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The state, the curriculum and the nation

A qualitative study of national identity diffusion through the national curriculum in the Republic of
Rwanda

Author: Otso Artturi Rajala

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Supervisor: Axel Fredholm

Abstract

The Republic of Rwanda has traditionally been a home to three ethnic groups: Hutus, Tutsis and Twas. Clear divides between the groups have been created over the centuries by both inside and outside forces. Each group shares among themselves a collective identity which can be used to rally masses to create tensions in society. This is a development a stability-pursuing state seeks to avoid. In the past, tensions stemming from ethnic divides have resulted in atrocities in Rwanda, last time during the war and the genocide in 1990-1994. In the aftermath of the genocide, the Rwandan state adopted a 'never again' mentality towards domestic conflicts.

This thesis argues two points: First, the Rwandan state is actively working to eliminate domestic ethnic identities as a part of a nation-building project. To build this argument, the thesis explores the historical background of the environment where the identities exist, the role of ideology, and solidarity as a binding force in the Rwandan society.

The second argument is that the Rwandan state utilises the national curriculum to diffuse the new national identity into the pupils. To back this argument, the thesis presents the national curriculum as a platform where state goals are realised. Using qualitative content analysis methods and synthesising material from different sources, this thesis seeks to confirm the arguments by studying the context where the Rwandan national curriculum is drafted and how national identity diffusion becomes apparent in it.

Keywords: Rwanda, nation-building, national identity, authoritarianism, curriculum, school-society nexus.

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1. Introduction

“Never do we feel the need of the company of our compatriots so greatly as when we are in a strange country; never does the believer feel so strongly attracted to his co-religionist as during periods of persecution.” (Durkheim, 1893:102).

In the quote above Durkheim describes the strength of sentiments, beliefs and values of collective consciousness that steer how we think. Depending on the circumstances, collective consciousness connects us to the society by enforcing our sense of solidarity with society. To sense belonging to a society is to identify with that society, be it large or small. At a large enough scale we begin identifying with imagined communities, people we never have and never will meet (Anderson, 1991).

National identity describes belonging to an imagined group of people, a nation. The people sharing a national identity, although they understand that they all are different still believe that they are members of the same nation. As national identities describe subscribing to an imagined community, they are always invented identities which are designed, taught and even assigned to populations. As the internationally recognised legitimate governing body the authoritarian Rwandan state has taken upon itself the task of uniting the divided people of Rwanda who have subscribed to different collective identities and in some cases still do. This thesis shows that the state uses the traumas from the 1990-1994 wars and past genocides to justify its goal of elimination of other collective identities it considers rivals of the new national identity.

To invoke a sense of unity within an imagined community, the state has to resort to symbols and narratives of unity. Nation-building and national identity diffusion are done through nationalism which concretely manifests in mottos and flags and the like (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). Institutions of mass education enable the passing of uniform knowledge to whole generations. This thesis argues that in the case of Rwanda, a part of this uniform knowledge is a national identity. Having an extensive control over the society and, consequently, of its institutions such as the education system, the state is in a position to define the attributes of the Rwandan national identity and the ways it is passed to the pupils.

1.1 Purpose, aim and research questions

This thesis concerns itself with studying how the Rwandan national curriculum has been harnessed for the task of national identity diffusion. Young learners are an important target group for nascent collective identities, because children’s affection to the myths about their community and homeland is unquestionable (Druckman, 1994). Rwandan basic education consists of primary and secondary school, but because pupils can choose between different tracks in upper-secondary school, this thesis focuses on studying the contents of education in primary and lower-secondary school. In order to properly understand how this is done and grasp its full implications the thesis will build a comprehensive

conceptual framework. The thesis discusses Rwandan national identity within the Rwandan state goals framework where ‘unity’ is considered as a necessary theme in the nation’s future.

Nation-building, efficient administrative and governing infrastructures and increasing human capital are considered important themes in contemporary development discourse. States are regarded important distributors of development (OWG, n.d.) while new critical approaches to mainstream post-conflict peacebuilding have begun promoting the importance of appropriate domestic state institutions for stability and development prior to democratisation and the liberalisation of markets (Paris, 2004). Post-conflict peacebuilding and nation-building processes are topical themes in international development where conflicts and oppression in the Global South hamper development and prohibit the realisation of human rights and redistribution of wealth. This discussion motivates the thesis’s inquiry into the contents of the Rwandan national curriculum, because a national identity and the unity stemming from it is considered important by the Rwandan state to prevent future domestic conflicts (Hintjens, 2008). Curricula are a central part of education as they determine the content of what is taught, which is much more than human capital building. It includes among other things the learning of values and attitudes. Moreover, the process of unification contains a dimension of democratisation as the authoritarian Rwandan regime harnesses this process to consolidate its power. The thesis builds a hypothesis that in order for the Rwandan state to be able to use the national curriculum to reach its goals it must have an extensive control over the society.

Following the discussions above, the research questions that guide our inquiry are:

- a) “To what extent does the Rwandan state penetrate the society and its institutions?”
- b) “How is the Rwandan national curriculum harnessed to national identity diffusion?”

1.2 Previous research

Post-genocide Rwanda has been the subject of extensive academic scrutiny. This makes data collection for background relatively easy, but limits it for other parts because academic research has for the most part focused on the different aspects of authoritarianism the Rwandan state expresses, as well as its oppressive policies. Much of social scientific research on Rwanda is anthropological and uses interviews and field observations of social behaviour at the micro level. Furthermore, a great deal of this material explores how Rwandan state institutions through structural functionalism promote unity in the society. This approach, however, has been focused on the direct extraction of loyalty through the oppression of the individual, and it has focused on the state and adults instead of children. In this thesis, adults are the diffusers who operate the institutions responsible for encouraging the formation national identity in the young.

Ingelaere (2014) has studied the state’s reach and overreach in Rwanda through analysis of over 350 oral histories, which together with existing research confirms the strength of authority and extent of state overreach (i.e. state’s capability of interfering with most aspects of its citizens’ lives) in everyday

state-society interactions. Ingelaere also provides a detailed description of the structure of local governance in contemporary Rwanda. This builds upon previous research on state surveillance and reach in Rwanda (Purdeková, 2011) which has confirmed the state's deep penetration of society and how the administrative infrastructure is used to uphold order in the society. Examples of this are given by Hintjens (2008) and Mann and Berry (2015) who explore the links between developmentalism, surveillance, oppression and citizenship among the Rwandan poor. Hintjens (2008) emphasises the importance of the 'never again' mentality within the Rwandan state and how this is reflected in the lives of the economically deprived Rwandans who are politically re-labelled from above. Her argumentation rests on the parallelisation of Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF, the ruling political party) and the state, and nationalist mentalities of the ruling elite. Mann and Berry (2015) focus on motivations and priorities of the state. The authors explore these themes by studying public statements by Rwandan politicians and the Vision 2020 draft document, and they formulate an argument that developmentalism and the distributive infrastructure built upon it serves as a platform for expanding political control over the nation. As developmentalism in Rwanda is nearly synonymous with market creation and economic growth, evidence of the state's control over people can be found in the shifts from direct violent control by the state to more subtle social control through markets and surveillance (Mann & Berry, 2015). Previous studies do not leave unclear the goals and motivations behind the actions that the Rwandan state takes. Direct and indirect control over the population to reach unity and ambitious economic goals become apparent. National identity and especially its creation from above has largely been ignored, as too have the old ethnic identities. Sundberg's (2014) doctoral dissertation shares several themes with this thesis although her research focuses on the creation of a model Rwandan citizen. Sundberg's anthropological research studies the *itorero* civic training institution for adults where participants are educated in a military-like environment about the Rwandan culture, the importance of its preservation, and about the importance of loyalty to the state and the virtues of political unity.

The scientific study of education has long paid attention to schools as conveyers of not only information but also values, culture, identities and loyalties. The study of education is often normative, and looks to optimise educational systems to better fulfil their tasks. Citizenship education receives much attention in nation-building related evaluation of education (e.g. Haynes, 2009; Scott & Lawson, 2002; Sheldon, 2012; Zajda et al., 2009). The goal of citizenship education is to raise empowered citizens, fully recognised members of the political community who are aware of their rights and obligations and means to affect decision-making. The link between national identity and education has been paid little attention, and in some countries a clear link between the two is a novelty (Sheldon, 2012). On national scale, the goals of education are recognised from national curriculum and policy (e.g. Haynes, 2009; Sheldon, 2012; Zajda et al., 2009), which is why the Rwandan education system is studied within the school-society nexus in this thesis (Epstein, 1992). National curricula are often portrayed as battlegrounds, because different entities with their own agendas attempt to participate in the curriculum drafting process. Mass education through standardised curricula reaches hundreds of thousands of

pupils, which is why the contents of the final curriculum can have a remarkable impact not only on what the pupils learn, but also on their identities (Durrani & Dunne, 2010; Murray, 2008).

Following Sheldon (2012) and Durrani and Dunne (2010), this thesis argues that national identity can be engineered and diffused from above through tightly controlled institutions and narratives.

