

The Things They Learned: Aspiration, Uncertainty, and Schooling in Rwanda's Developmental State

Timothy P. Williams

To cite this article: Timothy P. Williams (2018): The Things They Learned: Aspiration, Uncertainty, and Schooling in Rwanda's Developmental State, The Journal of Development Studies, DOI: [10.1080/00220388.2018.1453602](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2018.1453602)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2018.1453602>



Published online: 27 Mar 2018.



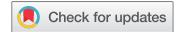
Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



The Things They Learned: Aspiration, Uncertainty, and Schooling in Rwanda's Developmental State

TIMOTHY P. WILLIAMS

Department of Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath, Bath, UK

(Original version submitted August 2017; final version accepted March 2018)

ABSTRACT *The role of formal education in the reproduction of inequalities is well documented. Less clear is how this lens can be applied to a study of post-conflict state-building. The present study pairs policy analysis with student-centred ethnographic fieldwork to examine education policy in Rwanda. Since the end of the genocide, the government has staked its claim to legitimacy in delivering inclusive development. Its basic education policy is an entitlement programme with broad public support and designed to allow all children to attend primary and secondary school. Students found themselves caught up in a web of contradictions with important symbolic and material dimensions. They went to schools designed to improve access for the poor. But they were also poor schools, lacking in quality and associated with failure. The country's switch from French to English was bound up in alliances of domestic power that further undermined effective teaching and learning. The basic education policy intended to highlight the government's commitment to deliver development to all. But in absence of a sustained and effective strategy to improve quality, young people felt excluded from meaningful engagement in the education system. Whether the basic education policy constitutes inclusive development is therefore debatable.*

We expected to achieve many things. It didn't happen. But I thank God that I am still a student.
(Interview with Secondary School Student, Eastern Province, Rwanda, May 18, 2014)

1. Introduction

On 23 January 2013, Jean Paul¹ learned that he passed his O-Level national examination. He later learned that it meant nothing.

Jean Paul was well-versed in the importance of schooling in Rwanda. From the radio, he learned that education, rather than cows or land, was to be children's inheritance. Becoming educated was cast with a sense of urgency. If he expected to develop himself and his family, the government told Jean Paul that he needed to go to school. He wanted to become a doctor.

Jean Paul's family was poor. Less than a decade earlier, he would have almost certainly had to discontinue his studies after primary school. However, a new education policy meant he now had the chance to study at the secondary level at what was called a school of basic education. The policy formed the backbone of the government's effort to 'ensure that all Rwandan children have the right to attend six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education [O-Level] and three years of upper secondary education [A-Level]' (MINEDUC, 2011, p. 2). Jean Paul's lower secondary studies took place at a school called Groupe Scolaire Kimunga (GSK). As a school of basic education, GSK was markedly less expensive than other government secondary schools. However, such schools

Correspondence Address: Timothy P. Williams, Boston College School of Social Work, McGuinn Hall, 140 Commonwealth Avenue, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, USA. Email: timothy.williams@bc.edu

were also understood as being ‘cheaper’ – or lesser – in other ways. They had undertrained teachers and limited resources. Schools of basic education also carried the unfortunate distinction of being known as the ‘schools for those who failed’. As one of Jean Paul’s teachers put it, ‘This is the bottom of the class. Those are the ones who come here’.

When Jean Paul passed his Senior 3 examination, he was offered a place to study science for his A-Levels at a well-regarded boarding school. It was the kind of school to which he was told to aspire. But he could not afford the fees to attend. If he wanted to continue his studies, he would need to do so at the kind of school he and his classmates at GSK had aspired to leave: a school of basic education – a school for failures and a reputed dead-end for social mobility. At his new school of basic education, Jean Paul studied the sciences, but after two terms, he only saw the inside of a laboratory once, when he went on a field trip to a boarding school. ‘You can think all you want, but the practical realities are different’, he said when we met the following year. ‘I didn’t have other options if I didn’t go to this school [of basic education]. The other option I had was to sit at home.’

Jean Paul was acutely aware of how schools of basic education compared to other schools. Officially, all government schools of secondary education were the same: students at schools of basic education, like their boarding school counterparts, studied the same national curriculum, and they took the same national examination. Both were secondary schools. When I mentioned these similarities to Jean Paul, he laughed. ‘Here we study our A-Levels’, he said. ‘But it is not a secondary school. It is not a boarding school. It is not a high school. This is a school of basic education.’

Jean Paul’s educational experience informed how he thought about himself and his future – just not in the way he had hoped or expected. Passing the examination was not the trajectory-altering experience that he had anticipated it would be. Jean Paul learned about the importance of the government’s commitment to development and the importance of going to school. It instilled in him a perception of possibility. And yet his experience at school made clear just how out of reach these possibilities were for him. In the words of Jean Paul, ‘Doctors don’t attend schools of basic education.’

In the end, Jean Paul succeeded in the O-Level examination. And in the end, it did not matter.

Since the end of the 1994 genocide, the Government of Rwanda has introduced a series of education policies aimed at inclusion. By 2012, all young people were entitled to attend primary and secondary school (MINEDUC, 2003, 2015). The Ministry of Education has received global recognition for its work to expand access as quickly as it did (UNICEF, 2012). But for many young people like Jean Paul, schooling functioned as a source of contradiction. They went to a school known as schools for the poor. But they were also known as poor schools. Children had unprecedented access to continue their studies, but they also felt excluded from meaningful engagement within that system. In this paper, I analyse fieldwork and interview data carried out in schools and the surrounding community to shed light on the experience of being a student at a school of basic education and to consider implications for the government’s broader state-building project.

Formal education has the potential to serve a number of important functions. It is associated with higher economic returns, better health outcomes, democratic participation, more opportunity, and so on (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; Singh, 2011). But while it has the potential to offer these benefits, some scholars point to an alternative, more critical narrative. They note that the operative word is ‘potential’ – that placing too much faith in education ‘as a driver for change might divert attention away from social struggles over the value and uses of education in situations of economic uncertainty’ (Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2008, p. 8). That the background, knowledge, skills, and other dispositions needed for social mobility are held by dominant and elite groups is not coincidental. Left unexamined, schooling operates as a contradictory resource, transmitting values in a way that reproduces or reinforces inequalities across social categories such as ethnicity, gender, and social class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Levinson & Holland, 1996).

