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Taka, M.

Author post-print (accepted) deposited by Coventry University's Repository

Original citation & hyperlink:

Taka, M 2020, 'The role of education in peacebuilding: learner narratives from Rwanda', *Journal of Peace Education*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 107-122.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2019.1669146>

DOI 10.1080/17400201.2019.1669146

ISSN 1740-0201

ESSN 1740-021X

Publisher: Taylor and Francis

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Journal of Peace Education, on 20/09/2019, available

online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/17400201.2019.1669146>

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The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: Learner Narratives from Rwanda

Journal:	<i>Journal of Peace Education</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	peacebuilding, conflict transformation, learner perspective, humanisation, Rwanda

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Title: The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: Learner Narratives from Rwanda

Abstract:

This paper examines the role of education in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding, because there is a limited evidence base, specifically from the learners' point of view. The findings from Rwanda, where education was used for discrimination and marginalisation throughout its history and is now a pillar of national unity and reconciliation in the post-genocide education reforms, contribute to the literature on education and conflict. They have highlighted two unique roles of education in peacebuilding: providing cognitive rewards, and transforming the values of learners, which enables humanisation.

Keywords: peacebuilding, conflict transformation, learner perspective, humanisation, Rwanda

1. Introduction

The global commitment for the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to ensure all children receive good quality primary education by 2015 has shed light on the limited educational achievement in conflict-affected countries. Despite an increasing campaign and focus on education, children in conflict-affected countries are more than twice as likely to miss out on education as children in other countries, according to an EFA report (UNESCO 2015, 2). The situation exacerbates for adolescents as they are more than two-thirds more likely to be out of school. This setback has drawn increasing attention to the detrimental

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3 impact of armed conflict on education. Accordingly, the global effort to promote
4 education in emergencies (EiE) has been intensified as demonstrated by the
5 development of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), a
6 global network to promote quality, safe, relevant and equitable education for all in
7 emergencies and crises.
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17 The challenge of providing education in conflict-affected countries has also
18 stimulated the discourse on education and conflict amongst donors, practitioners and
19 academic communities. Two faces of education, put forward by Bush and Saltarelli
20 (2000), suggests that education can be a catalyst for peace as well as a weapon of
21 conflict, and this concept has been central within the discourse. This paper seeks to
22 add to the discourse by paying particular attention to the roles of education in
23 countries emerging from violent conflict. In these circumstances, education is
24 expected to aid post-conflict peacebuilding by turning the negative impact of
25 education into a positive one. While such a positive role of education in post-conflict
26 situations is assumed, challenges in making this happen and measuring the positive
27 impact of education have been limiting the evidence base (Davis 2017).
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45 It is observable that the idea about positive roles of education in conflict-
46 affected situations is often discussed without evidence or established theory of change
47 amongst donors, practitioners and academics. More significantly, there is a noticeable
48 lack of understanding in how learners, especially those whose education has been
49 affected by conflict, make sense of roles of education in their circumstances. Against
50 this backdrop, this paper aims to examine learners' perspectives on the roles of
51 education in conflict-affected situations. While exploratory in nature, it attempts to
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3 examine convergence and divergence on the role of education in peacebuilding
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5 between reflective narratives of learners and rationale of the epistemic community.
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10 To achieve the objective above, the research selects the important case of
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12 Rwanda where educational paths of the population were heavily shaped by conflict
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14 and the progressive education sector reforms have taken place since 1994. It focuses
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16 on individual learners, who had lost their educational opportunity due to conflict but
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18 managed to attain formal basic education when they were no longer school age after
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20 the 1994 genocide. This paper, therefore, makes a contribution to the emerging
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22 discussion on the role of education in post-conflict peacebuilding by adding the voices
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24 of learners. In addition to contributing to the enhancement of livelihoods and human
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26 capital, education can also play a role in healing and (re)humanising individuals in a
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28 post-conflict society.
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35 This paper is structured as follows. The next section provides the context of the
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37 research. The third section reviews how the roles of education in post-conflict
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39 peacebuilding have been identified and discussed in the literature. The research
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41 methods are provided in the fourth section. Then, the fifth section on results and
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43 discussion contrasts the perspectives of learners with the education's role in post-
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45 conflict peacebuilding identified in the literature. The sixth section concludes the
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47 paper by connecting the research findings with the wider discussion and policy on
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49 education and conflict.
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56 **2. Context**

