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Educating for conflict or peace

Challenges and dilemmas in post-conflict Rwanda

In Rwandan classrooms today, survivors of the genocide sit beside returned refugees or the children of those imprisoned for war crimes. The schools in which they are being taught were often sites of mass atrocities. New textbooks and other learning resources are in short supply and those that do exist—written prior to the 1994 genocide—promote highly divisive stereotypes between Hutu and Tutsi students. Current Rwandan leaders, however, claim to have a new vision for Rwanda's education system. What opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding are presented by such a scenario?

This article attempts to encourage thinking about peacebuilding beyond the conventional bounds of inquiry. In particular, it aims to stimulate debate with regard to the subtle and complex relationship between education, ethnic conflict, and peacebuilding. The central argument is that schools and curricula are an important site of the construction, mobilization, and politicization

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of ethnic divisiveness, and that this has important—and largely overlooked—implications for post-conflict peacebuilding and the prevention of conflict.

This article will begin with a preliminary review of the literature to unpack the key themes and hypotheses of contributions dealing with formal education, conflict, and peacebuilding. Next, it will apply the findings from this overview to a case study of Rwanda exploring how education helped construct the ethnic identities that played a role in the 1959 revolution and in the 1994 genocide. It will also investigate significant developments in education policy since 1994 and their prospects for peacebuilding. Reflecting upon both the theoretical propositions and the Rwandan example, the final portion of the article will lay out an agenda for research highlighting important questions and challenges that must be addressed to better understand the prospects for peacebuilding education.

The central terms “ethnic conflict” and “peacebuilding,” to which I refer throughout, are subjects of significant conceptual deliberation. The term “education” is also open to several interpretations. Since much work is being done in this regard, and for the sake of brevity, I defer debate on these issues to those who know them best. I outline here only the basics in order to clarify my use of the terms. By ethnic conflict, I do not mean to suggest that ethnicities are primordial. This paper is written through constructivist lenses whereby ethnicity is a mix of subjective and objective criteria; ethnicity is considered both constructed and malleable. I recognize, however, that although ethnicity is constructed, even myths tend to gain a solidity and a reality about them and consequently changing ethnic allegiances to a broader civil cohesion is not an easy task.

I take peacebuilding to mean “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.” It is “sustained, cooperative work to deal with the underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems [that contribute to conflict].”¹ Taisier Ali and Bob Matthews explain that peacebuilding can be seen as moving from a negative peace, which involves the mere cessation of hostilities, to a positive peace, which goes further to address the underlying root causes of conflict and achieve a condition of stable and widening shared values. Despite having been originally introduced as a post-conflict endeavour,

1 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “An agenda for peace,” New York, UN general assembly, 2002.

peacebuilding is now also seen to have conflict preventative potential.² Although education is specifically cited in the list of peacebuilding activities suggested by Boutros-Ghali's "Agenda for peace,"— "[r]educing hostile perceptions through educational exchanges and curriculum reform may be essential to forestall a re-emergence of cultural and national tensions which could spark renewed hostilities"³—it has only rarely been mentioned in the peacebuilding literature.

By education, I am referring to state-led formal schooling institutions at primary and secondary levels. I am inquiring into education as an institution, focusing on the content of education and access to it, rather than employing the term broadly as equated with socialization, wherever it may occur. I acknowledge that informal education is important too, and could be the focus of an interesting complementary paper.

I EDUCATION, ETHNIC CONFLICT, AND PEACEBUILDING

We often hear calls for "more" and "better" education from governments, NGOs, international organizations, and aid agencies around the world. Formal education has long been held up as a harbinger of modernity, a key to economic progress, a transmitter of culture, and the cultivator of children's intellectual and moral development. More recently, education has been called into the peace and conflict arena as a tool of post-conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and global security.⁴

2 Taisier Ali and Robert O. Matthews, "Conclusion: Conflict, resolution and building peace" in Taisier Ali and Robert O. Matthews, eds., *Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999), 288, 306. Please see Necla Tschirgi, *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations and Challenges* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2004); Henning Haugerbraaten, "Peacebuilding: Six dimensions and two concepts," *African Security Review* 7, no. 6 (1998); and Michael Lund, "What kind of peace is being built? Taking stock of post-conflict peacebuilding and charting future directions," Ottawa, IDRC, 2003 for excellent review pieces addressing these and other conceptual debates in the peacebuilding literature.