The recognition that schooling plays a central role in perpetuating difference is not new or surprising. What is less understood are the implications for how we might apply this critical lens to the study of education in Rwanda, where the importance of inclusion is not only a chief aspect of the government's development strategy, but also intrinsic to the survival of the country's ruling party—and the viability of state itself (Golooba-Mutebi, 2013).

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The next two sections offer additional details about the historical and contemporary educational context of Rwanda. I then describe the methods used for this study. The sections that follow comprise the empirical and analytical heart of this paper, whereby I focus on how students and other community members interpreted their experience of the basic education system. The paper closes with a discussion that summarises the arguments made and considers how findings from this study can advance our understanding on the nexus of education and development in post-conflict developmental states.

2. A brief history of formal education in Rwanda (1898–1994)

Formal education was introduced when Rwanda was under German (1898–1916) and Belgian (1916–1962) colonial occupation (Newbury, 1988). The Europeans aimed to accomplish their goals through collaboration with Rwanda's Royal Court, which was comprised of a small group of elites who held the designation of 'Tutsi.' For most of this time, schooling was primarily a Church-led enterprise (Longman, 2010). Few children received formal education. Those who did were children of elites who received European-style education, while children from the poor rural peasantry (both Hutus and Tutsis) were typically offered 'just enough' education for religious conversion, but not so much that it might lead one to reject their role in the existing social hierarchy (Hoben, 1989, p. 8).

As the colonial era came to an end, formal education emerged as an increasingly desirable way through which social mobility might be achieved (Longman, 2010). Becoming educated (along with being a Catholic and a Tutsi) was among the attributes necessary to secure wage employment (Des Forges & Newbury, 2011; Erny, 2001). For the rural, predominately Hutu population, unequal opportunities, along with exploitative labour systems, led to a system of institutionalised oppression (Newbury, 1988). Unequal access to education was among the factors that contributed to a Hutu-led revolutionary movement that preceded Rwanda's 1962 independence (Carney, 2014; Lemarchand, 1970).

The newly independent Republic of Rwanda, led by President Grégoire Kayibanda, assumed a prominent role in organising schooling. Under what became known as the First Republic (1962–1973), the government focused on expanding educational opportunities at the primary level (King, 2013). During this time, primary school enrolment grew but the government struggled to maintain a basic level of quality (Hoben, 1989). A military coup in 1973 led to the Second Republic and the installation of Juvénal Habyarimana as President (1973–1994). Secondary schooling became increasingly sought after as the means to social mobility (De Lame, 2005). Yet, throughout the two Republics, ethnic and regional identification served as trump cards for admission to secondary school that could override examination performance (King, 2013). Citing unpublished material from the Ministry of Education, Obura (2003) reports that 85 per cent of secondary school students were admitted based on the combination of examination performance, ethnicity, and regional quotas; 10 per cent were selected by churches; and 5 per cent were chosen by the Ministry of Education.

Any momentum the education system had attained came to a halt in the 1990s. Rwanda's civil war and genocide decimated the country. An estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed between April and July of 1994 (Des Forges, 1999; Prunier, 1995). The conflict had devastating effects on the school system. Schoolchildren, teachers, and other formally-educated people were specifically targeted in the genocide because they were thought to represent the educated and elite class (MINEDUC, 1998). Many of those who were not killed fled the country (Obura, 2003). Two-thirds of all school buildings were severely damaged; approximately 75 per cent of all public sector employees (including teachers) were either killed or went missing; and an estimated 50 to 70 per cent of the remaining primary and secondary teachers were underqualified for their positions (MINEDUC, 1997, 1998).

There was a shared sentiment by most observers that the education system had failed the country (Gasano, 2006; MINEDUC, 1997). By the end of 1994, Rwanda was considered to be a failed state (UNDP, 1997).

3. Education policy in Rwanda's developmental state

Rwanda's approach to governance and state-building since the genocide is increasingly described in similar terms as 'dominant developmental' (Booth & Golooba-Mutebi, 2012; Williams, 2016, 2017), 'developmental' (Biedermann, 2016; Mann & Berry, 2016), or 'post-developmental' (Honeyman, 2016). These concepts have important differences (see Honeyman, 2016), but they collectively share the idea of a strong, centralised approach to state-building, a political system relatively free of rent extraction, and also one devoid of real competition. Rwanda's governance is 'developmental' in the sense that elite legitimacy and incentives centre on a development project focused on lifting all Rwandans out of poverty and addressing the factors that are thought to have led to conflict, such as ethnic divisionism, regionalism, inequality, and few opportunities for social mobility (Golooba-Mutebi, 2013; MINECOFIN, 2000). It seeks to transform the country from a subsistence-based agricultural economy to a knowledge-based, market-oriented society.

Formal education has been central to the government's approach to inclusion in its developmental aspirations. Rwanda's new Constitution made primary school fee-free (RoR, 2003). Between 2009 and 2010, it introduced basic education policies that made secondary education (O-Level and A-Level) an entitlement rather than one based solely upon merit or financial capacity (MINEDUC, 2011). By 2012, primary school enrolment was nearly universal, while net enrolment in secondary school stood at about 25 per cent (NISR, 2012b).

While access has expanded, indicators of quality remain low. Less than 20 per cent of primary school students complete their studies on time (NISR, 2012a). For those who complete their first year of primary school (Primary 1), just one in three can identify all of the letters in the alphabet (Friedlander, Gasana, & Goldenberg, 2014), while one in five Primary 3 students are unable to read any word of the grade-appropriate passage they are tested on (USAID, 2014).

3.1. Basic education policies

In 2008, a Nine Year Basic Education (9YBE) policy was introduced that extended access beyond primary school through O-Levels (Senior 1 through Senior 3). Then, during his 2010 re-election campaign, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame promised to extend 9YBE to a Twelve Year Basic Education (12YBE) policy. This basic education policy can be seen as a logical step toward improving access to secondary schooling. As community-based day schools, they were designed to be more affordable and practical than boarding schools because students do not pay for room and board.

At the same time, government boarding schools continue to serve an important function. These secondary schools were officially known as 'Schools of Excellence'. They are intended to be reserved for the top performers on the primary (P6) and lower secondary school (O-Level) national leaving examinations (MINEDUC, 2011). In 2012, on a per-student basis, boarding schools received about four times as much funding from the government as schools of basic education.² Unlike schools of basic education, government boarding schools do not fall under the country's fee-free basic education policy. School fees, combined with the cost of accommodation, food, transport, and other materials made boarding schools prohibitively expensive.³

Basic education schools can therefore be understood to serve two important functions. First, schools of basic education can be considered 'overflow schools'. While the number of places available at government boarding schools has not increased, the basic education policies increased the number of students enrolled in government secondary schools, making boarding school spots even more competitive. Schools of basic education were thus intended to address this gap (Honeyman, 2016). Those who did well on their examinations but were not offered a place at a boarding school could now

continue their secondary studies – albeit at a school of basic education. Second, schools of basic education could also be considered ‘safety net’ schools. Those who would have otherwise had to drop out due to poor grades, economic hardship, or other extenuating circumstances (for example, helping to support their own household) could now have the opportunity to continue their studies at a school of basic education.