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3 Throughout Rwandan history, from colonisation by Belgium to the genocide in the
4 post-independence period, education has been used systematically to privilege
5 particular groups of people and marginalise others (King 2014; Obura 2003;
6 Schweisfurth 2006). The Belgian colonial administration introduced and managed
7 schools with missionaries and favoured the Tutsi inschools (Walker-Keleher 2006):
8 the Hutu were able to receive limited education to do unskilled jobs while the Tutsi
9 were encouraged to study further and occupy important political positions (Obura
10 2003). This divisive education system helped to consolidate the ethnic identity of the
11 Tutsi as outsiders, who conquered and oppressed the Hutu, to divide and rule the
12 colony (Gatwa 2005; King 2005). Consequently, the struggle for independence in the
13 late 1950s was accompanied with a Hutu uprising against the historical domination by
14 the Tutsi, who had been privileged by the Belgian administration (Gatwa 2005; UN
15 n.d.). This was culminated in the ‘social revolution’ from 1959 to 1962 to force
16 around 120,000 Tutsis into exile in neighbouring countries (UN n.d.). Following
17 independence in 1962, the post-independent government continued to try to unseat the
18 Tutsi from power and influence.

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42 Moreover, there was a regional power struggle amongst Hutu politicians
43 favouring their own region, the north or south of the country, leading to the coup in
44 1973 (Uvin 1999). The power struggle resulted in recurring attacks against the Tutsi
45 as a political scapegoat, including the purge of the Tutsi from universities and other
46 public positions in 1973 (Hilker 2010). It created waves of Rwandan refugees mainly
47 into Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, then Zaire) and
48 Tanzania, amounting to some 480,000 refugees by the end of the 1980s (UN n.d.).
49 The post-coup government codified the ‘policy of quota’ to control the progression
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3 from primary to secondary education on the basis of marks, averages and scores
4 achieved in the examination; continuous assessment or academic history of a child;
5 region of origin; ethnicity; and gender (Rutayisire et al 2004). However, as the
6 examination results were not published, the system was rather arbitrary to
7 disadvantage particular groups of people, often based on ethnicity and regions. In
8 addition, the contents of education, such as textbooks, aimed to indoctrinate ethnic
9 prejudice and hatred (King 2014; Bird 2003; Obura 2003). As such, discrimination
10 and injustice were embedded in the overall education system which ‘failed the nation’
11 in preventing the genocide (Rutayisire et al 2004, 345).
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26 The genocide in 1994 broke out amidst the civil war, which started in 1990
27 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), mainly formed of Tutsi refugees in Uganda,
28 started attacking Rwanda, following the assassination of the then President Juvénal
29 Habyarimana on 6 April 1994. The genocide led to significant destruction of life and
30 infrastructure: an estimated 800,000 people were killed; approximately 2.1 million
31 Rwandan refugees moved to neighbouring countries, mainly in then Zaire; and an
32 estimated 1.5 million people were internally displaced (UNHCR 2000). While the
33 repatriation from then Zaire started with more than 200,000 refugees immediately
34 after the genocide (UNHCR 2000), over 700,000 Tutsis were also about to return
35 from exile, mainly from Uganda (Prunier 2009).
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51 In the devastation and chaos, about 38 per cent of children aged between seven
52 and 12 lost at least one parent in 2000 (World Bank 2005), and 70 per cent of children
53 witnessed violent injury or death (Obura 2003, 50). Schooling was halted in 1990 due
54 to the civil war (King 2014, 111); about 75 per cent of the teachers in primary and
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3 secondary schools were killed, fled or were in prison (Freedman et al. 2008, 250); and
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5 half of the school-aged children were not at school just after 1994 (Obura 2003, 136).
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7 Despite a large amount of aid flooded into the region, the refugee crisis overwhelmed
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9 the aid assistance, especially in the area of education.
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15 However, the reconstruction and reform of the education sector after the
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17 genocide was remarkable. Schools were reopened as early as September 1994 (Obura
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19 2003, 56), and the level of enrolment returned to that of the pre-genocide level within
20
21 three years owing to flexibility in the admission age and timetable (World Bank
22
23 2005). The post-genocide government committed to reform the education policy for
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25 national unity and reconciliation and has banned any form of discrimination based on
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27 ethnic or regional identity (King 2004), underpinned by the abolition of ethnic
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29 categorisation and the 'policy of quota' (Rubagiza et al. 2016).
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35 The new Education Sector Policy (2003) was developed to achieve the MDGs and
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37 EFA through some critical initiatives, including the abovementioned Catch-up
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39 programme (2002) and Capitation Grant (2003) to replace the primary school fee.
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41 They resulted in almost universal enrolment in primary education (Rubagiza et al.
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43 2016), making Rwanda one of the top-performing countries in education in sub-
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45 Saharan Africa (UNICEF 2015). Furthermore, basic education was extended to nine
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47 years (2009), to be fee-free (2012), and to the Twelve Year Basic Education
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49 Programme (2012), resulting in the current education system of 6-3-3-4 years for
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51 primary education (P1 - P6), lower secondary education (S1 - S3), upper secondary
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53 education (S4 - S6) and higher education. National examinations are held at the end of
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55 primary education, lower secondary education (Ordinary level, O-level) and upper
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3 secondary education (Advanced level, A-level) (MINEDUC 2010). While there are
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5 some concerns regarding the quality and attainment of education as demonstrated by
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7 dwindling rates for the completion of primary education and the transition from
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9 primary to lower secondary education (World Bank 2011), the country has shown a
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11 significant transformation in its educational provision.
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17 **3. The role of education in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding**