1.3 Delimitations

This research was carried out as a research overview using secondary sources. Much of the material is official Rwandan documents. The research focuses fully on synthesising and analysing contents from written documents, and no data collection from the field, such as classroom observations or interviews, was done for this thesis. Therefore teaching in a Rwandan classroom may differ dramatically from what is stated in the curriculum or syllabi. Teachers do not always follow the curriculum and as social entities have their own motivations (Wang & Liu, 2008). The final outcomes of national identity education and events in the classroom are not in focus in this research.

Official documents are treated as reliable sources as they come from the government of Rwanda itself (this is also discussed in the Method and material section). Because of the author's lack of knowledge of Kinyarwanda and French only sources written in English were used. Most official documents are translated from Kinyarwanda into English and French which are also official languages in Rwanda. As the research relies on material that is available from sources in English, it is possible that nuances or certain meanings from the original documents were missing.

1.4 Disposition of the thesis

To understand how national identity is diffused through the national curriculum, we must first understand the motives of the actors creating it. After surveying a background where better understanding of the ethnic history of Rwanda is presented, the conceptual framework is described in detail. The analysis is carried out in four parts. The first two sections of the analysis focus on clarifying the role the state has in the Rwandan society, and the state's motives, goals and reach. These first parts are essential to the understanding of the role that primary and lower-secondary school curricula play in education. Most aspects of social life and interaction in Rwanda are monitored if not controlled by the state which also becomes apparent in the structuring and planning of education. Due to its status in the society, the state's motives and goals must be scrutinised, because they are imperative to the drafting of school curricula. The elimination of old identities will be studied, because of the groundwork this process does for the implementation of the new national identity. Once the elements of the Rwandan national identity have been established and the context where they are diffused explained, their narratives are traced in the Rwandan primary school curricula.

2. Background: The ethnic history of the contemporary Republic of Rwanda

The Republic of Rwanda was formed on 1 July 1962 when the Belgian colonial rule in what was then known Ruanda-Urundi came to an end. An area containing small kingdoms, including Rwanda and Burundi, was given to the German Empire at the 1890 Brussels conference. The final borders of the colony-to-be were established as late as 1900, and the German colonial rule had little influence on the social and political structures in its East African colonies. After the First World War, Belgium accepted the League of Nations Mandate of 1916 to govern Ruanda-Urundi, and Belgian rule continued until independence.

Before colonialism, Rwanda and Burundi had experienced several migrations from different peoples. The first ones to settle in the land in both areas were the Twa people. After them the Hutu arrived, followed by the Tutsi. A state apparatus has existed in both Rwanda and Burundi for about 500 years, and the states in both countries continue to govern pre-colonial historical territories of old kingdoms. Monarchy was the form of rule in both Rwanda and Burundi which were separate kingdoms despite having been settled by the same ethnicities. The Tutsi were often kings, nobility, and soldiers while the Hutu were mostly peasants. Although hierarchy was quite clear between different segments of the society, class mobility was relatively easy and based on wealth, so if a Hutu purchased enough cattle, she could 'become' a Tutsi (Pottier, 2002:13). This fluid ethno-caste system was eradicated during the colonial era, when the colonial powers, especially the Belgians, formalised and racialised the feudal state apparatus in Ruanda-Urundi. Racial 'differences' were discovered in Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas, and as in the eyes of the Belgian colonial rule the Tutsi made up the traditional ruling race (and class) their rule was consolidated and justified by the idea of race. The pre-colonial era is in many instances romanticised (e.g. Pottier, 2002) and wrongfully so (Sundberg, 2014). It is still true that the Belgian reforms in the Rwandan society were dramatic, and led to Hutu underrepresentation and inter-ethnic tensions that would later lead to uprisings (Pottier, 2002). A few remarks outside of the social context help to explain how and why these dynamics came to be, and how the potential for social mobilisation in Rwanda has remained high. Rwanda is a tiny, densely populated territory where Hutus have always made up a larger part of the demography than Tutsis, with the Twas as the smallest minority. Kinyarwanda is used and understood by nearly all citizens of Rwanda. It is also an official language together with English and French.

This chapter on the thesis's background has focused on describing the real and imagined ethnic divide and its origin in Rwanda. The 1994 genocide was purposefully discarded in this chapter because it is not the focus of this thesis, and what we must know about it we will come back to later. The genocide, as horrible as it was, was only one of many conflicts between different demographic groups

in Rwanda; demographic, because they have hardly ever been purely ethnic in essence although they often are presented within the ethnic framework.

3. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

The research overview combines a variety of concepts and frameworks. The process of collective identity creation in a country context is one of many steps and dimensions: there is the planner, the mediator, and the receiver. While each of these roles has unique individual characteristics and is open for study separately, they are also interlinked within different nexuses. This means, that in order to understand the process of national identity diffusion to the younger segments of the Rwandan population, we must first understand what national identity is, i.e. what it consists of; what its distinct features are in the Rwandan context; who plans it, i.e. how does the Rwandan state decide what the diffusible ideals are; who are targeted in the diffusion process; and what the central mediator in the Rwandan context is. The concept of *creation* in the context of an authoritarian regime indicates a top-down process, which guides us to the task of clarifying the concept of the state. In social sciences, nation, state, government and nation-state are often used synonymously and without proper clarification which blurs the variety of meanings the concepts include. To avoid this, the concepts used in this thesis will be opened up and rigorously defined so that we can understand what we are studying.

3.1 Durkheim: functionalism and mechanical and organic solidarity

Sometimes called the father of sociology, Durkheim looked at social rather than individual explanations for how society works. Although all actions have their origin in the individual, they cannot be understood at the level of the individual, because it is only in social interaction where actions gain their meanings. Social actions are realised in society, for which Durkheim (1893:129) gives two definitions: it is “a more or less organised totality of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group”, and “a system of different, special functions which definite relations unite”, but it is important to notice that “these two societies really make up only one”.

Durkheim (1893) studied society in a very theoretical manner, without naming any clear example for his work during the times when European nations were transforming from agrarian to industrial societies. Through Durkheim’s eyes, society is a self-preserving system. Self-preservation becomes possible through our actions, which are embodied in different institutions that diffuse common consciousness. Common consciousness is the sum of the “totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society”, and it “has its own life”, that is it remains, diffused from one individual to another (*ibid.*:79-80). Preserving social cohesion is attributed to common consciousness because it contains the society’s patterns of thinking: economic inequality, norms and morality and all

other collective realities manifesting in society are what Durkheim called *social facts* (Pope, 1975). This consciousness directs individuals to organize in different ways into institutions with their own respective objectives to fulfil different social needs with an overall goal of renewal and protection of society (Durkheim, 1974). This occurs while another consciousness, that which is “personal to each of us and characterizes us” is the consciousness that grants each person individual agency, and exists alongside the common consciousness (Durkheim, 1893:105). Indeed, for Durkheim (*ibid.*:49), each institution has its own *function* in society. These interrelated functions contribute to the survival and renewal of society in similar way that organs within one’s body contribute to the survival of the individual (*ibid.*). This results in Durkheim perceiving society as a *system*, which is what this thesis does with the Rwandan society.

What, then, brings people together and holds them together in society? To answer this question Durkheim (1893) looks at division of labour and the solidarity it creates. Studying the society during its transformation from agrarian into industrial, he recognises two solidarities: mechanical and organic, or solidarity through likeness and solidarity due to the division of labour and specialisation. Mechanical solidarity for Durkheim is dominant in pre-industrial societies where similarity fulfilled the function of solidarity, while an advanced division of labour and specialisation which results in the individuals being interdependent on each other is the main source of solidarity in industrial societies. Advancing societies set requirements for qualifications to different posts, and specialisation in one’s own profession distances the individual from others. The same applies to institutions which become more specialised and solitary in carrying out their respective functions. There must be a balance between the two types of solidarities, although one is always more dominant: too much similarity (or too strong a collective consciousness) results in the reduction of the individual, while too much individuality and an absence of regulation results in a lack of solidarity and drifting apart, or anomy (*ibid.*:368).

The two types of solidarities are important for this thesis’s argumentation because they give a potential explanation of the social functions that hold a society together. However, as this thesis explores a nation as context, these explanations lack explanations for individuals’ collective identity as a connective function. As we shall discover, the Rwandan state has put forward a modernisation project which demands a much larger degree of specialisation in the labour force than currently exists. This together with a project of elimination of ethnicities demands a more detailed explanation for binding functions in society. Functionalism has been criticised for its lack of recognition of conflict theory and its perception of equilibrium or *status quo* as a nearly deterministic process (Pope, 1975), but it is suitable for us to use in the study of different institutions and their interconnectedness. As a clearly structured society going through dramatic changes, Rwanda becomes an interesting case to look at how equilibrium is attempted to restore.

3.2 The school-society nexus

The ‘terrain’ where the school curriculum is formed is known as the school-society nexus. Within this nexus – on this terrain – the role of school as an institution and its role as a conveyor of knowledge are discussed: the curriculum and the contents of different subjects reflect the society’s values and goals (Chepyator-Thomson, 2014; Epstein, 1992). As social and cultural conditions are society-specific, schooling differentiates between societies (Epstein, 1992) which affects the contents of curricula directly and indirectly: directly in the way described above, and indirectly by including different actors in the curriculum forming process. Following this line of argumentation, in authoritarian societies it is the state that holds the most power over what is taught to young learners whereas liberal societies include a variety of stakeholders and consequently a variety of angles in and interpretations of syllabi. In other words, in authoritarian systems the state has the monopoly of power of knowledge (Morgan, 2015) whereas, theoretically, in liberal societies this power is more distributed. The contents of different subjects’ syllabi and how excellence in them is valued in the society “has been seen as a medium to unify and reinforce national identity” (Fry & McNeill, 2011:289).