3.2. English language policy

Another important development was the country’s new language policy. Starting in Primary 4, the medium of instruction shifts from Kinyarwanda to English. Prior to 2009, however, the language of instruction had been French, not English, owing to the country’s Franco-Belgian colonial roots.

The new language policy was announced with little warning. As one might predict, it posed an immense challenge for teachers who had studied and trained in a Francophone system (Abbott, Sapsford, & Rwirahira, 2015). When the language change was introduced, just 15 per cent of primary teachers and 10 per cent of O-Level teachers were proficient in English (MINEDUC, 2009). A 2012 study of 600 primary and secondary teachers found that nearly 94 per cent had a ‘beginner’ or ‘elementary’ knowledge of English (Simpson, 2013). Of O-Level teachers in the sample, 5.3 per cent demonstrated a basic working knowledge of English (Simpson, 2013). Challenges related to the new language policy disproportionately impacted students in rural schools, which often had difficulty attracting qualified teachers due to low pay and difficult living conditions (Abbott et al., 2015). Teachers with strong language skills opt for better-paying teaching positions in urban areas, boarding schools, private schools, or in non-teaching professions.

The government explained the shift to English in terms of economic development. The shift to English was designed to facilitate regional integration and serve as a point of entry into the global market economy (Samuelson, 2013). Rwanda recently joined the East African community and also the British Commonwealth. It helped to establish stronger ties with Anglophone countries such as the UK and the United States, and their corresponding donor agencies, DFID and USAID.

The language shift was also bound up with domestic power alliances. The government’s ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), was founded by a group of Rwandan refugees whose families had fled to Uganda to escape Tutsi-targeted violence during the two Republics. Most core members of the RPF studied English and not French (Prunier, 1995). Thus, while the language change had an economic explanation, it could also be explained as promoting the backgrounds and preferences of a powerful minority group.

4. Fieldwork and field site

The purpose of this study was to better understand how students attending schools of basic education understood their situation in Rwanda’s developmental state. I utilised ethnographic methods during nine consecutive months of fieldwork in 2012 and an additional six months of follow-up visits over the next three years.⁴ The majority of the community-level data gathering occurred in a rural sector called ‘Kinunga’ in Rwanda’s Eastern Province. About 43 per cent of households in Kinunga fall below the official poverty line (NISR, 2011). During my fieldwork, access to amenities such as electricity and clean water was improving but remained limited. Nine out of 10 households in the area relied on farming (NISR, 2011). In addition to schooling, most young people in the area were expected to help their families by fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, looking after cows, digging in their fields, and protecting rice crops from birds and thieves.

There are seven government-run schools in Kinunga. While I spent time in each school, most of my work centred on the experiences of students attending a school of basic education called Groupe Scolaire Kinunga (GSK). In 2012, GSK offered O-Level studies (Senior 1 through Senior 3) to about 700 students. Administrative oversight, resources, and land at GSK were shared with an adjoining primary school. Like many schools in Rwanda, GSK was government-run but the land was owned by

the Catholic Church. In addition to school- and community-based observations, I worked closely with a group of 16 Senior 3 ‘focal students’ at GSK whom I got to know well over the course of the fieldwork (including Jean Paul). Their lives were the microcosm through which I investigated the nexus of individual and collective processes (Kleinman, 2006). I purposely selected this group so that they collectively comprised a range of socio-demographic characteristics and dispositions such as gender, geographic proximity to school, language ability, academic performance, and personality traits (for example, shy, outgoing, and so forth) (Williams & Rogers, 2016). In 2012, each focal student was in the last year (Senior 3) of their O-Level studies. Given that GSK did not yet offer A-Levels (Senior 4 through Senior 6), each student would be transitioning elsewhere after taking their national examination at the end of the school year.

5. Findings

The rationale behind the basic education policy was clear: to give all young people the chance to continue their studies. But what also became clear over the course of my fieldwork was that those who attended schools of basic education were caught up in a complicated web of contradictions, one with important symbolic and material dimensions. On the one hand, they were instructed by the government that education was their inheritance, that they needed to continue their studies if they wished to develop themselves and their country. On the other hand, the experience of attending a school of basic education was the antithesis of the inheritance narrative. Students grappled with what to do in the face of the contradiction. Below, I elaborate on why this was the case through three themes: (1) schools of basic education were associated with schools for failures and the limited quality suggested to students that they did not have a real chance at success; (2) the English language policy prohibited students from doing well; and (3) students had to reconcile the contradictions of basic education with the other options they had, which were few.

5.1. Schools of basic education were known as schools for the poor and also poor schools

Over the course of my fieldwork one theme emerged with striking regularity: schools of basic education were associated with failure. Students at GSK took their cues from their peers, teachers, school administrators, and members of their family and community. A head teacher of a nearby boarding school called GSK ‘the school for those who fail’. A teacher at a nearby primary school referred to GSK as ‘the school for stupid kids’. A history teacher at GSK described his own students as those who are at ‘the bottom of the class’. A secondary student at a nearby boarding school remarked that GSK was the type of secondary school in Rwanda that attracted those teachers ‘who were secondary school dropouts themselves’.

A powerful narrative emerged about the relationship between the national examination, the value of schools of basic education, and the status conferred upon students who attended those schools. Students who did well on their primary examination were said to be those who were smart and committed to their studies. They were the ones said to go on to study at government boarding schools, who would attend university, and acquire good jobs. By contrast, schools of basic education were for everybody else. According to many of my study participants, schools such as GSK were for those children who did not take their studies seriously. They were the ones who would go on to assume jobs in agriculture and manual labour, much as their parents did.

The irony is that many students at GSK such as Jean Paul did well on their examinations and were offered spots in boarding schools. This put them at the heart of a contradiction: they didn’t fail their examination but went to schools considered those for failures. In a group discussion, a 13-year-old boy in primary school explained why it was important not to attend a school of basic education like GSK. ‘You can pass the national examination’, he said. ‘But if your parents don’t have money, then you will attend these basic education schools. Then when you meet other students [on the street] they will think of you as a failure [...] even though it isn’t true.’