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21 This section briefly identifies roles that education can play in post-conflict recovery
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23 and peacebuilding from the emerging literature on education and conflict. The
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25 literature has been growing within academic and practitioner communities especially
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27 following the landmark report of the impact of armed conflict on children by Ms.
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29 Graça Machel (UN 1996) and the publication of *The Two Faces of Education in*
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31 *Ethnic Conflict* (Bush and Saltarelli 2000). In the latter, the potential role of education
32
33 in facilitating inequalities and tension to propagate conflict has been recognised, and
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35 at the same time, there is a widely held expectation that education can contribute to
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37 post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Davies 2011;
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39 Smith 2005 in Lauritzen 2016, 77-78).
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47 The roles of education in peacebuilding are considered to differ depending on
48
49 the stages of a conflict. While education during an emergency humanitarian period
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51 can provide protection and sense of normalcy to children (Smith et al 2011), the
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53 (re)construction of the education sector during post-conflict reconstruction can
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55 support the government in building legitimacy and other efforts for peace and
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57 recovery (UNESCO 2011, 20). More precisely, conflict sensitive education can
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3 address the pre-existing inequalities and division, and the reformation of the education
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5 sector can result in social transformation and play a developmental role in post-
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7 conflict society (Smith et al 2011). The specific roles of education, focusing on post-
8
9 conflict recovery and peacebuilding, can be grouped in the three broad areas of state-
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11 building, conflict prevention and conflict transformation, although the three spaces
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13 closely overlap.
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19 Firstly, access to education assists state-building through helping make up lost
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21 ground, which was destroyed during the conflict and re-establishing 'normality'
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23 (Ellison 2014, 189). It does not only rebuild the lost social capital and capacity in a
24
25 post-conflict society but also helps the post-conflict government to create peace
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27 dividend by promoting social development for the population (Ellison 2014, 189;
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29 Knutzen and Smith 2012, 64; Davies 2010 in Lopes Cardozo and Shah 2016).
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31 Therefore, rebuilding the education sector is considered by many to be a quick way to
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33 legitimise the post-conflict government (Lopes Cardozo and Shah 2016, 516-517).
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35 Access to education is also considered to restore social cohesion which is lost during
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37 the conflict (Tawil and Harley 2004).
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45 Secondly, education is thought to prevent future conflict as it may raise the
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47 opportunity cost for individuals to engage in violence (Ellison 2014, 190; Lopes
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49 Cardozo and Shah 2016, 520). For education to support conflict prevention, many
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51 scholars emphasise the need for conflict sensitive education in terms of access to help
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53 address inequalities and grievances (Bush and Saltarelli 2000, 16-21; Ellison 2014:
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55 190; Knutzen and Smith 2012, 64). They also suggest conflict sensitive education to
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57 encompass peace education; skills in mediation and conflict resolution; inclusive
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3 curriculum; and the use of democratic teaching methods and critical pedagogy to
4 encourage debate and critical thinking.
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10 Moreover, Davies (2017) refines conflict sensitive education further and
11 recognises the critical role of education in transitional justice to prevent future
12 conflict. She draws attention to the transitional phase from states symbolised with
13 violence and human rights abuse to ones that are more democratic and protect against
14 violence. In this period, society goes through a transitional justice process by
15 confronting the large-scale violence in the past and striving to achieve justice,
16 accountability and reconciliation. Since education contributed to the violence in the
17 past, it has a unique role in transitional justice to uncover past violence and build a
18 future where democracy can prevail. More specifically, structural reforms in
19 education can improve the curriculum in the teaching of history, human rights and
20 citizenship; transform pedagogy and institutional culture to embed critical thinking
21 and democracy; as well as to address discrimination and inequality. While education
22 alone cannot achieve the goal of conflict prevention, the absence of educational
23 change will limit the transition from past violence.
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45 Finally, conflict transformation is an area where many pieces of literature (for
46 example, Ellison 2014 and Gill and Niens 2014) recognise the role of education in