Globalisation and modernisation are recognised as driving forces for change in Rwanda. They affect the way the Rwandan state acts and reacts, and how the school curriculum reflects this as a consequence. There are many interpretations of globalisation and what it means in practice, but for the purposes of this thesis we will use it as a concept to describe the voluntary and enthusiastic “copying of fashionable institutions and policies” (Meyer, 2007:263). This standardisation of societies promotes good governance and good citizenship, and “leads nations to at least posture as virtuous by global standards” (*ibid.*:264). Policies and institutions and their structures are copied to gain a better position in global competition which has shifted from armed to economic. Educational systems are a prime example of this global institutional isomorphism: models of enrolment, curriculum, organisation and a shift to mass education even in the developing world has increased (*ibid.*:267-268).

The standards traditionally come from the Global North, and they are implemented through the process of modernisation. Modernisation implies development and process: moving forward. Developing countries find the new norms and values they need to fare well in the global economy from the Global North, and find themselves needing to adapt. To diffuse these values – e.g. entrepreneurship, liberal market economy, secularisation, equality – a clear and strong state structure is required (Nabudere, 1997:206). The aspiration for modernity echoes through the Rwandan draft document Vision 2020, composed by the Rwandan Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, which describes the goals for the nation to reach by the year 2020 and the strategies to reach them. Vision 2020 paints a picture of Rwanda as a “modern” nation once it reaches the goal (MINECOFIN 2000:6).

3.3 Finding “national identity” among identities

If we are asked to define ourselves we will soon come up with a number of characteristics that we and others assign for ourselves. An easy way for one to define oneself would be to list the attributes and qualities one values, such as passions, hobbies, religion, and country of origin. These attributes, among countless others, can be experienced both personally and in relation to other individuals, and they can be transient or central and tenacious. Of these attributes and characteristics the ones that are a central part of us and that we carry with us over long periods of time, are identities: they are an integral part of us, and without them we would truly not be who we are. Prime examples are our gender, values, and culture (Parekh, 2009). In social psychology, manifestations of identities in different social interactions are categorised into *personal identity*, which refers to “the idiosyncratic characteristics that distinguish us from other individuals” in interpersonal behaviour (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001:33), and into *social identity*; often dubbed *collective identity* by sociologists. An individual acquires her social identity from the knowledge of membership of different social groups and from the meanings she gains from these memberships. Individuals have a variety of social identities, and relationships are an integral part of them: they are “irreducible to any individual” although they are personal and felt (*ibid.*).

‘Irreducibility to any individual’ in social identity (henceforth ‘collective identity’) means that the identity is shared among a group of people. Sharing a collective identity therefore indicates a sense of belonging to a group (Smith, 1991; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Formed in a group of individuals, a collective identity is a product of dynamic social processes and its attributes are constantly being redefined by the members of the group. As social groups interact with other social groups collective identities are constantly compared and evaluated to each other. Social groups define themselves by reference to what they are not, which makes the comparison value laded and influences the individual’s reactions to members of other social groups with different collective identity. Therefore acting under a collective identity makes us socially defined subjects (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Smith (1991) lists gender, spatial or territorial, class, ethnic, religious, and national identities as examples of typical collective identities. As a community based on simply one of these identities would not be stable for a very long time, the necessity of multiplicity of an individual’s collective identities is apparent. At this point it is important to remember that collective identities can be carried and felt across borders and over periods of time: one can have a sense of belonging to a nation-state that does not yet exist or has ceased to exist.

A population sharing a common national identity is often associated with its own *nation-state* but this is not necessarily true. As implied above, one can share a national identity without belonging to this nation’s homeland: the Kurds do not have a state of their own although they form their own nation, the Koreans have had their homeland divided in two, and the Palestinians, the Catalans and the Scottish are campaigning for ‘independence’ (Morris, 1998). It is equally often that a nation is confused with an

ethnic community. Ethnic here does not imply race but a social group; possessing an ethnic identity implies a population sharing:

“1) a collective proper name, 2) a myth of common ancestry, 3) shared historical memories, 4) one or more differentiating elements of common culture, 5) an association with a specific ‘homeland’, 6) a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population” (Smith, 1991:21).

Ethnic identity and its attributes are something national identity builds upon (Morris, 1998; Smith, 1991), but national identity is more complex. Nationalism and the state institution are crucial.

Nations, and therefore national identities, are created by and exist in the social interactions between people. They are not born into but learned and reproduced, and this process is one that the state finds crucial. The fundamental difference between ethnic and national identities is that ethnic identity has to do with identifying with an ethnic community, whereas national identity refers to solidarity, loyalty, and belonging to a nation. For nation-building purposes, a nation requires a *myth of a homeland*, a territory of their own. Equally important are *myths shared by the community and historical memories* which are often related to the ‘homeland’. These attributes tie the individuals together by shared memories and experiences, tie the individuals to a territory, and makes *the land’s resources exclusive to the people*. This creates an idea of autarchy: the territory feeds the community, and the community must protect the territory in return. An idea of *patria*, “a community of laws and institutions with a single political will” (Smith, 1991:10) creates stability and a sense of continuity within the nation by *binding individuals by law and making them legally equal*. The law also reflects the *values and traditions* of the community which unifies them *culturally*. These values and traditions, again, are traced back to the mythical ‘homeland’. Institutions of mass socialisation, such as schools, are harnessed to circulate the myths, values, and traditions to the younger populations. These sentiments, attitudes and values together with a name are the fundamental features a national identity (Smith, 1991). To ensure its existence, the state must be capable of invoking nationalistic sentiments in its population.

Reicher and Hopkins (2001:37) describe nationalism that differentiates ethnic and national identities in the following way: “nationalism makes nations as much as nations make nationalism”. Modern nations and states, more organised than bare ethnic communities, need to justify themselves to the people. It is through nationalism that the state invokes a sense of belonging and solidarity to the nation, which is crucial to the continuity of the nation. This ideology is upheld by repeatedly reminding the members of the community to which they belong by symbols such as flags and mottos. For the purpose of reproduction of the nation, children are targeted through exposure to the society and through its institutions, such as schools. The learning of culture and values and tradition by children is important, because for children the first national identity they absorb is positively charged due to the affection they sense before they are cognitively capable of critically assessing the components of their collective identity. Furthermore, children may experience that they are normatively expected to behave according to their surrounding culture (Druckman, 1994; Roccas, Schwarz & Amit, 2010). Therefore this thesis is interested in studying national identity diffusion through educational systems in Rwanda.

4. Method and material

This thesis presents a research overview in which material is brought together, synthesised, to create an understanding of a phenomenon. The conceptual framework presented earlier provides a lens through which national identity diffusion in a top-down manner through the national curriculum is analysed in this study. The material consists mostly of official documents and academic articles and books.

National identity diffusion through the national curriculum in Rwanda serves as the case in this research. Material from previous research and academic authors is for the most part used as secondary sources to support the thesis's arguments, provide the context, and supplement official documents from Rwanda which will form most of the primary sources (Bryman, 2012:13-14,311-328). Interpretation of official Rwandan documents takes different forms which all follow the qualitative content analysis methodology (*ibid.*:557-563): hermeneutic content analysis through the conceptual lens and synthesis of data provides us with an understanding of the state's social and political motivations in Rwanda. During the analysis, when signs of national identity diffusion in official documents and curriculum are looked for, semiotic approach to content analysis is used to discover different meanings as identity diffusion and ideologies are rarely mentioned in official documents and are certainly not in accordance with our conceptual framework (*ibid.*:559-560).

To properly understand the case, we must look at it from different angles. A system-driven theoretical path is chosen to provide us with an understanding of the complex system of national identity diffusion through the national curriculum. Following this path, the conceptual framework becomes instrumental for our study of the phenomenon, and finally through combination of theories and concepts during interpretation of official documents will we be able to triangulate our understanding properly (Løkke & Sørensen, 2014).

Material for this study is collected from different sources, and none of it created by the author of the thesis. Therefore source criticism is important. Document evaluation of official Rwandan documents is done carefully following the checklist provided by Bryman (2012:561) and their validity and availability is discussed when necessary. The Rwandan national curriculum for primary education is the primary source of information about how the elements of national identity are diffused into the children (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). The research questions and the topic of the study thus steered the collection of material, which became a dynamic process. As the study scrutinises the state, the society and the curriculum in Rwanda, the relationships between these items had to be taken into consideration. The Vision 2020 draft document which summarises the Rwandan state's current goals as plans and ideals that influence the overall policy-making in Rwanda also discusses the importance of education. Vision 2020 is composed by the Rwandan Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and the document steered the study's attention to look at education policy-making in Rwanda. Two Rwandan state institutions steering the nation's education policies were recognised: the Rwandan Ministry of Education

and the Rwandan Education Board. Together these two institutions have composed a curriculum framework document which was last updated in 2015 (this is further discussed in section 5.3). The curriculum framework determines the guidelines for curriculum drafting on different levels of education in Rwanda. As the study advanced and more was learned about the structure of education in Rwanda, the author of the thesis decided to focus on Rwandan basic education at primary and lower-secondary school. At this point, the curriculum framework revealed the subjects taught at this level in Rwandan schools. Furthermore, a careful analysis of the curriculum framework revealed more policy papers influencing curriculum drafting in Rwanda: Education Sector Strategic Plan, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, Seven Year Government Programme (7YGP), and the Harmonised Curriculum Framework for the East African Community. The Ministry of Education and the Rwandan Education Board compose the curricula and syllabi for each school level and subject, and the websites of both institutions were consulted for these documents.