Felix said he did well enough on his primary school examination to be offered a place in a boarding school for O-Levels. But with five older siblings, a father in prison, and little land to cultivate, his family was poor. GSK was the only option Felix had to continue his studies. Felix expressed worry that his school had little value compared to students who attend boarding schools:

Many people think that we are not intelligent. They don't know that there are some students who have passed the [Primary 6] national examination but who don't have enough money to go to boarding schools. I think people should value us. They should consider us capable, intelligent students.

He continued:

We take the same examination as those children of [government] ministers who go to good schools [that have access to laboratories]. That is why those who perform well on national exams are from cities. They score higher because they have the resources and materials. I think we have smart students here at this school [GSK] – but we can only show our intelligence if we went to good schools.

Attending GSK was not the kind of secondary school experience Felix had envisioned for himself. It was disappointing and frustrating, he said, but he tried to rationalise the situation. '[My parents] didn't blame me for going to GSK. I didn't even blame myself. We all knew our family's financial capacity [was low]'.

Expectations of students attending these schools were low. Teachers and administrators at GSK tended to consider their students to be failures and lacking in intellectual capacity. When I asked the head teacher at GSK about this, he raised his hand and said, 'You have to understand that this school is for those who perform at a low level'. He slowly lowered his hand to emphasise this point. He continued:

This school is called a [school of basic education]. This school is for those children who failed their primary examinations. They don't even have to try. That is the problem with this school. The kids don't work hard. They don't want to succeed.

Another official at the school cited a lack of self-confidence that students had in their abilities was an obstacle for success:

Students don't put strong efforts into their studies. They compare themselves with boarding school students and feel that they are failures [...]. Their mindset is that they are here because they are not smart enough to get into a good school. [...] They feel that they are not clever. They think of themselves as students who will never do anything important for themselves.

But as we have seen, it was often lack of financial capacity or other circumstances, not examination performance, which dictated whether young people could continue their studies at a school of basic education such as GSK.

Many students at GSK expressed a concern that their teachers and administrators lacked confidence in their abilities to study well. Some worried that there was a 'dumbing down' of the curriculum – that teachers withheld school material, because they didn't think their students could handle it. Theoneste explained that it was frustrating to prepare for the same national examination as students from, as he put it, 'good schools', knowing that he and his GSK counterparts had not been taught everything that would appear on the national examination. For him, failure felt unavoidable. 'They prepare the national examination for us as if we have been studying the same things [as those in boarding schools]', he said. 'If teachers at our school only teach us the basics, it is discouraging, because there isn't anything else we can do to prepare.'

The GSK school administration blamed students for being uncommitted and for being failures. Students assigned blame to GSK administration for being uncommitted and for viewing them as failures. However, the emergent concern was a shared one: schools of basic education did not allow

students to feel they had a reasonable shot at doing well. The circumstances of their arrival, material or otherwise, mattered less than the type of school they attended. They weren't necessarily there because they failed their national examination. But they were considered to be failures because they went to GSK.

Parents associated boarding schools with social mobility, but this was not the case for schools of basic education. For example, when Desire passed her primary school national examination, she enrolled in the government boarding school she was assigned to for her O-Levels, only to drop out after a year due to financial hardship and enrol at GSK. As a Senior 3 student at GSK, she once again prepared for the national examination in hopes of being offered a spot at a boarding school for her A-Levels. Her mother said that if Desire passed her national examination, she would do whatever it took so that Desire could continue her studies at the boarding school she was assigned. However, if she failed, her mother explained that Desire should plan to discontinue her studies rather than attend a school of basic education:

If [Desire] passes her national examination, I can go to my parents to request my [own] inheritance [cows and land] early. Then I can sell them in order to send her to [boarding] school. But if she fails, there is no way I can go to my parents for that reason [of sending her to a basic education school].

Around the time I was wrapping up my fieldwork, an editorial was published in *The New Times*, a Rwandan newspaper widely considered to be the mouthpiece for the Government of Rwanda. Entitled 'All Schools Are Good Enough', the editorial implored children and families to embrace the chance to attend school, even if schools did not take the form that they expected or wanted:

Parents should [...] appreciate that a learner can make it in any secondary school and get good grades to proceed to university. We should move away from the stereotypes that your child can only succeed if they attend the traditional good [government boarding] schools. At the end of the day, it comes down to individual discipline and focus. If a child is not disciplined and focused, regardless of the school they attend, they will still be failures in life. (*The New Times*, 2015)

The article suggested that if students worked harder and had 'individual discipline and focus' they would realise educational success regardless of what kind of school they attended. But this perspective was contradicted by nearly all of my study participants: the kind of school students attended mattered. That the editorial was published in such a prominent national news outlet suggests that the relevance of the findings likely extend beyond Kinunga.

For students at GSK, the notion that educational attainment could emancipate one from poverty, lead to social mobility, or confer status and distinction was tempered by a range of constraints. Classes at GSK were taught by undertrained teachers. Textbooks, computers, laboratory materials, and other supplies were scarce.

Students at GSK expressed concerns that there was a gap between what types of careers and subjects they were encouraged to pursue and the resources available to facilitate their learning of these subjects. That the government emphasised the importance of sciences as part of its quest to become a knowledge-based economy meant young people should aspire to study science. Doing well in these subjects was necessary for anyone who wished to pursue a career as a doctor or engineer. But given the absence of resources, GSK students felt they were at a disadvantage. For example, chemistry was widely regarded as the most challenging subject by students at GSK. Students went through their whole lower secondary studies without ever having entered a laboratory. 'I wonder how I can continue my studies in chemistry without measuring chemicals', said Anastase, a Senior 3 student at GSK. On a practice test in the months leading up to the Senior 3 national examination, about one-fifth of all Senior 3 students scored 0 out of 100 on the chemistry section.