47 peacebuilding. They often refer to the change from 'negative peace' (the absence of
48 direct violence) to 'positive peace' (the absence of structural and cultural violence as
49 the causes of direct violence), described by Galtung (1975). Transformation of the
50 pre-existing 'systemic and structural injustices' through education reforms is
51 considered particularly important as it can enhance people's confidence in the justice
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3 system; awareness and engagement in politics; and livelihood skills (Knutzen and
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5 Smith 2012, 64-65). Thus, this idea greatly overlaps with the abovementioned role of
6
7 education in transitional justice, and education is expected to facilitate the multi-
8
9 layered transformation in political, economic and social spaces. In addition, education
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11 is assumed to improve social relations by changing people's values, attitudes and
12
13 behaviour towards tolerance and non-violent approaches. However, as mentioned
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15 earlier, such a broader transformation cannot be realised solely through education
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17 because the role education can play is limited despite being critical (Davies 2017).
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25 These suggestions on the roles of education in peacebuilding should be
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27 examined carefully, however. It has been recognised that the wider socio-political
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29 environment in post-conflict countries can hinder the transformational process
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31 through education reforms (Hilker 2010, 4). This is evident when education policy is
32
33 not integrated in the broader peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes. In
34
35 some cases, structural injustices are not acknowledged in these processes, which are
36
37 often determined by how the conflict has been settled and result in the political
38
39 establishment (Tawil and Harley 2004, 14). Therefore, it is essential to consider the
40
41 context when analysing the roles of education in peacebuilding. In particular, political
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43 will and agendas of different actors within the education sector in post-conflict
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45 countries are key to the analysis (Smith et al 2011).
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52 Given the significance of the context, Lopes Cardozo and Shah (2016, 522)
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54 draw attention to the limitation of state-centric analysis within academic literature.
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56 Such analysis tends to overlook the intricate interactions and influences of various
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58 structures, institutions and actors at different levels. There is caution for research
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3 which attempts to find causality between education and conflict or peacebuilding
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5 without embracing such complexity as it can result in a large 'attribution gap' (Davies
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7 2013, 3).
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12 Furthermore, there is an observed split within the literature between applied
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14 research and more theoretical work of the academic community (Barakat et al 2013;
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16 Gill and Niens 2014). While the former focuses mainly on education service delivery
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18 and may overlook long-term impacts, the latter tends to explore the ideas about
19
20 conflict transformation (Gill and Niens 2014; Smith et al 2011). This division may
21
22 result in a lack of theory on the link between education and conflict and
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24 peacebuilding. The general lack of evidence base on the role of education further
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26 contributes to this limitation (Barakat et al 2013, 127; Gill and Niens 2014).
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34 There is also a complete disregard for what roles education plays for individuals
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36 in these countries as a lot of research focuses on education reforms in post-conflict
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38 countries. The experiences and views of learners are hardly considered in the literature
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40 as the research tends to draw on the perspectives of scholars, donors and practitioners
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42 who are involved in the education sector. This is a significant gap considering the
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44 transformative potential of education in healing and humanisation, according to Gill
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46 and Niens (2014). Grounding on the pedagogy of the oppressed by Freire (1968), Gill
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48 and Niens (2014) stress that humanising education can rectify the historical processes
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50 of dehumanisation which denied the moral values and human rights of individuals.
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52 Such education is to help overcome conflicted collective histories and trauma in post-
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54 conflict countries by repairing and restoring human relationships and raising
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56 awareness of human values. However, education as humanisation both as a concept
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3 and as a pedagogical approach to peacebuilding is currently missing in the relevant
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5 discourse, hence, the focus of this research on learners' narratives as described in the
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7 following.
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10 11 12 **4. Methods** 13 14 15