3 Boutros-Ghali, "Agenda for peace."

4 See, for example, Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley, "Education and identity-based conflict: Assessing curriculum policy for social and civic reconstruction" in Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley, eds., *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion* (Paris: UNESCO, 2004), 5, and Wayne Nelles, "Introduction," in Wayne Nelles, ed., *Comparative Education, Terrorism, and Human Security: From Critical Pedagogy to Peacebuilding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 15-20;

At the same time, however, a small but growing literature is questioning this dogmatic faith in education. This literature suggests that education is neither always a force for good, nor even benign, and that certain kinds of education can and do contribute to conflict, especially violent ethnic conflict.⁵ With regard to ethnic conflict, school can be a location where the community is imagined and constructed in ways that create oppositional groups. This, however, is not inevitable. The key implication is that rather than continually prescribing *more* education, studies need to be conducted on what *kind* of education contributes to conflict, and what kind fosters peace.

The key dependent variable in this literature is thus social cohesion, or lack thereof, which might be termed intergroup hostility. Social cohesion, however, is both conceptually and practically difficult to pin down and various authors use it to mean significantly different things. A useful definition suggests that

social cohesion represents the absence of latent conflict whether caused by racial, economic or political reasons, among others; and the presence of strong social bonds, as noted by the existence of trust, reciprocity, associations crosscutting social divisions and the presence of institutions of conflict management.⁶

The main independent variables suggested in the literature centre around various components of formal education. In "The two faces of education in ethnic conflict," scholars from the Innocenti Research Centre examine 14 possible facets of education, half of which are allegedly linked to inter-group hostility, and half of which are purported to foster social cohesion. Note, however, that despite the dichotomized format presented, independent variables from both groups can be active simultaneously. The variables

5 This section draws on, among others, Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli, "The two faces of education in ethnic conflict: Towards a peacebuilding education for children," *Innocenti UNICEF Research Centre*, Florence, 2000; Annette Isaac, extracts from "Education and peacebuilding: A preliminary operational framework," CIDA, Ottawa, undated; Alan Smith and Tony Vaux, "Education, conflict and international development," UK Department for International Development, London, 2003, 2, 4.

6 Cole Genge, "Learning for social cohesion," in "Learning in postconflict situations," The Center for International Education, Amherst, MA, 2001, www.unix.oit.umass.edu.

can be usefully grouped and examined as two major influences: the content of education and the structure of education.

To begin, it is argued that a principle way in which education helps students construct communities is in terms of educational content. The manipulation of history in this context is perhaps the issue gaining the most scholarly attention. It is widely agreed that “history is a process by which certain stories and events are highlighted while others are minimized or ignored.”⁷ At recent International Studies Association conferences there has been a noted proliferation in interest regarding the use of textbooks to legitimate a specific historical narrative and to induce social coalescence into political identities. While education has long been acknowledged as an important tool for inculcating national values, it is curious that it has been less rigorously examined in light of constructing ethnic exclusivity.

Educational content can be a weapon of cultural repression through the inclusion and omission of curriculum. Many authors acknowledge that the language of instruction is a significant element of cultural repression. Religious repression also plays a key role in this process.

In terms of educational structure, ethnicity—as well as class and gender—can be reinforced and manipulated through the uneven distribution of education to give one group advantages over another. Segregated or unequal access to schooling can also induce feelings of superiority or inferiority among students. The dominant group is thus not only supported, but the repressed group may also feel an increased solidarity. The examination of the structure of education can valuably supplement the analysis of educational content in the formation of ethnic identities. As education scholar Michael Apple explains, the structure of education constitutes part of a hidden curriculum.⁸

Indeed, if education has contributed to the polarized construction of ethnic identities that contributed to violent conflict, the implication is that it can contribute to their reconstruction and be a valuable part of post-conflict peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Thus, in a post-conflict situation, a mere reinstatement of the old educational system is likely to cause trouble. This is an important consideration for peacebuilders. In order to improve social cohesion, educational structure

7 Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*, 12.

8 Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 14.

must be changed so as to equalize educational opportunity. Peacebuilding education also involves examining educational content in order to promote an ethnically tolerant climate, legitimate linguistic tolerance, and focus on similarities and inclusion rather than difference and exclusion.

While education deserves more attention for its role in either fostering conflict or preventing it, it is of course not the sole determinant of either. The structures of ethnic violence are deeply rooted in a complex economic, social, and political context, and education alone does not cause or eliminate ethnic conflict. However, as scholar David Hamburg suggests, the “stakes are so high now that *even a modest gain on this goal would be exceedingly valuable*” [emphasis added].⁹ As Bush and Saltarelli put it, the “add education and stir approach” is inadequate for solving the vast array of problems with which society often charges education.¹⁰ The relationship between education, conflict, and peacebuilding needs to be problematized.