5.2. Language change: 'I don't know English and it is the language we use in all subjects'

The English language policy had the effect of putting both students and teachers at GSK in a difficult position: for teachers, to teach in a language they were not proficient in, and for students, to be taught and tested in a language most did not understand. In May 2012, I observed a teacher's English class at GSK. The topic of the day was reading comprehension. The teacher divided the class into three groups of about 10 students each. He passed out comprehension textbooks and dictionaries and assigned the students to read a story he had selected out of the textbook. Students were to read a passage out of the text and answer a list of questions written on the blackboard. Students were clear on the assigned task, because the teacher gave the instructions using Kinyarwanda. However, it soon became evident that most students were unable to perform the assigned work. The story was about an organisation that was reusing garbage to make a profit. However, students did not know the word 'garbage'. To find its meaning, they used the dictionary to find alternative words for garbage, but they were also unfamiliar with words like 'rubbish' and 'trash'. The assignment descended from a reading comprehension exercise into a word search. Students looked at what appeared to be the most important words or phrases within each question the teacher had written on the blackboard, attempted to locate these words or phrases in the text, and then took their best guess as to what the correct answer might be.

There was a near consensus that English undermined children's educational experience, and it was something most school administrators and students said they felt powerless to change. A boy at GSK said he wasn't learning English well because his teachers didn't know English either: 'Education here doesn't have quality', he said. 'We have teachers who studied in the French system, and they don't know English. [...] That is why students from good school perform well. Because they have teachers who are good at English.'

A head teacher at a nearby primary school, himself an Anglophone, concurred:

Children have learning challenges, and these challenges come about due to the implementation of government policies. Today all schools are supposed to teach in English. But we don't have trained English teachers. English is a foreign language. It is one the students don't understand. What's more, teachers, too, do not understand English.

If teachers did not know English, their students also had little chance of doing well. As the language of instruction, English was a prerequisite for learning material in all other subjects. Knowledge of chemistry, geography, biology, and mathematics required a working knowledge of the medium of instruction. Given that school-issued textbooks at GSK were in short supply, student notebooks assumed the function of textbooks. Their notes were their transcription of their teacher's own transcription from a textbook. An error, misspelling, or misunderstood idea was likely to be transcribed in students' notebooks, studied, and later reproduced on the examination.

New material in any subject that used English had the invariable effect of introducing children to a new set of English words and concepts that needed to be clearly understood if they were to be accurately absorbed into the lexicon of students. A statement written on the blackboard 'a pipette is used for chemistry', if written unclearly on the blackboard, might be copied down as 'apipetteis used for chemistry'. One student at GSK, Yvette, said that her teachers demanded that she and her classmates copy down the class notes verbatim, rather than engaging the subject material, because teachers don't feel confident themselves:

When we are answering questions in history, we shouldn't have to memorise word-by-word. [...] But if we change any word they don't give us good marks because they want us to write and memorise what we wrote in our notebooks without changing anything. But for me, the most important thing is to know ideas. Those teachers, they are not good at English.

The effects of the language policy on individual experience can be best understood by learning from Jean Damascene, whom I first met when he was preparing for the O-Level examination at GSK. His

experience was typical of many students at his school. According to his mother, Jean Damascene repeated his fifth year of primary school, because his learning was not progressing to her expectations. She said she wanted him to be fully prepared to study in French. Being comfortable in the language of instruction at school was a key factor for future academic success, she said. ‘Without knowledge in French I didn’t think it would be easy for him to catch up’, his mother said. Neither Jean Damascene nor his mother could have anticipated the language change to English that occurred less than two years after her son repeated a year in school to improve his French. By the time Jean Damascene sat for the Primary 6 national examination, it was held in English. Both Jean Damascene and his mother characterised his performance on the exam as one of failure. That is why he went to GSK rather than a boarding school, said his mother. A few months before he took his O-Level national examination, Jean Damascene said that the language issue remained his most pressing concern. ‘The biggest challenge I face is that I don’t know English, and it is the language we use in all subjects’, he said.

Most teachers in the area adopted a hybrid approach to their teaching. ‘We teach in English and explain in Kinyarwanda’, a primary school teacher said. Students needed their notes in English, because English was the language in which their knowledge would be examined. ‘Students don’t know English but examinations are in English’, he said. To learn the material, explanations in Kinyarwanda were essential, but this learning was not necessarily reflected in students’ examination results. Young people could study hard, but without a sufficient knowledge of, or exposure to, the language of instruction, their odds of learning the material and performing well on the examination were low.

As explained earlier, the introduction of the English language policy could also be explained in terms of history, politics, and power. Being an Anglophone was associated with the ruling party and being a Tutsi elite. The head teacher at GSK noted that the mandate to teach and learn in English undermined student learning. He said that Rwandans are being asked to use English because ‘they want to copy the language of the ruling party. Even English accents here sound like those English accents found in Uganda.’

These types of generalisations are imprecise and potentially dangerous in a country less than 25 years removed from genocide. However, evidence from this study and others suggests that the language policy has helped to inscribe linguistic background as a proxy for ethnicity and political power.⁵

5.3. Shifting expectations for the future

Young people at GSK learned that they were not learning as they had hoped. The basic education policy was created to enable poor households to send their children to schools – but it did so by delivering them poor education. As Patrick put it, ‘If I continue to study in these [poor] conditions, I cannot be a professional. But I keep quiet because I don’t have another option.’ He added, ‘We go to schools that are low [in status and quality], because we don’t have financial capacity. We don’t have a good background. Those schools [of basic education] cannot help you to develop. We know why we go there, but it is still hard.’

Over the course of my fieldwork, I found that what students came to expect from their education began to shift. They suggested that attending school – any school – would be better than the alternative of going to no school at all. For example, when he was still a Senior 3 student at GSK, Anastase vowed to do whatever he could to avoid attending a school of basic education for his A-Levels. However, he now realised that if he wished to continue his studies, a school of basic education was his only option due to limited financial capacity. ‘If I dropped out of school, I wonder how I would feel if I saw my friends and colleagues going to school and coming home, with me just staying home’, he said.

The following year I met a disaffected Anastase at a café near his home. ‘You know I’m not in school now, don’t you?’ he asked me. He said he stopped his A-Level studies due to financial hardship. Being a student at a school of basic education connected Anastase to the government’s national development project, even though he felt on the margins of that project at a school of basic

education. But Anastase's ambitions had gradually diminished in the face of structural barriers that were proving difficult to overcome. As Anastase explained at the café: 'In primary I used to think about being an airplane pilot. In Senior 1 (at GSK) I wanted to become a doctor. Now I think I might like to be a driver.' Until he secured the funds needed to receive a driver's license, Anastase lived with his mother. He said he spent the mornings digging in the family's fields. He visited his neighbours in the trading centre in the afternoons. He hoped to continue his studies, even if it meant now doing so at a school of basic education, the type of school he had once vilified. But, by his own admission, his chances of returning to school were growing increasingly slim.