Once the documents listed above were acquired, they were rigorously scrutinised. Vision 2020, 7YGP, Education Sector Strategic Plan, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Harmonised Curriculum Framework for the East African Community were studied and synthesised with scholarly sources using a hermeneutic approach (Bryman, 2012:560-561). This approach was chosen to study the Rwandan state's motivations to influence the curriculum drafting process in terms of national identity diffusion. The results from this scrutiny, especially with regard to Vision 2020, 7YGP and Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, were also used in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the thesis to describe the motivations of the Rwandan state to penetrate the society. Discovering 'true' state goals from Rwandan official documents proved challenging and deserves a short discussion here. The study began with a hypothesis that the Rwandan state indeed has goals, and set out to recognise these goals from documents composed by state institutions. The goals became apparent only by scrutinising several different documents from different sources once they were synthesised with existing academic publications: certain themes, which are elaborated on in section 5, were brought up in Rwandan official documents and were in alignment with previous academic research on Rwanda. The reoccurrence of themes indicates that the Rwandan state is indeed pursuing these goals quite seriously instead of simply stating them on paper. Discussions of these goals in academic publications supports this argument further.

The selection of school subjects for this study was done after reading each subject's curriculum. The final selection included Social Studies, History and Citizenship, Religious Education, and Entrepreneurship (see section 5.4). During the selection process, it became apparent that themes related to and signs of national identity diffusion were the most apparent in these subjects. This led to the closer scrutiny of these curricula and a thorough study of the subjects' syllabi. Selecting subjects for closer scrutiny to find out specific results in this way is common in education and curriculum research (e.g. Cramer & Lampe, 1994; Durrani & Dunne, 2010; Murray, 2008; Sheldon, 2012).

Authors of secondary sources are widely recognised reliable, but the limitation of their research is also discussed when necessary, and elaborated in section Previous research. A clear structure, logical conclusions, and the open representation of material and evidence together with their sources support the internal validity of the thesis. External validity is strived to by presenting the methodology and material as openly as possible. The thesis focuses solely on the Rwandan education system, but because similar material is available for other countries, the methodology and conceptual and theoretical frameworks used in this thesis can be copied and used to study other country contexts. Should the study carried out for this thesis be replicated, it is expected that similar results would be discovered (Bryman 2012:47-48). The extensive conceptual framework is here justified by the prevailing lack of universal understanding of the meaning of ‘national identity’. National identity is specific to a group of people (in this case, Rwandans identifying themselves as Rwandans and interacting with their state), which is why the Republic of Rwanda and the official documents composed by its state were chosen for this study. Republic of Rwanda as a site of inquiry was chosen because of its past and the means the state is currently utilising to stabilise its domain and prevent the atrocities of the past from ever happening again.

5. Analysis

5.1 The role and reach of the state in Rwanda

The relationship between the state and its subjects, the people, can often be described as contractual. There is no formal contract binding the individual to the state, but a social one. The individual gives up some of her freedoms and in turn receive services from the state. If this contract is violated on the part of the individual, she is punished according to the law (Rousseau, 1762). Although the presentation of the state-society relationship as a contractual one has been criticised due to its simplicity and lack of generalisability to different contexts (Simon-Ingram, 1991), it describes the Rwandan state-society relationship quite well. The first section of the analysis describes the role and reach of the Rwandan state while the second section focuses on describing and explaining the power that the state has. This is important, because the power expressed elsewhere in society can also be expressed in the school-society nexus where the national curriculum is negotiated. The capacity of the state to maintain social control also reflects its capacity to achieve its goals which this thesis explores in the national curriculum (Migdal, 1988). To understand what role the Rwandan state has in the Rwandan society let us look at the functions and duties it has, or those that it has assigned itself.

Anthropological inquiry on the subject of Rwanda has revealed that a story of an ancient structured society and centralised political system lives on and is reproduced in Rwanda (Sundberg, 2014). This relates strongly to an important task governing groups and bodies are expected to perform: *state and nation building*. State formation manifests through achieving and maintaining *sovereignty*: by

dividing territories distinctly into “inner” (within borders) and “outer” (outside borders) a domain is created where the state’s exclusive authority is recognised (Morris, 1998). No foreign state is to intervene with the actions of another state within that state’s own borders. Two other common characteristics of a modern state relate to the ‘inner’ sphere: they are the capability to maintain a monopoly on legitimate physical violence within its territory (Weber, 1919) and the delivery of public goods other than the political order (Mazucca & Munck, 2014). State building in post-colonial nations is given special attention because the state often precedes the nation. This, then, becomes apparent in nationalistic actions and discourses through which the state assigns itself nation-building projects (Durrani & Dunne, 2010).

The reach of the state is proportional to the capacity of the state to carry out the aforementioned tasks. The main tools the state has at its disposal are a functioning, unified and standardised bureaucracy and judicial system, or law (Boone, 2012). The provision of for example social and health services in the peripheral regions and deployment of armed troops and police forces throughout the domain to uphold laws that are uniform throughout the domain, links people with different backgrounds to the central state (*ibid.*:626). Durkheim (1893:68) criticised this notion of laws regulating the individual’s relationship with the state, asking “What, moreover, is the State? Where does it begin and where does it end?”. This question directs us to see how wide the reach of the Rwandan state within the Rwandan society is. It is useful for us to explore this separately, because it lays the foundation for the thesis’s first argument. The Rwandan state has the capacity to deeply penetrate the society and its institutions, and it justifies this by combining developmental and ‘never again’ ideologies (Mann & Berry, 2015).

The Rwandan state is an authoritarian one, and works actively to expand its political control (Hintjens, 2008; Ingelaere, 2014; Mann and Berry, 2015; Purdeková, 2011; Sundberg, 2014). The state’s administrative body, and effectively the society, have been structured by the state with the top administrative entities being provinces, followed by districts, sectors, cells, and finally *imidugudu*, or villages (Ingelaere, 2014; Pourdeková, 2011). Some would place President Paul Kagame and his government to the top of the administrative pyramid, or even talk synonymously of the government, administration, and the sole ruling party, RPF (Hintjens, 2008; Sundberg, 2014). Entities in the hierarchy work with a mandate from an entity above them. Districts control the coordination and allocation of economic resources to sectors which are responsible for service delivery and development projects. Population mobilisation for work and projects happens at cell level. A typical Rwandan citizen interacts with the bureaucracy at sector level and below, where legitimacy is sought by allocating a number of positions to be filled by elections. A demonstration of linkages and loyalty to the state is that although the administrative infrastructure is used to diffuse orders down the pyramid, positions with a monthly salary are found at sector level and only occasionally at cell level, and this concerns only appointed personnel. At village level the administration is elected and receives no salary although they are in direct contact with the population (Ingelaere, 2014). The services provided by sectors and put into practice by cells include security, health care and education. Moreover, in the case of the distribution of education

services, “districts oversee the management and inspection of [schools] and monitor how sectors and cells oversee the management of [schools]. ... The administrative cell, particularly, has the official mandate of managing and monitoring [schools]” and has the vital role of “sensitis[ing] parents to value education for their children as well as participat[ing] in education activities” (MINEDUC, 2010:11).

The “webs of people” that make up the administration are the state’s primary tool for controlling the people (Purdeková, 2011:477). The spread of information with cascade potential within this web of administration is made possible by the state’s deep penetration of the people’s lives at village level through the bottom-up transferring of reports and requests. As all members of the village communities are expected to participate in the meeting of annual targets or performance contracts (*imihigo* goals; e.g. harvest goals, construction of commercial complexes) everyone becomes linked. The goals are created by villages’ Executive Committees together with District Committees who also monitor and evaluate progress (IPAR-Rwanda, 2015). As a physical sign of state presence, a general or colonel is stationed in every District (Purdeková, 2011:478). This way citizens are not only reminded of the role, reach and authority of the state – considered important by Weber – but they are also linked to the web of surveillance through which information about tax-paying, drinking, applying for a passport and much else can be monitored. This web is crucial for monitoring the regime’s opponents (Hintjens, 2008).

