: it facilitated participants to think through the constructs they have on their own, helping them to orally convey these ideas to the researcher afterwards.
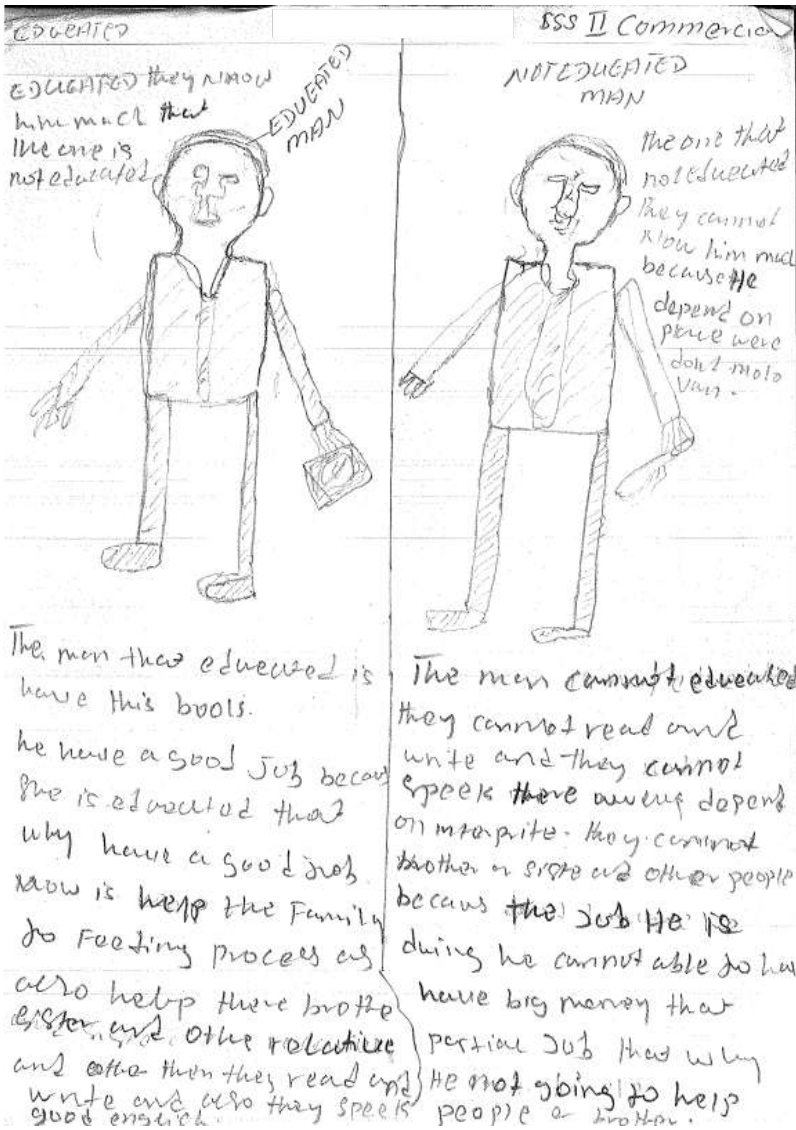

Figure 7: Drawings and the accompanying writing by Henry (SSS pupil) of educated and uneducated persons

5. Concluding thoughts

The chapter explored the meaning of schooling using drawing as a research tool, and it suggests how formal education is contributing to socially marginalising the majority of young people. In a context where the majority of young people end up in the status of mere <<uneducated>>, simply expanding basic education does not seem to help counter the problem. Rather, it increases the number of <<dropouts>> who continue to seek the opportunity to go back into the formal education track, and as long as they cannot reach the university level they go on feeling devalued in society. Having said that, I am not advocating a simple expansion of access up to tertiary education either, as the solution does not lie there. Indeed, it is beyond the scope of the chapter to suggest a specific education policy to tackle the problem. Nevertheless, what it suggests is for a policy to take into account the beneficiaries' perspectives and what education means in context. Without doing so, a policy designed with good intentions may have undesirable effects in society, as discussed in the chapter.

From a methodological perspective, the chapter has demonstrated advantages of using drawing in participatory research with disadvantaged young people, both as a tool and a data source. It is a simple, low-cost and familiar artefact that could be applied even in conflict affected countries. Despite its extreme simplicity, there are more ways to take advantage of the method, for example, adding colour pencils available to participants and including their use of colour in the analysis. In addition, although it was not suitable at the time of my fieldwork, it would be interesting to consider using photographs as another visual method in such contexts with the proliferation of smartphones in recent years (e.g. Poveda, Matsumoto, Morgade and Alonso, 2018).

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