Another student, Fred, said he wanted to become a scientist. At GSK, he didn't pass his O-Level examination, and so he was assigned to continue at another school of basic education located one hour's walk from his home. The school offered the A-Level combination of mathematics, chemistry, and biology (MCB) – a combination that many students chose who aspired to be doctors or scientists. If Fred wished to continue his pursuit of being a doctor, studying MCB would make the most sense. However, in 2013, Fred said that when he looked around his new school, he saw that it had no electricity, and it did not have a laboratory. In part because the school was still under construction, many of the classrooms did not yet have doors. To study chemistry or biology would require materials that his new school would be unable to offer. As a result, Fred opted to study history, economics, and geography (HEG) – subjects that could be mostly learned out of a textbook rather than dependent on materials his school did not have. Should he have focused on science it would only be a theoretical exercise – much like it was at GSK.

No longer was the prospect of social mobility the core motivation for going to school. Yet, in the view of Anastase and many of his GSK counterparts, the alternatives to studying should also be avoided. They did not think that schools of basic education would allow them to achieve their goals of continuing on to higher education to study medicine or science. But they did not discount what schools of basic education could still do for them: they said they would be able to read road signs, to be a driver, to work at a salon, and to avoid subsistence-based agriculture. Perhaps most crucially, however, continuing their studies at a school of basic education would allow them to avoid the label of 'dropout'. Their continued studies would prevent them from being *considered as someone who was uneducated*. As the Senior 3 national examination approached, a GSK student named Hope offered an increasingly conservative assessment of her future educational prospects. She did not want to continue at a school of basic education, but experience told her that enrolling in boarding school was unlikely to be economically viable. Even so, she found value in attending a school of basic education.

It would make me sad to stop my studies, but I can also be proud of what I did so far. Because I have achieved a good level of education. By the end of Senior 3, I hopefully will have acquired some important knowledge. I can read signs on the road. I can be proud of that achievement.

But if there were social sanctions associated with attending a school of basic education, there were more severe sanctions for those who stopped their formal studies altogether. According to students, discontinuing their studies was to suggest that they were poor or a street child. They could be accused of being illiterate, ignorant, or lacking in self-respect. Young people worried that if they failed to continue with their studies, others may think they were involved in illicit activities such as taking drugs or (for girls) engaging in transactional sex. Failing to study could also suggest that they were uncommitted to developing themselves or their country, an accusation that might lead one to question their commitment to the government's development project and its expectation that all young people become educated.

It was in a discussion with Patrick that many of these themes came to a head. When he was not offered a place at a boarding school for his A-Levels, Patrick continued his studies at a day school located an hour's walk from his family's home. He wasn't happy with his situation, but he remained resolved to continue his studies at any cost:

[In the past] it was clear that some people couldn't afford going to school – that is why they came up with those inferior schools [that is schools of basic education]. They help poor people who

stay in the countryside. Those schools prevent poor kids from poor families from being street kids. Even after completing your studies you can dig but you dig in different ways compared with those who didn't go to school. [...] Those schools [of basic education] help us to get basic knowledge. But we are also different from those who go to those good schools. Those students who go to good schools study in good conditions because they have qualified teachers. They don't walk to school because they stay in boarding schools. But we are happy too because we have those schools of basic education. Instead of going to dig or becoming a street boy we join those schools. [...] You can be jobless but at least someone who is jobless who has a degree.

Students at GSK valued the opportunity to continue their education. Their studies functioned as a form of distinction. Through their studies they learned that they could be educated citizens, that they were included in the country's development project. But they also learned who they were not. It was difficult for Patrick to say that he and his GSK counterparts were educated in the same way as a student who attended a boarding school. When the time comes to look for a job, he knew he was going to be at a disadvantage. Their education at GSK conferred limited value in terms of skills, social capital, and status compared with other schools. Over time, perceptions of what his education might lead to may be more rigidly circumscribed. But while the nature of their commitment to remain in school changed, it did not wane.

6. Discussion

From the radio, students at GSK learned that education, not land, was to be children's inheritance. Yet, their educational experience was one of contradiction. Their concern was that the education they received was dry, infertile, and incapable of producing yields that would translate into economic security. They did not know English well, and neither did their teachers. Students grappled with what value their education had, what status it would confer, and what opportunities it would lead to. Yet, nearly all young people I met wished to continue their education for as long as possible, even if it was at a school of basic education (see also Honeyman, 2016; Serpell, 1993). If given the option between infertile land and no land at all, or between bad education or no education, the choice for most was relatively clear: a school of basic education was better than no school. In this section, I locate this study of education within a broader discussion of Rwanda's developmental state.

The historical link between education and conflict – what Bush and Satrelli (2000) refer to as the 'two faces of education' – has been well-documented in the Rwandan context (Erny, 2001; Gasanabo, 2006; King, 2013). As the utility and prestige of formal education grew throughout the two Republics, it became a source of discontent. Access to 'good schools' became a key proxy of social and economic disenfranchisement (Lemarchand, 1970; Prunier, 1995).

Rwanda's post-genocide government sought to address these divisions that led to conflict through an inclusive approach to development, including education (MINECOFIN, 2000). As Obura (2003, p. 143) wrote in her influential UNESCO report on education in Rwanda after the genocide, 'The only way to be sure that no one group is less served than the other, *and perceives that it is less served*, is to get all children into school' (italics in original).

Through the basic education system, the government took important steps to promote inclusion by improving access. They have also taken measures to prevent discrimination on the basis of ethnic background. What the findings from this study do is add nuance into how basic education is experienced on the ground. Students at GSK located themselves and their school in a broader context. They saw value in their educational experience and the ways that it included them in the country's broader national development project. The basic education policy intended to highlight the government's commitment to deliver development to all. However, in absence of a sustained and effective strategy to improve quality (Williams, 2017; Honeyman, 2015), students felt excluded from meaningful engagement in the education system.

This paper contributes to a body of evidence to suggest that on one hand, the government's efforts to deliver education for all are notable, while on the other hand, the education system has also

introduced more subtle forms of exclusion and stratification, along the lines of rural/urban divisions (EDC, 2017), social class (Kumar, 2015; Pells, Pontalti, & Williams, 2014), and language ability (Samuelson, 2013). This study also adds to a broader body of evidence that has investigated the effects of Rwanda's developmental state on the lives of ordinary citizens (for example, Ansoms, Marijnen, Cioffo, & Murison, 2017; Ingelaere, 2014; Newbury, 2011; Pontalti, 2018; Sommers, 2012; Straus & Waldorf, 2011; Williams, 2016). Collectively these findings point to a disconnect between the future-oriented vision of the government and the realities that ordinary Rwandans face.