The state’s administrative infrastructure serves as a platform for the state to achieve its goals. The Rwandan state goals are found in the Vision 2020 draft document where they are categorised into six pillars and three overarching themes. While each government department and ministry is responsible for their own sectors and creating policies, Vision 2020 steers these actions. The six pillars are: good governance and capable state; human resource development and a knowledge based economy through an extensive education system; a private sector-led economy; infrastructure development; productive and market oriented agriculture; and regional and international economic integration. The cross-cutting themes are: gender equality; protection of the environment and sustainable natural resource management; and science and technology, including ICT (MINECOFIN, 2000). Three objectives arise from the six pillars which encapsulate the state’s vision and goals. These are the promotion of macroeconomic stability and the reduction of aid dependency, the transformation from an agrarian to a knowledge-based economy, and the creation of middle-class and an economy led by entrepreneurship. Indeed, Rwanda aims at being a middle-income country by the year 2020 (*ibid.*:11-13). Education is mentioned several as the key to achieving most of the goals. For example, the document mentions improvements in education as “crucial for providing an efficient and productive workforce” twice (*ibid.*:12,15), illuminating the importance of the education system to the state. The stability of the country, unity and reconciliation are not directly mentioned in any of the goals, but the narrative of unity and strength put forward by RPF is present throughout the draft document. Vision 2020 briefly explains how the Rwandan people formed a peaceful society which shared a common language and culture and did not recognise different ethnicities. This “unity of the Rwandan nation” was broken by a foreign colonial intervention (*ibid.*:7) and has only begun to return after RPF “put an end to the 1994 genocide

and thereafter formed the Government of National Unity” (*ibid.*:8). The document then proceeds to criticise former governments for relying on foreign technical expertise in the management of state institutions (*ibid.*:10). In the section about Good Governance and a Capable State, the Rwandan nation is envisaged as “a people, sharing the same vision for the future and ready to contribute to social cohesion, equity and equality of opportunity” (*ibid.*:14). Later in the document the state seizes for itself “explicit political will and efforts for reconciliation” (*ibid.*:29), which together with the envisaged Rwandan nation does not leave room for distinct ethnic groups but a new unity through a new identity which is based on new values.

5.2 Creating a new national identity by eliminating old ethnic identities

One dimension of the justification of the bureaucracy and administrative infrastructure that connects the citizens tightly to the state is the ‘never again’ ideology practiced within the state (Hintjens, 2008). After the genocide of 1994, which in the official narrative is framed as a genocide against the Tutsi (Sundberg, 2014), the government that was formed in the place of the old one that had been destroyed during the chaotic genocide, presented itself as a “Government of National Unity” (Mann & Berry, 2015:127) and consisted of moderate Hutus and Tutsis who had formed the military-cum-political RPF party during the genocide. RPF secured most of Rwanda and virtually ended the genocide. RPF emerged as the morally superior group, and before long became the sole power-holder (*ibid.*). Hence the comparison of RPF and the Rwandan state (Sundberg, 2014). The genocide traumatised not only Rwandans but the international community as well. Neither the United Nations or the Union of African States (nowadays, African Union) could prevent the genocide or intervene, which allowed for the RPF to create a narrative of itself as a capable military force, and of Rwanda as a nation that must stand alone united because it cannot rely on the international community for help, and because ethnic divisions within the society would lead to a cycle of violence (Mann & Berry, 2015; Sundberg, 2014). This has given the Rwandan state a nearly unlimited amount of freedom to shape and control the society. Anyone acting as an opposition or questioning of the state can be labelled as a ‘*génocidaire*’ or ‘divisionist’, and all talk of ethnicity is discouraged. The state, depicting itself as a capable military force, has assigned itself the task of maintaining order and stability which stems from unity (Hintjens, 2008; Mann & Berry, 2015; Weber, 1919).

The Rwandan state’s aspiration to maintain stability through ‘unity as *Rwandans*’ clearly implies a new collective identity, designed and diffused from above (Durrani & Dunne, 2010). Already on the second page of the Vision 2020 draft document a “clear Rwandan identity” is mentioned as a state goal, and as a norm for a proper Rwandan citizen, a full participant in the society (Kaberuka, 2000:2). This, then, implies a need for new myths of a homeland, of a community and its shared memories, new sentiments and feeling of entitlements to a *patria* and the land’s resources, legal equality, and cultural unification with shared values and traditions (Smith, 1991). Hintjens (2008) has recognised the three

main instruments that the Rwandan state uses in its search for unity: history, laws and politics. When applied to the plans for the creation of a new national identity these instruments are used in different ways for a common goal. According to the official Rwandan narrative, different ethnic groups lived in a symbiotic and harmonic relationship until the European colonial intervention. This ‘Garden of Eden’ narrative is problematic and is in strict contrast with scholarly research (*ibid.*:14), but is sufficient for the creation of a sense of unity in several ways. It implies a need to stand united as help from the outside is not reliable, and it paints a picture of a mythical homeland to return to. Sundberg (2014:92-93,95-102) calls this mythical homeland the Golden Era of Rwanda whose inhabitants shared a soldier identity. Sundberg explains that according to the Golden Era narrative, Rwanda was a strictly structured society where the citizens were expected to work hard for common good, be obedient to their superiors and sacrifice if needed. Ethnic divisions, in this narrative, are replaced with class divisions, although the class-society is framed as just and as allowing for upward mobility.

The domain of law overarches those of history and politics. In modern Rwanda, openly discussing Hutu, Tutsi and Twa ethnicities is prohibited. Moreover, political parties are allowed to register on the condition that they do not question the existing unity paradigm, set by RPF (Hintjens, 2008). It is in this way that the Rwandan state attempts to steer legislation making in a direction that promotes the RPF’s ideal of a common consciousness. The state still faces a challenge with beliefs and sentiments in its campaign to eliminate different ethnic identities. The elimination process excludes the possibility of being both a Hutu or Tutsi or Twa *and* Rwandan, although the combination in general is easier for the Tutsi since it is they who form the elite (Hintjens, 2008; Ingelaere, 2014; Mann & Berry, 2015; Sundberg, 2014). The sentiments towards a *Rwandan* nation and beliefs of a new unity are still very real and strong among those who possess them. In the case of Rwanda, it is the group engineering new Rwandanness, the state and its elite, where they must exist. Acts in opposition to the rules of the society sharing solidarity through likeness are most easily found in penal law which enforces punishment as a form of social control. Therefore acts that pose a threat to the political elite in Rwanda are harshly punished, as they are perceived as disturbances to the nation’s social cohesion (Durkheim, 1893; Hintjens, 2008; Mann & Berry, 2015). The punishments imposed in this manner are what Durkheim calls *repressive*: they make demands on the agent directly, punish her and aim at inflicting suffering. They reflect the community’s moral codes (Durkheim, 1893). This not only indicates a need to protect the group’s collective consciousness, but also a need to uphold and maintain it (Smolicz, 1981), which the state attempts to do through its extensive penetration of the society.

The role of law and justice in the national identity building process in Rwanda manifests itself also through the extensive use of the concept of reconciliation. The Vision 2020 draft document names “explicit political will and efforts for reconciliation” as a key task for the state in post-genocide Rwanda (MINECOFIN, 2000:29). In Vision 2020, other tasks of the state as part of reconciliation include destroying ethnicity cards, the establishment of the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation, and the establishment of courts for the less serious crimes carried out during the genocide. The *gacaca*

reconciliation system is one of these courts. *Gacaca* tribunals are community-based courts, aimed at imposing justice at grass-root level, and the system was designed on a court system used in pre-colonial Rwanda. They were established to support the overloaded justice system after the genocide, but also to help communities reconcile and recover by handling their own trials (United Nations, 2012). Suspected *génocidaire* are not allowed a defence during *gacaca*, and according to script are expected to confess, ask for forgiveness, and repent by either serving a short jail sentence or communal work, or be forgiven (Ingelaere, 2014). In *gacacas*, the judge is elected by the local community, but it has been documented that in some cases the police superintendent plays a more important role in the “backstage ‘preparing of witness’” (Pourdeková, 2011:478). As discussed above, according to the way the genocide is framed within the official discourse in Rwanda, only Hutus are tried in *gacaca*. This, together with the fact that soldiers of the RDF (Rwandan Defence Forces, the military branch of RPF) are not tried in *gacaca* (Hintjens, 2008:17), strengthens the mostly Tutsi RPF’s narrative of history and imposes justice accordingly. The communities are given a sense of empowerment and sovereignty over their reconciliation process whilst these processes remain tightly controlled by the state (Pourdeková, 2011:478). This kind of tribunal that imposes punishments in a repressive way, making demands on the accused agent’s wealth and honour, again, reflect the ideal moral code of the community (Durkheim, 1893). However, interestingly and in the spirit of reconciliation, harsh physical punishments were not passed. This, then, signals modernity and new unity. It also signals the adaptation of lenient, ‘modern’ punishments which are “strikingly isomorphic” in the “models of the good [societies]” (Meyer, 2007:263). Sections 5.1 and 5.2 have described the structure of the Rwandan society where the state’s status and monopoly to legitimate violence are to a large extent unchallenged. The Rwandan state works actively to secure its monopoly of access to control which supports the state’s fulfilment of goals in contrast to more ‘web-like’ societies where the state’s status is challenged by other entities (Ishihara, 2015; Migdal, 1988; Weber, 1919). Having described the context and the role and reach of the state, the thesis moves on to describe how the national school curriculum is drafted and how national identity is diffused using it.