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17 This paper is motivated to understand the roles of education in post-conflict recovery
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19 and peacebuilding from the perspectives of learners. The research looks at how
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21 learners, whose education was affected by conflict, make sense of the roles of
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23 education in conflict-affected situations, based on the Rwanda case study. Therefore,
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25 it is qualitative and interpretive in its design 'to understand how specific human
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27 beings in particular times and locales make sense of their worlds' (Schwartz-Shea and
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29 Yanow 2011, 10-11). The interpretive research is contextual and 'seeks to explain
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31 events in terms of actors' understandings of their own contexts, rather than in terms of
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33 a more mechanistic causality' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2011, 52).
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41 Therefore, the research draws key primary data from semi-structured
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43 interviews on individuals' circumstances, focusing on three main questions: how they
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45 lost their education prior to 1994; how they pursued their second chance education;
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47 and what education meant for them. Narratives provided by the interviewees tell us
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49 how they made sense of their circumstances, their decisions to pursue a second chance
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51 education and the meaning of education upon completion, in other words, their
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53 'subjective reality.' More specifically, it focuses on learners, who had not completed
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55 nine years of formal basic education, through primary and lower secondary schooling,
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3 before 1994 and obtained the education after 1994 when they were above the age of
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10 The interview data was collected in 2016 from 23 individual learners, who met
11 the above criteria. The individual learners were primarily identified through two
12 alternative pathways to formal basic education in Rwanda: the Catch-up programme
13 and the Private Candidate (*candidat libre*). The Catch-up programme was
14 implemented by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF Rwanda,
15 between 2002 and 2015, to provide accelerated primary education for a large number
16 of orphans and other vulnerable children and adolescents who had missed some or all
17 primary education in the 1990s (MINEDUC 2016). In one year it combined two study
18 years, making the six-year primary education three years (MINEDUC 2012). It was
19 taught for five hours a day by qualified and specially trained teachers at local primary
20 schools and other schools run by various organisations across the country. While the
21 programme aimed to bring over 80% of out-of-school children, between nine and 16
22 years old, back to formal primary education, it also accepted older people, who had
23 been attracted by flexible curriculum (Kanamugire et al 2008).
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45 Private Candidate allows individuals who are not enrolled as a student in
46 secondary school but meet the criteria set by the Rwanda Education Board (REB) to
47 take the advanced level (A-level) national examination. This policy helped individuals
48 who had missed secondary education due to discrimination or had been in exile
49 during the time of the previous government, to obtain a secondary education. Many
50 private centres for the provision of condensed teaching to prepare for Private
51 Candidate in the evenings opened after the genocide. However, most of them closed
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3 down, and this research identified only two existing centres in Kigali. In total, seven
4 catch-up graduates from Kigali, Southern and Western provinces, 13 private candidate
5 graduates from Kigali and three other individuals from Southern province were
6 interviewed. They included eight women and 15 men, ranging from 25 to 61 years old
7 at the time of the interviews.
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17 The interviews were conducted using an interview guide and timeline to
18 ensure ‘internal coherence as experienced by’ the interviewees (Atkinson 2002, 133-
19 135), either in English by the researcher with or without a national research assistant
20 as an interpreter, or in Kinyarwanda by the national research assistant. The interview
21 records were analysed using thematic analysis, including the process of identifying
22 the information relevant to the research questions, coding the data, organising patterns
23 and themes, and reviewing and defining the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006).
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35 Furthermore, the research gathered other data to understand the provision of
36 education in Rwanda and to contextualise the research findings. It collected secondary
37 data on the policy, systems and context of education in Rwanda from relevant
38 research papers, policy documents, organisational reports and newspaper archives. It
39 also conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 stakeholders who were concerned
40 with the provision of education in Rwanda. These include government officials at
41 central and local levels; teachers, headteachers and administrators at primary schools
42 which provided the Catch-up programme; directors and teachers at Private Candidate
43 preparation centres; as well as donors and non-governmental organisations who
44 supported education.
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3 The research sought triangulation to enhance its quality and credibility: combining
4 different methods such as interviews on their life course, stakeholder interviews and
5 document analysis to check the consistency of the findings and having multiple
6 analysts as the interview data and interpretation were discussed and reflected with the
7 national research assistant. However, there are potential limitations in the sample and
8 the quality of the data. There was a general lack of statistics on complex education
9 journeys, linking school dropouts and returns, and on educational attainment based on
10 learners' situations such as disability, religions, genocide survivors, orphans, former
11 child soldiers, refugees and returnees, which reduced the diversity of the data. There
12 was also an issue of knowledge management within various organisations as previous
13 activities were not well recorded when activities or personnel had discontinued,
14 especially more than 20 years after the genocide. In terms of quality, the accuracy of
15 language interpretation and the available data can influence the data analysis.
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35 **5. Results and discussion**