The experience of the English language policy highlights this contradiction. To be sure, there is a reasonable argument to be made that the language change was necessary, because English is 'an important vehicle for trade and socioeconomic development and as a gateway to the global knowledge economy' (MINEDUC, 2010, p. 14). But the language change was introduced with little evidence of strategic planning, leaving the system unprepared to respond (Pearson, 2014).

Findings from this paper suggests the language policy poses a real challenge to the country's aim at inclusive development. The language policy has contributed to a learning crisis. Most primary students are unable to sufficiently understand the language in which they are taught, with students in rural areas at particular disadvantage (EDC, 2016, 2017; Friedlander et al., 2014). Abbott et al. (2015, p. 123) estimated that that it

will take a generation before the schools are staffed by people who were themselves taught in English at school and university, albeit often badly, and probably two generations before the English that is used and therefore learned at school becomes a language fully worth learning.

Yet, any well-informed hypothesis would suggest that the new language policy *was* going to pose an immense burden on schoolchildren across the country, particularly in poor rural areas, such as Kinunga that struggled to attract qualified teachers. To be taught and examined using a language they did not know was immensely frustrating for students. By 2014, most of the focal students I worked with had spent upwards of a half decade in an Anglophone secondary education system, but most could not hold a basic conversation in English.

The language policy also served to reinforce the dominance of Rwanda's political elite. Knowing English is now an important gatekeeper for educational success and advancement. The ability to speak English well naturalised intellectual prowess. That some of the most visible members of the RPF, including the President, were Anglophone Tutsis added an unavoidable political and ethnic explanation to the language shift. With a few exceptions, most participants did not make the connection between the language policy and power explicit during my fieldwork. This is understandable given the government's low tolerance of critique pertaining to the ruling party. What students and teachers did offer, though, was to deconstruct their own experience. They offered subtle critiques of how the language has shaped their ability to engage with their studies and how it shaped how they thought about their future.

In this paper, I argued that young people at GSK learned that they were not learning. But of course it was not that simple. They learned that they were in an education system that was not educating them as they had hoped. They learned that they didn't need to fail the examination to be considered a failure – the school they attended conferred that status upon them. They learned that when they didn't know English, it was not necessarily because of a lack of effort but linked to the quality of their school and their families' recent history of conflict and displacement. They learned to prepare themselves to be unemployed, but to also think about themselves, as Patrick put it, as 'at least someone who is jobless who has a degree'. They also learned to accept the opportunity to continue their studies as an end in itself. Education might not be the inheritance they had hoped for after all. It might simply delay their entry into manual labour or unemployment. But on the other hand, what other choice did they have? As Jean Paul said, 'The only other option I had was to sit at home.'

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my research assistant and the participants in this study, who shared their time and stories with me. Marie Berry, Jason Hart, Rose Løvren, Kirsten Pontalti, and members of the Mowana Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education provided helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. Comments and suggestions from the three anonymous reviewers improved this paper substantially. All errors are my own.

Funding

This work was supported by a research studentship provided by the University of Bath.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. For the protection of study participants, all names presented in this paper are pseudonyms. Details about geographic locations have also been modified.
2. In 2012, schools of basic education received 4,250 Rwandan Francs (USD \$5.80) per student per year. Boarding schools receive 20,000 Rwandan Francs (USD \$27.80) per student per year.
3. It is also important to note that schools of basic education may have been fee-free, but they still had hidden costs that made them prohibitively expensive for many households (Williams, 2013; Williams, Abbott, & Mupenzi, 2015).
4. Throughout my fieldwork, I worked closely with a local assistant, who coordinated logistics and translated conversations using Kinyarwanda and English when necessary.
5. See also: Williams (2017); King (2013); Russell (2013); Samuelson and Freedman (2010).

References

- Abbott, P., Sapsford, R., & Rwirahira, J. (2015). Rwanda's potential to achieve the millennium development goals for education. *International Journal of Educational Development, 40*, 117–125.
- Ansoms, A., Marijnen, E., Cioffo, G., & Murison, J. (2017). Statistics versus livelihoods: Questioning Rwanda's pathway out of poverty. *Review of African Political Economy, 44*(151), 47–65. doi:10.1080/03056244.2016.1214119
- Biedermann, Z. (2016). The case of Rwanda as a developmental state. In L. Achtenhagen & E. Brundin (Eds.), *Entrepreneurship and SME management across Africa: Context, challenges, cases* (pp. 139–157). Singapore: Springer Singapore.
- Booth, D., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2012). Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda. *African Affairs, 111*(444), 379–403.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Bush, K. D., & Saltarelli, D. (2000). *The two faces of education in ethnic conflict: Towards a peacebuilding education for children*. Florence: UNICEF.
- Carney, J. J. (2014). *Rwanda before the genocide: Catholic politics and ethnic discourse in the late colonial era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- De Lame, D. (2005). *A hill among a thousand: Transformations and ruptures in rural Rwanda*. Madison: Tervuren, Belgium: University of Wisconsin Press; Royal Museum for Central Africa.
- Des Forges, A. L. (1999). *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda*. New York: Human Rights Watch; International Federation of Human Rights.
- Des Forges, A. L., & Newbury, D. S. (2011). *Defeat is the only bad news: Rwanda under Musinga, 1896–1931*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- EDC. (2016). *National fluency assessment of Rwanda schools: Midline report*. Kigali: Education Development Center; USAID.
- EDC. (2017). *Literacy, language, and learning initiative: National fluency and mathematics assessment of Rwandan schools endline report*. Kigali: Education Development Center, USAID, Rwandan Education Board.
- Emy, P. (2001). *L'école Coloniale Au Rwanda (1900–1962)*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Friedlander, E., Gasana, J., & Goldenberg, C. (2014). *Literacy boost Rwanda: Reading assessment report*. Kigali: Stanford University Graduate School of Education, Rwanda Education Board, Save the Children.