5.3 The creation of the Rwandan national curriculum and the function of education

Rwandan compulsory education lasts 9 years from age 7 to age 15. Basic education begins in primary school which concludes with a national examination granting the *Primary Level Certificate* and access to lower-secondary schools. In secondary schools the pupils follow a similar curriculum in the lower (ordinary or O-level) and can choose a study track between general or technical education, or enrol at a Teacher Training College at the upper-secondary level (or A-level, A for ‘advanced’) (EP-Nuffic, 2015; MINEDUC, 2013). Because every pupil in Rwandan primary and lower-secondary school follows the same national curriculum and can choose from different tracks in lower-secondary school, this thesis will focus on primary and lower-secondary education. Primary education in Rwanda is free for the

families and pupils (MINEDUC, 2015a) with the obvious exception of private schools. According to statistical data collected by the Rwandan Ministry of Education in 2014, the net enrolment rate in Rwandan primary education has been high 2010-2014 (96,8% in 2014, meaning that nearly all children in the age group that officially correspond to primary schooling attend) while completion and transition rates are lower (61,3% in 2014 and 73,4% in 2013). This means that while nearly all children officially corresponding to primary school-going age are enrolled in primary school, not all of them graduate and continue to secondary school. Furthermore, gross-enrolment rate in 2014 was at 134,3%, meaning that there are still many over-aged children attending primary schools because of repetition or delayed enrolment (MINEDUC, 2015b:14). While Rwandan primary schools are under a lot of stress with high levels of repetition, high gross-enrolment rates and high pupil-qualified teacher ratios, the primary school system has achieved a higher net enrolment rate than the Sub-Saharan African average (77,4% in 2013) and is given special attention in Vision 2020 (MINEDUC, 2013, 2015b; World Bank, 2016).

The Ministry of Education of Rwanda (MINEDUC), working under Minister of Education, Honorary Dr. Musafiri Papias Malimba is the government institution responsible for educational matters, and follows the guidelines set by the state, through its Education Sector Strategic Plan. The mission of the MINEDUC is “to transform Rwandan citizen[s] into skilled human capital for the socio-economic development of the country by ensuring equitable access to quality education focusing on combating illiteracy, promotion of science and technology, critical thinking, and positive values” (MINEDUC, 2013:9). In primary education, the mission is echoed in the national curriculum which has the vision of “optimising the potential of all learners and enabling every young Rwandan to make a valuable contribution to the sustained growth of the nation” (REB, 2015:16). The Rwandan curriculum, which refers to the learning outcomes further elaborated in syllabi, is created within the *curriculum framework*. It consists of the policies, laws, guidelines and directions that dictate how the curriculum, educational material and teacher training is planned, developed and implemented. The Rwandan curriculum framework includes Vision 2020, Education Sector Strategic Plan, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, Seven Year Government Programme (7YGP), education policies, and the Harmonised Curriculum Framework for the East African Community (EAC; consists of Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) (*ibid.*).

As stated in the Introduction, national curricula are often portrayed as battlegrounds. Those who decide the contents of the curriculum decide what pupils are taught in school. This stretches beyond the subjects taught in school to *how* different events in history lessons are framed and how the duties of the citizen are taught in social studies lessons. If there is only one dominant force in the school-society nexus the drafting of a curriculum is a relatively straightforward process due to the consensus of the activities and their monitoring in schools. Okuma-Nyström (2009) describes events from Canada in the 1960s when the North-American National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) issued a paper called *Indian Control of Indian Education* where the indigenous peoples declared their will to have ownership of indigenous peoples' education. The Canadian federal government complied and the control of

indigenous education was given to the local native populations. Before the challenging of the federal government by the NIB, it had been a dominant force in the school-society nexus. The balance was disturbed by a new actor and restored once compromises were made. In this way, different views, values, actors, etc. guide the drafting of the curriculum. The previously mentioned list of documents influencing the Rwandan curriculum framework implies that “the administration of education by the State” (Balsera, 2005:24) has a central role in determining the contents of the final national curriculum, even though the international East-African network also plays a role. In Durkheim’s terms, the institution of formal education has a dual function. Through the determination of contents of curricula, the many purposes of education itself are determined. Research on comparative and citizenship education has recognised human capital formation, the diffusion of values and practical skills, and the pupils’ own understanding of their rights and capabilities as typical goals of formal education (Kubow, 2009). The purpose of education is not only to raise a skilled labour force, but to also reproduce the society through the pupils.

Vision 2020 recognises economic stability, development and diversification together with regional and international integration as some of its objectives and pillars (MINECOFIN 2000), which reflect well the need to integrate the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, 7YGP and Harmonised Curriculum Framework for the EAC in the national curriculum framework. The Rwandan curriculum framework has set aims and values for the intended learning outcomes. One of these aims is the standardisation of skill and outcome testing and evaluation to make Rwandan education more comparable in the international education arena. The curriculum should also be “dynamic” in order for it to be swiftly adjustable to “future employment needs of the nation and the global economy” (REB, 2015:17). The curriculum values steer the creation of syllabi, or what is taught to the pupils and how it is taught. Listed values such as “the importance of family [and] Rwandan culture and heritage” steer the subject selection process while other values, such as “excellence, aspiration and optimism” and “learner-centredness” steer the syllabus planning process (*ibid.*).

The Rwandan curriculum framework and therefore the curriculum is highly influenced by the Rwandan state, because the state goals have a central role in the curriculum framework. Moreover, because of the high degree of influence that the state has in Rwanda, the school-society nexus is to a large extent dominated by the state. The attention given to pupils and children in the Vision 2020 and 7YGP underlines this further. This is understandable, because as was discussed extensively in previous sections about the role, reach and motivations of the Rwandan state, post-genocide unity building projects and stability are the major motivators of and sources of legitimacy for the current state. Children and young pupils, however, have not experienced the genocide but they make up the ‘social soil’ where the society and state are planted and reproduced, and who will be the first ‘real’ united Rwandan generation should the state’s preferred narrative be absorbed and accepted. The state’s own ideologies and values, such as modernisation, developmentalism and nationalism, and the culture and language of the collective consciousness are attached to the national curriculum in the curriculum framework and diffused to the pupils who are the perceived legacy and future of the nation (Dooley, 2013; MINEAC,

2010). As Vision 2020 sets a goal for an annual GDP growth of 7% (MINECOFIN, 2000), the aligning of educational and cultural values with economic goals is necessary. Nationalism, national unity and economic growth are not exclusive but the state works to synthesise all of these. The 7YGP stresses the importance of expanding the teaching of science and technology and opening new vocational schools in every district. Furthermore, the programme sets goals for expanding basic education from 9 years to 12, increasing the share of girl pupils studying science and technology to 45%, and promoting the teaching of English and Kiswahili languages to advance regional and international integration. Technological and vocational schooling together with education leading to entrepreneurship is considered important for the building of a productive and efficient workforce in the Vision 2020, but education is also considered crucial to the mediating of “Rwanda’s cultural values, the culture of peace and integrity, human rights and patriotism” (MINEAC, 2010:57; MINECOFIN, 2000). “Patriotic and responsible citizens, ready to play a full part in society”, “confident and self-reliant people, ready to take their place in the labour market”, “dignity and integrity”, “[national and individual] self-reliance” and “national and cultural integrity” are some of the aims and objectives for pupils and basic values for the Rwandan national curriculum (REB, 2015:17), which implies that the values (such as self-reliance and a strong work ethic), although they serve economic goals are also the virtues of the model Rwandan citizen, and have their root in the soldier identity of the idealised past (Sundberg, 2014).

Earlier in the thesis, the curriculum was discussed as a battleground, but throughout its argumentation this thesis has discussed *education* from a functionalist perspective. In ‘Previous research’ and ‘Conceptual and theoretical frameworks’ it was noted that scholars often take a conflict theorist approach to the study of the ‘curriculum as a battleground’, while Durkheim as a functionalist has been criticised for his lack of attention to conflict theory. To sum up this section of the analysis, let us look at the social function of education, but also understand the difference between the curriculum and education. Very often ‘education’ and ‘curriculum’ are discussed synonymously, but the curriculum, however, is merely a part of the institution of education which encompasses among other things methods of teaching, discipline in the classroom, and the curriculum. While the final curriculum can be seen as the result of conflicts between stakeholders and interest groups, it does not mean that conflict is the sole force in education. No matter how conflict-ridden the curriculum drafting process would be, no matter how the education system would be restructured – education, in one form or another has always been present in human societies serving a function.

When Durkheim (1893:49) wanted to recognise a function, he sought for “the need which it supplies”. This function is not solitary, though, as it always serves and is in a relationship with the greater “organism” (*ibid.*), i.e. the society. Education has a function in the society, as does the division of labour, marriage and religion, or any other social fact. The ‘goals of education’ recognised by comparative and citizenship education research together with the current youth of Rwanda providing the conditions for the society’s maintenance and reproduction as the ‘social soil’ make up the essential elements of the function of education (Durkheim, 1893; Kubow, 2009). Durkheim argued that there are

two consciousness in people; one that is personal and individual, and one that is common, shared and social. Education addresses the latter: for the society's social organisation to be maintained and reproduced the pupils are required to learn the values, morals and manners of the surrounding society, and be prepared for a full membership of the society (Durkheim, 1983; Ottaway, 1955), but this is not to say that education could not be used to implement social change, such as absorbing new identities and ideologies, as well. In the Rwandan context, the idealised future dictates the conditions for the values, morals and manners taught in schools. An important aspect of functionalism is the assumption that the society needs a sufficient amount of solidarity between its members for them to remain members of the society. Too little specialisation or role differentiation between the members will not provide the society with the necessary skills and resources, while too much of it will lead to alienation and lack of solidarity between the members. Education contributes to upholding this vital balance through its function, which translates into the creation of not just an educated group of citizens but a skilled labour force. Solidarity between the people then comes from their interdependence (Durkheim, 1893).