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40 This section presents and discusses the narratives of learners, how they made sense of
41 the role of education in the post-conflict period, based on 23 interviews. They stopped
42 schooling for various and combined reasons, ranging from hardship in exile,
43 discrimination through the 'policy of quota' before 1994, the genocide in 1994, to
44 financial difficulty due to a family problem, parent loss or imprisonment. The
45 interviewees who studied the Catch-up programme tend to be younger (16 to 25 years
46 old), as they missed primary education in more recent times than those who took part
47 in Private Candidate (23 to 52 years old) as many of them had been excluded from
48 lower secondary education due to the discrimination before 1994. The interviewees'
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3 narratives have suggested there are broadly three outcomes education brings about:
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5 financial rewards by improving livelihood skills; non-financial rewards such as
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7 cognitive rewards; and personal transformations, especially in healing and
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9 humanisation. While the three categories are not exhaustive or definitive, due to the
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11 limited number of interviews, they complement the limited evidence base of the role
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13 of education in peacebuilding with learners' reflective narratives.
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20 Firstly, 12 interviewees out of 23 viewed their second chance education to
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22 secure and improve livelihood through obtaining or enhancing skills and
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24 qualifications, hence for financial reward. The significance of education as a means to
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26 develop livelihood skills in the post-conflict context is often associated with a loss of
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28 family members and the post-genocide economic recovery.
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34 Two orphans considered this contribution of education particularly important,
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36 as they needed to survive without the support of parents. One orphan had lost his
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38 parents while in exile in the DRC and returned to Rwanda after the genocide when he
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40 was 14 years old and in S2. On his return, he could not continue his secondary
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42 education but managed to find a job as a bank cashier. He waited for an opportunity to
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44 continue his education for nearly ten years and started studying at a Private Candidate
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46 preparation centre when he was 23. While studying there, he kept his job at the bank
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48 as he feared losing the good job he had for studying. His delight in achieving A-level
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50 demonstrates the need for survival: 'As [an] orphan..., I say "my god, thank you,
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52 lord." And now, I am sure I [can] survive in this country. Even outside of this country,
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54 I can defend myself. I can get even other jobs [...] because I have my [A-level
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3 certificate].’ With his A-level, he achieved promotion within the bank and continued
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5 to study at higher education to reach a managerial position.
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10 During the post-conflict recovery period, there were growing job opportunities
11 for individuals with education and skills due to the lost human capital in the conflicts.
12 However, the labour market has changed after this period, requiring higher skills and
13 qualifications, often A-level and English language skills, as people were able to
14 receive education following the post-genocide education reform to promote EFA. One
15 interviewee testified that she had lost her warehouse manager job because she did not
16 have an A-level at the time. Another interviewee also explained that as the country
17 was developing rapidly ‘in a few days, when you don’t have that [A-level certificate],
18 I could lose my job. And, it is what is happening now.’
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33 Several interviewees observed this process of state-building and recognised
34 the vital role of formal education qualifications, especially an A-level certificate, in
35 improving their livelihood. They noted that when people have an education, people
36 get jobs, do their jobs better, are promoted in their jobs, look smart and enjoy their
37 life. This role of education in creating and enhancing livelihoods can be considered an
38 essential peace dividend that the post-conflict government delivers to their population
39 in the state-building process. It can also help to reconstruct and develop a broad-based
40 social capital through the education reform to widen access to education. However,
41 while it contributes to the transformation of socio-economic conditions of the
42 population, hence may raise the opportunity cost to engage in violence, it is not
43 possible to assert the impact on conflict prevention because of the limited focus and
44 nature of this research.
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Secondly, four interviewees mentioned the joy of learning that education provides. They enjoy learning things they did not know before and recognise the cognitive reward of education. It is important to highlight that the interviewees distinguish this non-financial reward from the above financial reward that education can create. One interviewee stressed this point in his statement: ‘because I was a businessman and had some money, there was nothing that forced me to go back to school.’ This cognitive reward is often neglected by donors who tend to focus narrowly on the role of education in improving human capital for economic development (Strober 2003, 130 cited in Ron-Balsera 2011, 276). Equally, it is not sufficiently discussed in the existing literature. As some interviewees noted that such learning could open their minds, the cognitive reward also relates to the following transformative role of education.