II EDUCATION, ETHNIC CONFLICT, AND PEACEBUILDING: A CASE STUDY OF RWANDA

Both educational content and structure in Rwanda’s schools have changed drastically depending on the ethnic group in power. As Philip Gourevitch writes, “with every schoolchild reared in the doctrine of racial superiority and inferiority, the idea of a collective national identity was steadily laid to waste, and on either side of the Hutu-Tutsi divide there developed mutually exclusionary discourses based on competing claims of entitlement and injury.”¹¹ The colonial period, marked by Belgian support for the superiority of Tutsis, is most drastically contrasted with the two post-independence regimes of Hutu rule. Since the 1994 genocide, Rwanda’s government has recognized the importance of this trend and is currently undertaking curricular reform that seeks to eliminate and replace ethnic exclusivity with an inclusive Rwandan identity.

9 David Hamburg, “Education for conflict resolution,” Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, New York, 1995.

10 Bush and Saltarelli, “The two faces of education,” v.

11 Philip Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 57-58.

Educational content and ethnicity formation in Rwanda

The manipulation of history in Rwanda's schools was the principal manner in which educational content helped construct ethnic identity. Many authors acknowledge that the intensity of competing histories in Rwanda is virtually unparalleled. The European-created history of Rwanda, emphasizing the Hamitic myth—which contends that Tutsis were a foreign race from Ethiopia, superior to the native Hutu—was disseminated as scientific certainty and is central to the self-understanding of Hutus and Tutsis. It was these intellectual foundations of ethnic identity, promoted in the colonial period, that first developed Hutus and Tutsis as *political* identities. As Mahmood Mamdani explains, the Tutsi as non-indigenous need be understood “as a political construct more than as a historical or cultural reality.”¹² Importantly, although the identities of Hutu and Tutsi developed through state power, they transformed into ideas that each group held about each other.¹³ According to scholar Daniel Osabu-Kle, “what these Europeans wrote in the name of research or investigations is full of contradictions and fantasies that, in the absence of an alternative written history, later generations of Rwandans came to read and accept as their history.”¹⁴

In short, colonial-period history was taught and accepted in such a way as to generalize blame and omit differences within Tutsi or Hutu groups. Stereotyping helped construct the Tutsi identity of supremacy and Tutsis used the theory of scientific superiority to pursue their own aims. As Catherine Newbury writes in *The Cohesion of Oppression*, it also helped construct Hutu solidarity based on “resentments of the dispossessed.”¹⁵

Following the 1959 revolution that transferred power from Tutsi to Hutu hands, domestic leaders continued to rely on Hutu and Tutsi political identities rather than attempting to build a more united postcolonial nation. New

12 Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers Ltd., 2001), 28. See also Philip Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*; Anna Obura, “Never again: Educational reconstruction in Rwanda,” International Institute of Educational Planning, Paris, 88, www.unesco.org; Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Daniel Osabu-Kle, *Compatible Cultural Democracy: The Key to Development in Africa* (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2000); Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide 1959-1994* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1995).

13 Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 50.

14 Osabu-Kle, *Compatible Cultural Democracy*, 213.

15 Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 116.

myths were grafted onto the “traditional” Hamitic myth rather than replacing it. The newly empowered Hutu government rewrote history, dividing it into the pre-1959 oppression of the Hutu by the Tutsi, and the post-1959 period when Hutus “that had been oppressed recovered their lost rights and overthrew the Tutsi domination.”¹⁶ As the NGO African Rights reports, “in school text books there were entire chapters about the *civil war* of 1959, the *resounding victory* of the Hutus, the *humiliating defeat* of the Tutsis and the exile of the Tutsis and so on [emphasis added].”¹⁷ Indeed, 1959 is highlighted by several authors as an event highly mischaracterized by written historical narrative. Discourse biased toward one ethnic group and exclusionary narratives have characterized the Rwandese curriculum and have contributed to students’ construction of their ethnic identity.