In the next section the national curriculum and the narratives it contains will be scrutinised more closely. The function of education becomes more apparent, and the necessary solidarity through interdependence is discussed in terms of how it appears in the curriculum.

5.4 The diffusion of national identity through the curriculum to the pupils

The national curriculum for Rwandan basic education at primary and lower-secondary school is extensive and, following global trends contains subjects from Physics to Social Studies and English Literature. Although all of the subject syllabi follow the curriculum framework it does not make sense to analyse the contents of all subject syllabi here, because even though the selection of every subject in the curriculum is politically negotiated and is therefore influenced by motivations realised in the school-society nexus, themes of national identity and citizenship are more apparent in for example History and Citizenship than in Mathematics. The content analysis therefore focuses on Social Studies, History and Citizenship, Religious Education, and Entrepreneurship. Kinyarwanda is the language of learning in the first three years of primary school after which the language used in school changes to English. Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, French and English are all taught as separate subjects throughout the education (MINEDUC, 2015a). While Kinyarwanda is the native Rwandan language, the learning of other languages is deemed important for economic purposes. This narrative justifies the extensive use of the English language in a way that does not make its use seem 'unpatriotic'. The Rwandan Ministry of Education reasons the teaching of English, French and Kiswahili in the Competence Based Curriculum document in terms of commerce, communication and culture (*ibid.*:19-20). The subject rationale for these languages is based on their wide global and local use:

“English is a lingua franca in many countries for a wide range of purposes including trade, commerce, science and technology and in accessing information using information technology. Rwanda is a member of the Commonwealth and of the East African Community in which member countries use English as the official language of communication. [...] French is important in the national and international contexts and one of the official languages of communication in Rwanda. As a member of the community of Francophone nations, Rwanda needs the French language in order to communicate with other member nations. It is also a language for trade and commerce all over the world. [...] Kiswahili is a language spoken by many people in Africa, particularly [EAC] member states of which Rwanda is one. The Rwandan population needs to communicate with fellow EAC members for different socio-economic, political and cultural reasons.” (*ibid*:20).

The narrative of a *need* to learn for reasons of economic and global integration is absent when the curriculum framework discusses the national Kinyarwanda language. In the curriculum framework, it is given a special status and is not only a means of communication but a cornerstone of the Rwandan identity:

“Kinyarwanda is the native and official language spoken and understood by the vast majority of Rwandans. Kinyarwanda is the language of learning of nursery schools and of the first three years of primary schools. Kinyarwanda is the language of basic literacy, which requires to be well mastered by students because it serves also as [a basis to learning other languages]. *There is a strong link between Kinyarwanda language and cultural identity, cultural values and heritage.*” (*ibid*:20, italic added).

Each subject has their general objectives stated in its syllabus. These objectives clarify what the pupil is expected to understand about the subject upon graduation. The objectives are divided into three categories: there are objectives for knowledge and understanding, skills, and attitudes and values. Furthermore, subjects taught in Rwandan schools are divided into topic areas which are divided into smaller sub-topic areas where individual themes are specified. These sub-topics are linked between subjects to provide pupils with a comprehensive understanding of different themes, for example the sub-topic area of ‘Unity’ in History and Citizenship Studies is linked to Social Studies and Religious Education through discussions about “living together in harmony” during these subjects’ lessons (REB, 2015a:44). Moreover, the subjects are connected by cross-cutting themes. There are eight of these: genocide studies, environment and sustainability, gender, comprehensive sexuality education, peace and values education, financial education, standardisation culture, and inclusive education (MINEDUC, 2015a). The cross-cutting themes are already decided in the curriculum framework which sets the narrative for how these themes are discussed in class.

Through the contents of certain subjects and the overarching themes, the values, culture and myths, common memories and loyalties and solidarities are diffused into the pupils through an institution that represents the state’s authority (Smith, 1991). The History of Rwanda is studied in

primary school in Social Studies and in secondary school in History and Citizenship lessons in several sub-topics. In the 6th grade of primary school, the history of Rwanda is taught during lessons about pre-colonial Rwanda and its economic and political organisation, the arrival of foreigners, and colonisation. The attitude and value related learning objectives during ‘History of ancient, colonial and post-colonial Rwanda’ in secondary school lessons are, among others, for the pupil to “show respect for components of the Rwandan pre-colonial civilizations” (MINEDUC, n.d.; REB, 2015a:31). Other value-related objectives emphasise showing respect to victims of famines and socio-political and economic independence of pre-colonial Rwanda (*ibid.*). These history lessons are elaborated in other classes through poems, dance and music. Later in education, the history of pre-colonial and colonial eras is elaborated in ‘German and Belgian colonisation’ where attention is given to assessing the impacts and effects of German and Belgian colonisation and “military occupation”, as it is framed in the syllabus (*ibid.*:56). In the history and citizenship syllabus pre-colonial Rwanda is described as a unified *civilization* without much reference to the different ethnicities that occupied the land or fought over its resources. The Social Studies syllabus portrays pre-colonial Rwanda as “an organisation [of] clans and social classes” that shared one cultural identity and language (MINEDUC, n.d.:78). The nation portrayed in these lessons is a regional military power occupying the same land as the contemporary Rwanda (*ibid.*). This narrative is in alignment with the official Golden Era narrative of a unified, structured and powerful kingdom (Hintjens, 2008; Sundberg, 2014). It also creates a narrative of continuity and right of ownership of the land. The syllabi highlight the long presence of the Rwandan nation in the same territory where a well-structured society exploited the resources and waged war against their *neighbours*. Resistance towards occupying powers is also brought up together with the influence of colonisation on the genocide of 1994 (MINEDUC, n.d.). In this way the sense of belonging and ownership of the land is taught to the pupils. The pupils are also taught to feel a continuum of a unified population with a shared identity – a nation – always having occupied the land (Smith, 1991; Roccas et.al., 2010).

The history classes depict the pre-colonial Rwanda as a *patria*. Although the society presented in syllabi is indeed different from the Rwanda of the day, the curriculum presents it as a stable nation where the division of labour together with a distinct political apparatus upheld the people’s solidarity to the kingdom and to each other. This balance was disturbed by colonisation when interventions by outside forces created inequalities within society which ultimately led to the genocide (MINEDUC, n.d.; REB, 2015a). The narrative proceeds to present, the period from independence to 1994 as a dark era which culminates in the genocide and finally ends with RPF’s occupation of Rwanda. The History and Citizenship syllabus for O-level in secondary education guides the teaching of the History of Genocide. The learning objectives follow the official narrative closely by teaching the pupils to “explain the causes of the genocide against the Tutsi”, “analyse the causes of the genocide against the Tutsi”, and “appreciate the causes of the genocide against the Tutsi [and] recognise how genocide against the Tutsi was carried out” (REB, 2015a:57-58). Learning activities include group discussions about the genocide and a role play about how the genocide was stopped. Also the role play serves the official narrative, as according

to the syllabus the pupils are expected to “appreciate the role of RPF/RPA [Rwandan Patriotic Army, later renamed RDF] to stop the genocide against the Tutsi” (*ibid.*:58). The mentality of a unified people standing alone with only their own state and society to rely on is similarly apparent in history and citizenship classes about Hindrances of dignity and self-reliance in Rwandan society, where the pupils should “explain [and] assess the importance of dignity and self-reliance” and “advocate for them” (*ibid.*:79). The normative portrayal of ‘self-reliance’ (even though history and citizenship lessons discuss it in a national context) is further strengthened in the entrepreneurship syllabus. The “Development of an efficient private sector spearheaded by competitiveness and entrepreneurship” is the third pillar of the Vision 2020 strategy, and its role as the creator of wealth, employment and competitiveness and as a catalyst for transformation from an agrarian to a knowledge-based society are emphasised throughout the draft document (MINECOFIN, 2000:6). Self-reliance and an “improved status” are enumerated as the “benefits of being an entrepreneur” in lower-secondary school’s entrepreneurship syllabus (REB, 2015b:38). The pupils are also encouraged to “develop a positive attitude towards being an entrepreneur” (*ibid.*) which for its part helps the pupils to assign a positive connotation to ‘self-reliance’.