The transformative role of education was most acknowledged by the interviewees as they reflected on their circumstances around education. The narratives of 17 interviewees related to the transformation that education enabled, often appeared in their desire to be able to help others, be useful in the society and restore what had been denied to them in the past. The interviewees perceived that their rights to education and their worthiness had been denied previously and longed for the restoration of human values, or re-humanisation. This idea resonates with humanisation and healing as a potentially important role of education, proposed by Gill and Niens (2014).

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3 More specifically, the role of education in enabling people to be useful was
4 repeatedly mentioned by 14 interviewees. One female returnee had a series of
5 suspension from schooling while in exile in Uganda, due to her father's death,
6 siblings' limited capacity to support her education because of their family
7 responsibility and contracting HIV/Aids, and poverty. After returning to Rwanda, she
8 had to work as a helper for her relative's and as a housemaid, she also had an
9 unplanned pregnancy, all of which hindered her education. Despite the numerous
10 holdups in her education journey, she did not give up on education and started to
11 study at a Private Candidate preparation centre when she was about 30 years old. On
12 reflection, she 'persisted to go back to school [...] because [she] wanted to be
13 someone else, who is able, at least, to bring up [her] young relatives, especially in
14 studying.' She explained that:

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33 'If you are educated, you can be the help to yourself, you can be a useful
34 person to the country, [...] even to your family. You can get a good job and
35 bring up other people in the family, to study to be what they want in the future,
36 and to be what the government wants in the future [...]. I wanted to study so
37 that I can reach somewhere, where I can even [...] help others in my hand.'