Gérard Prunier explains that the influence of the Belgian authorities and Rwandese clerics who helped institute these myths deserves significant attention since their influence remains and “can be traced as a major cause of the violence Rwanda has experienced at recurrent intervals since 1959.”¹⁸ Indeed, these myths were a central part of the 1959 revolution and the 1994 genocidal appeal to “Hutu-ness.” As African Rights reports in a comprehensive study of education in Rwanda, the messages of the *génocidaires* in 1994 was so effective “in part because the Rwandese people had been educated to believe that ethnic differences between the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were founded on distinct racial origins.” The report highlights “the type of education offered” as a “factor which contributed to this tragedy.”¹⁹

The government of Rwanda realizes that its education system “failed the nation” and points specifically to the role of curriculum in this regard.²⁰ Post-conflict educational content is thus the subject of great controversy. At the same time, government officials have invested great hope in educational reform as a tool of social reconciliation. They stress the role of education in

16 John Rutayisire, John Kabano, and Jolly Rubagiza, “Redefining Rwanda’s future: The role of curriculum in social reconstruction,” in Tawil and Harley, *Conflict, Education and Social Cohesion*, 334.

17 African Rights, *The Heart of Education: Assessing Human Rights in Rwanda’s Schools* (London: African Rights, 2001), 21.

18 Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 36.

19 African Rights, *The Heart of Education*, 8, 20.

20 Rutayisire, Kabano, and Rubagiza, “Redefining Rwanda’s future,” 345.

“creating a culture of peace, emphasizing positive, non-violent national values; and promoting the universal values of justice, peace, tolerance, respect for others, solidarity, and democracy.”²¹ They insist that a new set of values must be taught that highlights similarities and inclusiveness among Rwanda’s people. There is, however, a gap between policy and implementation.²²

Since the history curriculum in particular is so integrally tied to the roots of conflict in Rwanda, textbooks and curriculum produced prior to 1994 have been repudiated and officials have been unable to produce an agreed-upon history. Consequently, history has not been taught in Rwanda’s schools since the genocide. Although it has been included on the curriculum, no new textbooks have been produced and teachers are not trained to teach history and are furthermore hesitant to take on such “politically sensitive” material.²³ In terms of peacebuilding, Ali and Matthews note the necessity of the willingness “to remember and change.” They argue that “a policy of forgetting is likely to fail.”²⁴ Although the importance of revising educational content has been widely recognized as a tool for peacebuilding in Rwanda, and policy reflects this recognition, little actual progress has been made. A decade has gone by during which history, at least in schools, has been forgotten.

Educational structure and ethnicity formation in Rwanda

The divisive structure of education, particularly during the colonial period, also helped construct and consolidate Hutu and Tutsi identities in Rwanda. Both Catholic missionary and state schools openly favoured the Tutsi and actively discriminated against the Hutu. In Nyanza, the schools even had a minimum height requirement for admission that disadvantaged the Hutu, who were usually shorter. Monseigneur Classe, the first bishop of Rwanda, made it an explicit policy in 1911 to turn the Tutsi into the “born rulers of Rwanda,” and developed what Mamdani calls an “obsession” with Tutsi-

21 Quoted in Anna Obura, “Never again,” 93.

22 One might wonder, in this case, about the coincidence of power, minority status, and victimhood. The Tutsi, who generally support President Kagame’s regime, are a minority who do not want trouble from the Hutu majority and arguably have no alternatives to emphasizing peace and a broader Rwandan identity.

23 African Rights, *The Heart of Education*, 3.

24 Ali and Matthews, “Introduction,” in Taisier Ali and Robert O. Matthews, eds., *Durable Peace: Challenges for Peacebuilding in Africa* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 33.

focused education.²⁵ Hutus were given only enough education to pursue menial jobs such as working in mines and industry, whereas Tutsis were cultivated for political, administrative, cultural, and economic power. Obura explains that by granting or denying access to education, colonial and missionary powers “were also defining, on the basis of ethnicity, who would occupy important political posts.”²⁶

In the post-1959 period, distinct efforts were made to expel Tutsis from centres of power, including schools. As the Belgians prepared to leave Rwanda, they tried to impose ethnic quotas on education. Since, for example, Tutsis constituted approximately 9 percent of the population, they were to be allowed only 9 percent of school places and salaried jobs.²⁷ Ethnic quotas continued during the second republic (1973-94) under Habyarimana, which can be interpreted as meaning that people were still ethnically defined, although some authors point to the growing importance of regional conflict and differentiation during this period, a reminder that ethnicity is not the only factor needing examination. To determine ethnic quotas, school registration focused on ethnicity. To fill out pupil identification files, teachers would ask students to stand up according to their ethnic background. In some cases, where students were not aware of their ethnic identity, teachers would rely on stereotypes to help them identify the children.

