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Cole, Elizabeth. 2015. "Book Review: From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda by Elisabeth King." *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 1(1): 167-171.

The ***Journal on Education in Emergencies (JEiE)*** publishes groundbreaking and outstanding scholarly and practitioner work on education in emergencies (EiE), defined broadly as quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocation, higher and adult education.

BOOK REVIEW

Elisabeth King's new study of education in Rwanda is an excellent in-depth case study of the "two faces of education" conundrum: education, whether through content, classroom practice, structure, equity of access, or a host of other messages students can receive about the society they live in, is not an unalloyed good because it can contribute to either conflict or peace. This powerful theory, first developed in *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict,* a 2000 report edited by Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli, fully comes alive in King's focused picture of one country's experience with both education and violent conflict (Bush and Saltarelli 2000). Once again, the in-depth case study shows the great value of this approach in helping to bridge the gap between theories and practice in real-world contexts. While the underlying theory is familiar to those in the field of education and conflict, without details of the intersections between school systems and sociopolitical developments, it remains abstract. This book makes the connection concrete. It should be read not only by scholars and policy makers in the context of education and education in conflict, but also by political scientists, scholars, and analysts from other social science disciplines and policy worlds who are seeking to understand more fully the role education plays in political conflict.

Of King's key messages, two are particularly clear. The first is that education can play dual roles—contributing to conflict and building peace. Again, to people in the education and conflict field, this is not news, but to the vast majority of readers it truly is a revelation. As shown in studies like the current UN MyWorld survey—which asks people around the world to rank 16 essential needs—education, jobs, health care, affordable food, etc.—a broad spectrum of people put enormous faith and hope in education, which ranked first in the MyWorld results (United Nations 2014). An eloquent example of the intense yet in some ways misplaced faith in education emerges in King's interviews with Rwandans, as they tell her that the genocide was due to "ignorance"—specifically, a lack of formal education (1). King's second message is therefore that education must be treated very seriously as a potential contributor to conflict, both structurally (how the school system and classrooms are set up) and in terms of content (what is taught).

But King's third message, which addresses the most critical reforms needed to make education serve peace, fades into something less concrete—and for very good reasons. In Rwanda and far beyond, education reform is caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of two facts:[1] one, for each positive potential result from a certain reform there is a potential negative; and, two, even when it is pretty clear which reforms are critical and most likely to have positive results, the political will to implement them may be missing, or they are likely to be controversial and hence unstable or temporary.

At the end of her opening theoretical chapter, King addresses her concern that acknowledging the negative potential of education could somehow undermine the field—which, despite discursive recognition, is still neglected both in the humanitarian world and in development aid, especially in comparison to health care but to other areas as well. King notes that the publication of Bush and Saltarelli's study and widening recognition of the "two faces" theory created a fear that donors would use education's less than stellar record as a force for peace as a reason to deprioritize support for education in emergencies, which groups such as the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies had begun to campaign vigorously for by the time the message in the study was being actively discussed. King provides a nuanced answer to the hypothetical concern that she may be contributing to the feeling that education cannot serve peace enough to be a donor priority (14). This is an important argument, given that elaborating the "dark dimensions" of education takes some courage for a champion of education, even today.

This book also does a service to the field of political science, the author's original discipline, which generally overlooks education. As King points out, political scientists do not tend to study education, and education scholars and political scientists do not often interact (165). Hence, education remains marginalized in international relations and peace and conflict studies: "When this literature considers education's role in conflict, it usually concentrates on a lack of schooling, not on how schooling itself can contribute to conflict. Schooling is generally considered a black box without consideration of who has access or of the educational and psychological processes going on in schools" (7). In addition, King's overall focus on class and economic inequalities in Rwanda are a valuable and useful counterweight to the focus on ethnicity as a driver of conflict, particularly in Rwanda.

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1   Scylla and Charybdis were mythical sea monsters noted by Homer that lived on opposite sites of a narrow channel. Being caught between Scylla and Charybdis thus means having to choose between two dangers.

From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda is based on King's research in Rwanda, which she undertook mainly in 2006, with a short return visit in 2009. She conducted semi-structured interviews in both French and English with a range of interviewees across the country, from ordinary people to education officials, including some elderly education administrators from the Belgian colonial period. The interviews in Rwanda were complicated by the generally repressive atmosphere, thus King complemented them with an analysis of both primary and secondary education policy documents, curriculum materials, and textbooks. The book opens with a theoretical section that first compares theories of conflict in education with political science, then moves to the education and conflict literature. She elucidates concepts of the "hidden curriculum" in education and school, which are more familiar to education scholars than political scholars as (a) a "reflector of existing social conditions"; (b) an "amplifier of social categories and messages"; (c) a signal of progress and the fulfillment of citizens' demands for essential services (or not, in the case of neglect of education); and (d) a "causal contributor," that is, as an institution that can give students agency (21-22).