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47 Some interviewees also explained that education could 'open their mind' to
48 facilitate transformation. Through this transformation, they think they can change and
49 improve things, solve problems, and lead their lives for themselves. In other words,
50 education brings about change in their attitudes, behaviour and values, thereby
51 improving themselves and their social relations. As a result, the interviewees interact
52 with the society by playing various roles, ranging from helping their family and others
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3 in their community, engaging in community reconciliation activities, to actively
4 participating in politics. One former street child, who was persuaded to study by a
5 faith-based Catch-up school when he was 14, started teaching at that school and said:
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10 ‘because of the good things they [the school] did for me, I now have a purpose[:]
11 helping other children.’
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17 In contrast, people without education were considered to be useless and
18 shameful, especially after the genocide, when the education reform opened access to
19 education. Several interviewees articulated their experience of being
20 without education, their dehumanised past. One interviewee recollected how his lack
21 of education affected him in the past:
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31 ‘I used to walk along the road and think everything was useful, but only I was
32 useless. I said, oh my goodness, even a dog can keep a house. What about me?
33 [...] If you are not educated in Rwanda, you are something else. You are not
34 even in a good position to fit into society. If you don’t have [academic
35 qualification] papers, no one will recognise you. This was the major factor.
36 [...] Another thing was shame. You know, to live in the Rwandan society
37 when you are not educated, my friend, you are a shameful guy. In Rwanda, if
38 you are not an educated man or boy, to get a good girlfriend is even difficult.
39 Who will give you his girl or daughter when you are not educated? [...]
40 Because I am a good guy people love me. I am hardworking, but I am not
41 educated. It seemed like I was useless in society.’
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3 The account demonstrates that he felt he had no value in society without
4 education, dehumanised because of the political and structural violence in the past.
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6 Another interviewee noted that she ‘would have been lost with ignorance’ without
7 having education, as other people are getting an education after the education reform
8 in the country. Others also shared the impact of dehumanisation, such as feeling the
9 shame of being dependent and a burden on others. Two interviewees, who had studied
10 through the Catch-up programme and continued to secondary education, imagined
11 that they would have been in negative situations and influence if they had not been in
12 education. This also suggests their understanding of how lack of values could lead to
13 destructive attitudes and behaviours, or damaging social relations.
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28 Education was the key to correcting such historical dehumanisation by
29 overcoming their past, moving on in life, and becoming more human or being
30 humanised. For many interviewees, who had been deprived of schooling due to the
31 discrimination, they felt a very strong sense of injustice and were determined to
32 reclaim education as their right. One interviewee, who lost schooling due to
33 discrimination before the genocide, articulated his desire to retrieve what he had lost:
34 ‘I wanted to reach as far as I can. That was my target. I wanted to reach where I
35 missed because of the bad system we had before.’ Several interviewees explained that
36 they had been excluded from secondary education despite their good academic
37 performances because of their ethnicity, region and religion and voiced their shock
38 and sorrow they had felt. This historical injustice was not to be remedied without
39 education and was passed on to later generations in some cases, as one returnee from
40 Uganda was told by his father to return to Rwanda with an education.
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3 Education was also crucial in moving on in life in the aftermath of conflict as
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5 noted by one interview: ‘after the genocide, life has to continue.’ Others also
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7 described how education helped in the process of starting a new life: ‘This was the
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9 starting point of who I am today. Going back to school built my hope for life and
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11 seeing that my dreams can [be]come a reality.’ This suggests their awareness of the
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13 transformation triggered by education in their life as they perceived hope for bringing
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15 about the changes they want. Similarly, another account stated:
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22 ‘Education brought hope for me. I understand that things of whatever
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24 dimensions are possible. [...] Education restored my relationships with others.
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26 [...] Education helped me to know how to manage myself and others. There
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28 are things I cannot do because I studied. Education built humanity in me. I
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30 cannot revenge, for example.’
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35 This also touched on hope and continued to illustrate wider transformation in their
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37 knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. The transformation enhanced moral values and
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39 social relations which is expressed as humanity to reaffirm the role of education in
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41 humanising.
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46 **6. Conclusion**

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51 This paper examined the role of education in post-conflict recovery and
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53 peacebuilding, given the limited evidence base, specifically from the learners’ point
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55 of view. The findings from Rwanda, where education was used for discrimination and
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57 marginalisation throughout its history and is now a pillar of national unity and
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3 reconciliation in the post-genocide education reforms, add to the ongoing discussion.
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5 They have highlighted two fresh viewpoints which have implications for academic
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7 literature as well as policy for education in post-conflict countries.
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12 First, the findings underscored the importance cognitive reward education can
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14 provide as a non-financial benefit for learners. Such intangible return is not highly
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16 acknowledged by donors, unlike a financial reward, which is considered crucial in
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18 post-conflict state-building processes by providing peace dividends to the population
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20 and contributing to economic development. However, the cognitive reward was
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22 desired by the learners and appreciated as a source for transformation.
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28 Another is the crucial role of education in healing and re-humanising the
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30 individuals who were dehumanised in the historical violence as Gill and Niens (2014)
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32 argued. The learners clearly perceived the transformative role of education and the
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34 change in their values, attitudes and behaviour which improved their social
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36 relationships. While the pedagogy and contents of education were not the focus of this
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38 research and were not discussed by the learners, access to education was fundamental
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40 for the adult learners in restoring values as a human to exist in their society and to
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42 move on in life.
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48 Such a crucial need of the population in post-conflict societies has been so far
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50 overlooked. As some learners contended, they pursued education even though they
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52 had already developed sufficient livelihoods. This suggests a unique role of education
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54 which cannot be replaced by other elements. Although access to education cannot
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56 solely lead to broader peacebuilding as Davies (2017) warned, this finding has
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3 pointed at the distinctive role of education in peacebuilding. It also indicates policy
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5 implication in the provision of flexible and accessible pathways for formal education.
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