Following the 1994 conflict, a revised educational policy targeted national unity and reconciliation. In so doing, it rendered illegal any form of discrimination based on ethnic or regional identity. By not categorizing students and teachers along the Hutu-Tutsi divide, “the hidden curriculum had changed.”²⁸ This is a promising step in the peacebuilding process and there appears to be a commitment to following through with this goal.

III AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH: EDUCATION AND POST-CONFLICT

The arguments and case study above can be considered an appeal to scholars and practitioners to expand thinking about peacebuilding to include less

25 Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 89.

26 Obura, “Never again,” 98.

27 Ibid, 44; See also “The road out of hell,” *Economist*, 27 March 2004, 26. Other scholars estimate the Tutsi population to have been closer to 15 percent. If they are correct, it could be argued that the low estimate of nine percent represented further discrimination.

28 Obura, “Never again,” 88.

conventional activities such as education. Educational reform in cases where it has hitherto contributed to forming opposing ethnic identities and possibly even played a role in ethnic violence, such as Rwanda, will not be easy. There are significant challenges to understanding and implementing education as an element of post-conflict peacebuilding. This final section thus suggests eight areas requiring further contemplation to better understand the prospects for peacebuilding education.

First, the idea of education as variably fostering ethnic conflict or peacebuilding and conflict-prevention is based on the premise that formal education can shape understandings, attitudes, values, and the behaviour of individuals. However, formal schooling is just one part of childrearing and the transmission of values, and the relative weight of schooling in relation to other influences is under discussion. This is compounded in many parts of the world by the relatively low rate of school attendance. Political scientists exploring the peacebuilding potential of education need to further draw on literature offered by the fields of education, political socialization, and social psychology to better understand the promise and limits of education in inculcating values, and the link between attitudes and behaviours.

Second, rather than thinking about peacebuilding as a “taxonomic set of activities,” it is useful to consider the approach suggested by Kenneth Bush, which emphasizes the “impact” of peacebuilding.²⁹ This allows us to devote attention to activities, such as peacebuilding education, that diverge from the usual focus on demobilization, the disarmament and reintegration of former combatants, the repatriation of refugees, more open and inclusive political processes, and human rights. If we acknowledge that activities that do not often appear on peacebuilding lists may have an important impact, developing effective evaluative criteria should be at the forefront of a research agenda. And indeed, calls for such studies are widespread.

Third, it bears repeating that education is not a panacea. In order to be effective, peacebuilding education must be supported by changes in other parts of society. Education programs on their own do not offer a “magic solution” to conflict prevention. Together with other long-term initiatives, however, they could build social cohesion and help prevent conflict.

29 Kenneth Bush, “Commodification, compartmentalization and militarization of Peacebuilding,” in Tom Keating and Andy W. Wright, eds., *Building Sustainable Peace* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press): 24.

Fourth, peacebuilding education is a long-term endeavour and it is unrealistic to expect short-term results. Ali and Matthews argue that too often peacebuilding analyses do not include the longer-range goals of socio-economic transformation and socio-psychological reconciliation. Their case studies show that in order to achieve durable peace, the peacebuilding process must be extended in time, considering social change in terms of decades and generations.³⁰ Peacebuilding education may focus on peace through generational change. This time-lag needs to be more broadly accepted in order to achieve the required long-term commitment.

Fifth, in addition to requiring a long-term moral and political commitment, educational reform is costly. This is especially challenging for countries emerging from conflict. Two thirds of teachers in post-genocide Rwanda, for example, have no formal qualifications, and 65 percent of schools were damaged during the conflict. Each student currently shares one textbook with 13 to 22 other students, while there are no social studies textbooks at all.³¹ Educational reform requires a significant financial commitment. However, since it has been shown that *more* education in itself is an inadequate solution to peace and development problems, donors need to question whether, in certain cases, contributing resources to education might make conflict worse. When there are so many other peacebuilding and development priorities in competition with education, it may be difficult to commit and sustain government funding at adequate levels to make peacebuilding gains.

Sixth, even once a state has committed in principle to reforming education and has access to funds to undertake this process, the question of who controls the reform process, especially with regard to documenting the historical narrative to be used in schools, is highly contentious. This question reflects a wider peacebuilding debate. As Ali and Matthews point out, peacebuilding was originally assumed to be an international activity. They argue, however, that it is essentially a domestic activity and that the role of the international community should be restricted to the facilitation, support, and encouragement of local actors.³²

³⁰ Ali and Matthews, "The long and difficult road to peace," in Ali and Matthews, *Durable Peace: Challenges for Peacebuilding in Africa*, 395-6.