Other theoretical foundations of the book include a discussion of stigmatization, which is critical in understanding education's role in society, followed by a summary of existing theories of conflict that focus on horizontal inequalities and exclusive identities, and of theories of peacebuilding that focus on—in an elegant piece of structural symmetry—horizontal equity and inclusive identities. King explores at length theories of creating new national identities, which are widely understood to be a critical part of sustainable peacebuilding efforts and conflict transformation. She summarizes the main approaches to transforming conflict identities, along with their implications for education, as (1) individuation, a move from focusing on groups to individuals and their rights; (2) recategorization, or the creation of a new group identity with the aim of enhancing social cohesion; or (3) multiculturalism-pluralism/mutual intergroup differentiation, which is related to cross-categorization, with a stress on individuals having multiple identities based on various categories. It is the third approach that some scholars, including Marc Howard Ross, say appears to be most effective (31). Finally, King stresses critical thinking as a peacebuilding strategy, citing a number of interesting empirical studies, including a 2001 study by Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo on tests showing improved "anti-authoritarianism" scores as well as knowledge on civics texts, when students of civics classes engaged in more classroom discussions of issues and less "rote learning" of facts (34). Generally, King's literature review offers evidence to strongly support the claim (34) that "children must be confronted with conflict and have practice understanding it in order to be able to manage conflict peacefully in their own lives"

(Bickmore 1999). The rest of the book is organized historically, with chapters on colonial-era education, education in the Rwandan republics, and education in postgenocide Rwanda. This structure, which interweaves the major conflicts that have characterized Rwanda's history, effectively makes the point about the relationship between education and conflict. Finally, King concludes by giving a broader picture of the possibilities of education for peacebuilding, which places Rwanda in comparative perspective.

Among the many valuable insights this book offers is a section on the danger of trying to use access to education as a form of reparation, which can exacerbate ethnic tensions by causing some to resent victims for receiving undeserved privileges (126 ff). This point will be of particular interest to the transitional justice sector, which counts reparations among its arsenal of weapons to redress past wrongs. The statistics on educational attainment in Rwanda are also valuable. Rwanda is much admired for its supposed achievements in development; in the field of health, this admiration appears to be justified. But while primary school enrollment has risen dramatically in Rwanda to an above-average level for sub-Saharan Africa, primary school completion is much far below average, and net enrollment rates for secondary school and especially tertiary school are below average for the region (123-125). King demonstrates the continued salience of class and income disparity in Rwanda by showing that the figures for education attainment among the wealthiest quintile of Rwandans are much better than those among the poorest: "As has been the case throughout Rwanda's history, class plays an important role in accessing opportunities and the state" (126).

One of the book's most valuable insights is the highly conflictive role that education has played in, or the ways education has been used to foment, conflict throughout Rwanda's history: its complexity and danger were tellingly summarized by the last Belgian resident general of Rwanda, who called education in the country "at the same time a jigsaw puzzle and a viper's nest" (51). The same two images could be applied to the "history problem." Although King looks beyond the most conflict-related part of education (how the past is taught) to consider the entire system, her discussion of the deep difficulties surrounding history education since the conflict reveals how widely people disagree about how they see history as a subject—often with even internal contradictions. Many Rwandans told King that schools need to return to teaching history, but not the history of bad and violent things ("I want to wait until we will write a history that does not divide people"), although people disagreed widely on what exactly should be left out. Many of her interviewees also said, "If our history is atrocious, it is our history. We still need to teach it" (130). A viper's nest, indeed—but a necessary one!

It is not a criticism of King's work to say that, overall, this is not an optimistic book. It leaves one tempted to say that we have no viable model for how to approach education after atrocities of the level experienced in Rwanda. As a complement to King's book, similarly structured and detailed studies of less all-encompassing conflicts than a genocide, and/or less historically intractable conflicts, would provide good contrast: is the contradiction of education as peacebuilder/cause of conflict a dilemma writ large, or is it really qualitatively different in this postgenocidal setting? Are there postconflict contexts with more political space for education reform that can tell us more about the impact of conflict and about what works? We do have detailed studies about education from Northern Ireland, but more studies like King's in other contexts would be extremely valuable. Cambodia, for example, also a country that experienced mass killing (although not ethnic genocide), now teaches the history of the Khmer Rouge period in its classrooms even as it continues to have many structural inequities in the education system. We clearly could benefit from knowing much more about education's historical trajectory and the impact many postconflict reforms have had on peacebuilding in these places. King's methodology and rigor point the way.

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