- Gasano, J.-D. (2006). School history and mechanisms for the construction of exclusive identities: The case of Rwanda from 1962 to 1994. In C. Braslavsky & K. Halil (Eds.), *Textbooks and quality learning for all: Some lessons learned from International experiences* (pp. 365–404). Paris: UNESCO.
- Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2013). *Politics, political settlements and social change in post-colonial Rwanda*. Manchester: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre.
- Hanushek, E. A., & Wößmann, L. (2007). *The role of education quality for economic growth*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Hoben, S. J. (1989). *School, work, and equity: Educational reform in Rwanda*. Boston, MA: African Studies Center.
- Honeyman, C. A. (2015). *Early literacy promotion in Rwanda: Opportunities and obstacles*. Kigali: Save the Children; Ishya Consulting.
- Honeyman, C. A. (2016). *The orderly entrepreneur: Youth, education, and governance in Rwanda*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
- Ingelaere, B. (2014). What's on a peasant's mind? Experiencing RPF state reach and overreach in post-genocide Rwanda (2000–10). *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(2), 214–230. doi:10.1080/17531055.2014.891783
- Jeffrey, C., Jeffery, P., & Jeffery, R. (2008). *Degrees without freedom? Education, masculinities, and unemployment in north India*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- King, E. (2013). *From classrooms to conflict in Rwanda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kleinman, A. (2006). *What really matters: Living a moral life amidst uncertainty and danger*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kumar, C. (2015). *Investment in children's education in Rwanda: A briefing paper*. Kigali: Save the Children Rwanda.
- Lemarchand, R. (1970). *Rwanda and Burundi*. London: Pall Mall Press.
- Levinson, B. A., & Holland, D. (1996). The cultural production of the educated person: An introduction. In B. A. Levinson, D. C. Holland, & D. E. Foley (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice* (pp. 1–54). New York: SUNY Press.
- Longman, T. P. (2010). *Christianity and genocide in Rwanda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mann, L., & Berry, M. (2016). Understanding the political motivations that shape Rwanda's emergent developmental state. *New Political Economy*, 21(1), 119–144.
- MINECOFIN. (2000). *Rwanda Vision 2020*. Kigali: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning.
- MINEDUC. (1997). *Study of the education sector in Rwanda*. Kigali: Ministry of Education, UNESCO & UNDP.
- MINEDUC. (1998). *Study of the education sector in Rwanda: (revised edition ed.)*. Kigali: Rwanda Ministry of Education, UNESCO, UNDP.
- MINEDUC. (2003). *Education Sector Policy*. Kigali: Ministry of Education.
- MINEDUC. (2009). *Child friendly schools infrastructure standards and guidelines: Primary and tronc commun schools*. Kigali: Rwanda Ministry of Education.
- MINEDUC. (2010). *Education sector strategic plan 2010–2015*. Kigali: Ministry of Education, Government of Rwanda.
- MINEDUC. (2011). *Mapping the ways forward: Planning for 12 year basic education*. Kigali: Rwanda Ministry of Education.
- MINEDUC. (2015). *National education for all 2015 review*. Kigali: Ministry of Education.
- Newbury, C. (1988). *The cohesion of oppression: Clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Newbury, C. (2011). High modernism at the ground level: The imidugudu policy in Rwanda. In S. Straus & L. Waldorf (Eds.), *Remaking Rwanda: State building and human rights after mass violence* (pp. 223–239). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- NISR. (2011). *The third integrated household living conditions survey (EICV3)*. Kigali: National Institute of Statistics Rwanda.
- NISR. (2012a). *The fourth integrated household living conditions survey (EICV4)*. Kigali: National Institute of Statistics Rwanda.
- NISR. (2012b). *Population housing census provisional results*. Kigali: National Institute of Statistics Rwanda.
- Obura, A. (2003). *Never again: Educational reconstruction in Rwanda*. Paris: UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Pearson, P. (2014). Policy without a plan: English as a medium of instruction in Rwanda. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 15(1), 39–56.
- Pells, K., Pontalti, K., & Williams, T. P. (2014). Promising developments? Children, youth and post-genocide reconstruction under the Rwandan patriotic front (RPF). *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(2), 294–310.
- Pontalti, K. (2018). Kinship 'matters': Continuity and change in children's family relations across three generations in Rwanda. *Childhood*, 1–41. doi:10.1177/0907568217753523
- Prunier, G. (1995). *The Rwanda crisis: History of a genocide*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- RoR. (2003). *The constitution of the Republic of Rwanda*. Retrieved from <http://www.mhc.gov.rw/services/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-rwanda-of-june-2003.html>
- Russell, S. G. (2013). *The role of education in promoting reconciliation and civic identity in Rwanda: global, national, and school contexts*. (PhD) (unpublished PhD dissertation), Stanford University.
- Samuelson, B., & Freedman, S. (2010). Language policy, multilingual education, and power in Rwanda. *Language Policy*, 9(3), 191–215.
- Samuelson, B. (2013). Rwanda switches to English: Conflict, identity and language-in-education policy. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Language policies in education: Critical issues* (pp. 211–232). New York: Routledge.
- Serpell, R. (1993). *The significance of schooling: Life-journeys in an African society*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Simpson, J. (2013). *Baseline assessment of English language proficiency of school teachers in Rwanda*. Kigali: The British Council.
- Singh, K. (2011). *Report of the special rapporteur on the right to education* (Vol. A/HRC/17/29). New York: United Nations.
- Sommers, M. (2012). *Stuck: Rwandan youth and the struggle for adulthood*. University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA. [Washington, D.C.]: published in association with the United States Institute of Peace.
- Straus, S., & Waldorf, L. (2011). *Remaking Rwanda: State building and human rights after mass violence*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- The New Times*. (2015). *Editorial: All schools are good enough*. The New Times, Kigali, Rwanda. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201501190106.html>
- UNDP. (1997). *Human Development Report 1997*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- UNICEF. (2012). *Rwanda wins prestigious commonwealth education award*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/media_65676.html
- USAID. (2014). *Rwanda national reading and mathematics assessment*. Kigali: USAID, Education Development Center.
- Williams, T. P. (2013). *At what cost? The untoward costs of children's schooling in Rwanda, an in-depth case study*. Kigali: Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform, CIDA
- Williams, T. P. (2016). *Oriented towards action: The political economy of primary education in Rwanda*. Manchester, UK: The University of Manchester.
- Williams, T. P. (2017). The political economy of primary education: Lessons from Rwanda. *World Development*, 96, 550–561. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.03.037
- Williams, T. P., Abbott, P., & Mupenzi, A. (2015). 'Education at our school is not free': The hidden costs of fee-free schooling in Rwanda. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 45(6), 931–52.
- Williams, T. P., & Rogers, J. (2016). Rejecting 'the child', embracing 'childhood': Conceptual and methodological considerations for social work research with young people. *International Social Work*, 59(6), 734–744. doi:10.1177/0020872814539985