³¹ Obura, "Never again," 38, 47, 131.

³² Ali and Matthews, "The long and difficult road to peace", 408.

Some authors, however, agree with Stephen Heyneman that since the effects of education go beyond the local community, it is helpful for international organizations to provide professional guidelines and standards for curriculum.³³ Heyneman's concern reflects an important trend towards the merging of security and development. It needs to be asked however, if this would not result in outsiders imposing their views and priorities on local populations. The UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) worries about the legitimacy of international aid agencies and donors acting as "new missionaries" in the educational reform process.³⁴ According to Alan Smith and Tony Vaux, World Bank funding requirements, for example, sometimes packaged as "educational reform," are little more than disguised structural adjustment.³⁵ Furthermore, there is concern that peacebuilding priorities might be subsumed by the post 9-11 security agenda. Rwanda in particular has been highlighted as a place in which international actors have conflicting agendas.

What should be the role of the international community in peacebuilding education? If we insist that local actors should be most prominent, to what level of local actors are we referring? Should educational reform occur at the national level or should decision-making be decentralized to reflect regional, local, or even school-to-school choice?

With so many actors affected by educational decisions, the educational reform process itself can be conflict-ridden. Although most historians argue that the aim is not to find *one* written narrative, textbooks do ultimately write down *one* story that may, however, include various perspectives. Careful reflection is needed since the shelf-life of textbooks is long and educational content potentially influential. The more common challenge, however, is in moving forward; agreement on a common story is not an easy task and can lead to delays or even an impasse.³⁶

33 Stephen Heyneman, "Education, social cohesion and the future role of international organisations," *Peabody Journal of Education* 78, no. 3 (2003): 35-37.

34 "Curriculum change and social cohesion in conflict-affected societies," UNESCO colloquium report, April 2003, 12.

35 Smith and Vaux, "Conflict, education and international development," 35.

36 This occurred in Lebanon in 2001, when, after two committees and six years, the minister of education suspended the distribution of textbooks because he "thought that a timeline in the lesson showing the arrival of different peoples discredited the Arabs as invaders." Sue Williams and Paul McGill, "Education: Part of the problem, essential for the solution," *The New Courier* (special edition), UNESCO, 2004.

Seventh, in documenting the historical narrative, there is a fine line between, on one hand, reconciliation and the achievement of a common Rwandan identity and, on the other, justice. Healing following mass crimes involves contrition, forgiveness, and a willingness to move beyond the past, but a place must also be made for justice. Discovering an appropriate balance is the challenge. In Rwanda, fostering an inclusive identity cannot come at the cost of neglecting responsibility on either side for the horrible crimes committed throughout the last century.

Finally, to better answer the questions above, more in-depth research needs to be done on the connection between education, ethnic violence, and social cohesion. In particular, individual case studies need to be conducted to gain a better understanding of how possible implications play out in diverse contexts. Educational specialists point out that there are no “one size fits all” educational initiatives and different regions in the world face different challenges.³⁷ More generally, Bush contends that peacebuilding is being “commodified” through the mass production of peacebuilding initiatives engineered along northern specifications and applied indiscriminately.³⁸ It is unwise to think that a cookie-cutter model of peacebuilding education can be applied to different conflicts and situations. Lessons can be learned from different states’ experiences, however, and cross-regional comparisons could be a useful supplement to in-depth case studies.

CONCLUSION

This article urges consideration of the symbiotic relationships between, on the one hand, education and ethnic conflict, and on the other, education and peace. While recognizing that education can, and has been, a negative force in some cases, the fact that schools have provided one of the sites of exclusive ethnic construction leads to the possibility that transformed schools could play a positive role in fostering social cohesion. By examining the literature on peacebuilding education and the case of Rwanda, this article encourages us to think more about education as a potentially important peacebuilding component. Expanding our thinking about peacebuilding is

37 Stephen Heyneman and Sanja Tadoric-Bebic, “A renewed sense for the purpose of schooling: The challenges of education and social cohesion in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and Central Asia,” *Prospects* 30 (June 2000): 150-60.

38 Bush, “Commodification, compartmentalization and militarization of peacebuilding,” 24.

the easy part. Answering the questions and concerns raised above, not to mention operationalizing them, are much more daunting tasks. They are, however, pressing tasks. Since the implications for peace and conflict are potentially significant, further research must be done in order to better understand education's role in conflict and its possibilities for contributing to post-conflict peacebuilding and conflict prevention.