The patriotic self-reliance narrative is also used as a tool in two ways. It shifts the state’s responsibility for delivery of services and development to the people as the flow of aid money to Rwanda decreases, and it provides the state with a new form of control over the population. This new infrastructural form of control happens through the institutions already established in the society and is therefore not despotic but social. The constant promotion of entrepreneurship guides people to participate in this infrastructure, because private entrepreneurship in Rwanda is tightly controlled, and small-scale and private companies often have to participate in cooperatives that are registered at government agencies (Mann & Berry, 2015). It also serves another purpose that is related to the state’s modernist and developmentalist ideologies that are idolised in the Rwandan society. Entrepreneurship and its congruence with self-reliance promotes the values of a strong work ethic, and education leading to it can be perceived as a sensitisation process to the state’s values (*ibid.*:17). From a functionalist perspective, a diverse economy is also a source of social solidarity. Entrepreneurship, participation and specialisation in the labour force of an industrial or post-industrial market economy and the interdependence that follows “create[s] in two or more persons a feeling of solidarity. In whatever manner the result is obtained, its aim is to cause coherence among friends and stamp them with its seal” (Durkheim, 1893:56). The society that follows from these interactions is the one upon which the people assign their sense of belonging. The primary school’s social studies syllabus, for example, has a unit named ‘Rwanda needs Committed Good workers’ where the pupils are instructed to describe the qualities of a good worker, explain why they want to become good workers and give examples of good workers. The contents of the module consist of concepts of responsibility, the good leader (a good leader can “enhance unity among people”), self-reliance, good governance and the need for “committed

workers” (MINEDUC, n.d.:84). A strong work ethic, which resembles the previously mentioned soldier identity (Sundberg, 2014:95-102) are therefore being taught to the pupils as cultural values and ideals.

Loyalty to the state, adherence to law and solidarity to one’s community are other values that are presented as Rwandan and taught to the pupils (REB, 2015a,b,c). The Religious Studies syllabus for O-level discusses the importance of showing ‘respect’, ‘self-control’ and ‘accountability’ as important base values for making “good decisions” (REB, 2015c:vii). The History and Citizenship Education syllabus discusses the importance of respect as the base value for “spirit of nationalism and self-reliance” (REB, 2015a:43). The same syllabus also highlights the role of respect and solidarity in national unity and patriotism. Unity, respect, patriotism and the importance of having a national identity are discussed in the Unity sub-topic area where the pupils are instructed to “discuss in group the importance of interdependence and unity and thereafter present the results” (*ibid.*:76). The role of the state is discussed in the sub-topic area Democracy and Justice in History and Citizenship Education. As a role and a function of the state, the “importance of State and government to determine the Rwandan identity” is mentioned (*ibid.*:74-75). Overall, the role of the Rwandan state is studied in order to “acquire the spirit of patriotism” (*ibid.*:75) while the acquisition of a “law abiding” spirit is discussed during lessons on Rights, duties and obligations (*ibid.*:73). Adherence to the law is presented together with the concept of citizenship in the syllabus, where the rights of the citizen and the obligations of the state are also presented. An overarching theme for the unit is responsibility, be it on the part of the state towards its citizens or of the individual towards her family, community or nation. The Religious Education syllabus lists as one of the key competences of the pupil at the end of Religious Education the appreciation for “the role of respect of leaders, values and one’s conscience in promoting inner peace” (REB, 2015c:4). Moral and ethical education is included in the Religious Education syllabus and it is divided into different topics and units. In the syllabus, moral behaviour is often divided into distinct categories of good and bad practices. Good practices include showing respect to one’s elders and leaders, nurturing friendships, and maintaining a good relationship with one’s god, be it Allah or the Christian God. Bad practices include showing disrespect, neglecting one’s spirituality and relationship with her creator and, in sections about both Islam and Christianity the violations of one’s sexual rights and bodily integrity (*ibid.*). Gender rights, gender equality and the rights and obligations of the citizen are highlighted throughout the curriculum and in nearly all studied official documents. These freedoms, among many others that Rwandan state grants its citizens, could be dubbed social side payments for loyalty, following the argumentation by Mann and Berry (2015:10) whose research focused on the physical side payments, such as rural land reforms and free primary education in Rwanda. The state is interested in maintaining the integrity of its public image to the global audience and has to be able to include as many people as possible to enable the modernisation project to proceed (Meyer, 2007). The narrative of unity supports these aspirations. The state is therefore not interested in publicly persecuting sexual or religious minorities or the representatives of any certain gender.

The values and myths described and discussed above are crucial for the creation of a unifying national identity. A collective identity is often solidified through a contrast against the Other, or Others (Petersoo, 2007). This creates a distinct division between Us or the Self and the Other, who is often portrayed negatively or as a threat. The sense of unity and solidarity towards one's own reference group becomes possible more easily if there is a group who is clearly not 'Us' and threatens 'Us'. Rwandan official documents and the national curriculum suggest that the Other is division and genocide ideologies and the people harbouring them. The 7YGP commits itself to "reverse the ideology of past leaders who based themselves on discrimination and divisionism until it culminated in the 1994 genocide against Tutsi" and to "continue assisting Rwandans in facing genocide sequels and uprooting its ideology as well as other evils based on discrimination" (MINEAC, 2010:9,14). The History and Citizenship syllabus, in the sub-topic area History of Genocide, has as a learning objective for the pupils to become "responsible participants in civil society so as to protect their communities against all kinds of division and genocide ideology" (REB, 2015a:88-89). Even though the definition of genocide and division ideologies is elusive to say the least, both are made crimes. The meaning and scope for both criminal ideologies has not been set by the Rwandan criminal court, but Rwandan courts have adjudicated and convicted defendants on divisionism charges (HRW, 2008:34-43). The laws prohibit denial and minimisation of the Rwandan genocide as well as "all ethnic, regionalist, and racial propaganda, and any propaganda based on any other form of division" (*ibid.*:35). The crimes are imprescriptible, and people found guilty will face a prison sentence of five to twenty years (*ibid.*). As discussed earlier in the thesis, loosely defined terms such as 'denial' and 'minimisation' allow the authorities to quite freely target persons whom they deem divisionists or *génocidaires*, and often people talking in opposition to the state are targeted. Opposition members, activists and anyone criticising the modernisation and developmental policies, or disagree with the state's ideologies "[risk being] accused of divisionism [and can] find themselves declared enemies of the new Rwanda" (Hintjens, 2008:10). In light of what has been discussed in the thesis, the Others for modern Rwandans may be foreigners or native Rwandans who disagree with the state's goal of 'unity' or act in an 'unpatriotic' manner. Sharing the Rwandan national identity is an aspect of subscribing to this unity and patriotism.

6. Summary and conclusion

This research overview set out to discover the extent to which the Rwandan state penetrates the society and its institutions to discover the role the state might have in determining the contents of the Rwandan national curriculum to reach its own goals. The purpose of this study was to see how national identity diffusion might manifest in the national curriculum. Evidence was gathered from different sources, synthesised and studied using the conceptual framework presented in chapter 3. The study found that the state, working to maintain its monopoly to social control and mobilisation, is able to reach and

control the people's lives to a great extent as well as the society's institutions. The Rwandan state reach extends into the school-society nexus where its hegemonic role enables it to determine the contents of education to a large extent and therefore fulfil its goals. This thesis has concerned itself with the goal of national identity diffusion to the pupils, which it concluded is motivated in many official documents, which became apparent within the right conceptual framework. Evidence of this goal can also be found in academic publications when they are studied with the right conceptual tools.

This thesis has argued that the state works actively to eliminate the collective identities it perceives as challenging a new Rwandan national identity. Evidence was displayed on how the state enforces narratives and the framing of events in a way that 'unity as Rwandans' is given a positive connotation while public references to Hutu, Tutsi or Twa identities are frowned upon, and narratives on historical events involving ethnic identities are tightly controlled by the state. The state also influences not only the scope of education but also what is taught by controlling the contents of the national curriculum. The thesis argued that national identity is being diffused through the curriculum to the students attending basic education. Evidence of the importance of education to the state and the state's influence onto educational arrangements including its contents was found in the Vision 2020 draft document, the 7 Year Government Programme, and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy. Nationalism, security and stability including the unchallenging of RPF, and modernist mentalities were recognised as the main motivators of the state. Myths, values and loyalties related to the new Rwandan national identity based on the ideologies of the state were found in the national curriculum. The basic education syllabi under the curriculum included elements of the myths, values and loyalties of the national identity. By synthesising Rwandan official documents with academic publications, this research overview was able to trace the origin of these myths, values and loyalties to the Rwandan state which is engaged in a nation-building process. The elimination of old ethnic identities and their replacement with a new Rwandan national identity contributes to the reproduction of the nation and the state (Migdal, 1988). The authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state is also solidified through this process. By teaching loyalty to the state and the nation, and by romanticising the imagined past, the state seeks legitimation for its authoritarian policies. The state considers it important to attach children's unquestionable affection to their first collective identities to national identity, which is why the Rwandan state dominates the school-society nexus (Druckman, 1994; Epstein, 1992).

While Rwanda has been in focus in this thesis, the research has been carried out in a way that would be possible to repeat in different country-contexts. This contributes to the thesis's external validity, but also provides a contextual framework for studying how state goals are realised in national curricula elsewhere. Education is considered as an important factor for development (OWG, n.d.). Because of this, tools must be created to study education beyond its function of increasing human capital. If official documents similar to those used in this research were collected from other countries and studied using the frameworks and methods detailed in this thesis, it is probable that similar information about the role of national identity diffusion through national curricula would become apparent. Of

course, the results would probably be different for every country because of states' different roles and capabilities and different power-balances in their respective school-society nexuses.

The research presented in this thesis has not been designed to be normative in nature and it has not had an ideological agenda. This thesis presents the role of the state in the Rwandan society and its capacity to influence the national curriculum in the school-society nexus in the present day. Hopefully this thesis will inspire further research into school-society nexuses to reveal the motivations of different actors to influence contents of education.

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