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To cite this article: Paul Thomas (2018) Whose Vision 2020? The World Bank's development and educational discourse in Rwanda, Development Studies Research, 5:1, 50-58, DOI: [10.1080/21665095.2018.1469422](https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2018.1469422)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2018.1469422>



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Published online: 03 May 2018.



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Whose Vision 2020? The World Bank's development and educational discourse in Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that the World Bank's development strategy in Rwanda is unsuitable for long-term sustainability. By applying content analysis I consider the strategic goals as outlined in the World Bank's *Rwanda – Country partnership strategy for the period 2014–2018*, and *Learning for All: investing in people's knowledge and skills to promote development*, 2011; and Rwanda's *Vision 2020*; to show how the Bank's pursuit of narrow economic parameters is to the detriment of issues such as social inequality and the suppression of dissent. Given Rwanda's traumatic recent history, I argue that the contours of Bank policy, which evolved from 'rolling back the state' to 'good governance' in recent years – understood as selective collaboration with bureaucratic elites in stable, but often authoritarian regimes must incorporate credible plans that address the current human rights abuses, shortcomings in the rule of law and democratic deficit in the country. Furthermore, I argue that Rwanda and the Bank's recent focus on 'knowledge' is in essence an educational discourse that is skewed in favor of neoliberal, economic activity – what has been called 'knowledge capitalism' (Wanner 2009).

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 6 November 2017
Accepted 23 April 2018

KEYWORDS

World Bank; Rwanda; Vision 2020; development; education; human rights

Introduction

The genocide of the mainly Tutsi ethnic group in Rwanda in 1994 became a blight on the world's conscience. The French were accused of complicity with the Hutu-led government of Juvenal Habyarimana and the Belgians considered beyond the pale for sending in their troops to evacuate Belgian citizens leaving the grief-stricken Tutsis behind to face extermination at the hands of the machete-wielding executioners (Meredith 2011). The USA, traumatized by its failure in Somalia in 1992, was reticent to intervene in another African country two years later. The genocide in Rwanda was one where the world could not be stirred sufficiently to intervene and stop a preventable¹ genocide (Guest 2013).

This paper considers the World Bank's interaction with the government of Rwanda in the post-conflict era and the last decade in particular. The study is based on a content analysis of documents in the public domain, among which are: The World Bank's (1) *Country partnership strategy, Rwanda, for the period 2014–2018* (2) *Learning for All: investing in people's knowledge and skills to promote development, 2011* and (3) *Rwanda's Vision 2020*. *Vision 2020* has been redrafted into *Vision 2050*,

but this paper will concern itself with the undrafted version. The World Bank has supported Rwanda in its ambitions to become an attractive destination for private investment. According to the Bank,

Two World Bank projects supported the government in its effort to improve the investment climate: (i) the Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project, started by the International Development Association (IDA) in 2001, and, (ii) the Rwanda Investment Climate Reform Program, initiated through the World Bank Group's Investment Climate Advisory Services in 2007. (The World Bank Group 2013)

Last year (2017), the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, declared in Rwanda:

I am here to say to President Paul Kagame and the Rwandan people that the World Bank Group is ready to help in any way that they can and that we believe in the future of Rwanda and we believe that it will continue to be a model for the entire world. (New China 2017)

Simms (2017) critiques the Bank's policy of 'political prohibition' for not involving itself with the human rights abuses in borrowing countries such as Rwanda and states: 'a report by a United Nations rapporteur assessing this policy and its consequences found that "political

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prohibition” is “misplaced legalism”. It stated that ‘the World Bank is currently a human rights-free zone.’

It has been argued that prior to the genocide, the World Bank, which Uvin (1997, 46) has dubbed the multi-lateral donor ‘with the strongest love affair with Rwanda’, was narrowly preoccupied with economic growth in Rwanda to the detriment of increasing social divisions and inequalities. As such, tributes emanating from the Bank need to be carefully evaluated. Some, such as Storey (2001, 371) have implicated the Bank and the IMF in exacerbating the divisions through structural adjustment policies in 1991, among which the following conditions were outlined: devaluation of the Rwandan franc by 40%; constraints on wages; increase in fees for health and education; reduction of coffee subsidies; phased removal of trade restrictions and the privatization of some state enterprises.²

The discourse, therefore, did not flow from any detailed analysis of the *specificity* of Rwanda – indeed a central plank of Bank discourse is that it offers *universal, technical* solutions that do not *need* to be tailored to local circumstances ... the Bank’s discursive construction missed (deliberately or otherwise) a critical element of what was actually happening – sharply rising inequality, accelerating elite enrichment and corruption (mainly organized through the state). (Storey 2001, 380)

But, in all fairness to the Bank, it was not alone in being buoyed by the Arusha Peace Talks (1993) in Tanzania when the Rwandan government signed a peace treaty with the Rwandan Patriotic Front of Paul Kagame. However, others have pointed out that the Bank’s knowledge of non-economic issues, such as Rwanda’s ethnic divisions, must be implicated in the subsequent development. Bank officials spent barely 15 days in the country before 1989, spoke only English in a Francophone country and narrowly pursued a ‘universalized’, neoliberal template (Hanssen 1989). This paper considers contemporary dealings between the Bank and the current Tutsi-dominated Rwanda, and explores the nexus in light of the aforementioned critique.

The critique of the regime in this paper must obviously be considered in the interstices of the country’s violent past, which would make transition a herculean task for any leader. Freedman et al. (2008), who worked on a project to restart the teaching of History as a school subject in Rwanda, touch on some of these dynamics at work within Rwandan society. The research participants found it hard to discuss issues of ethnicity because of the government’s fear that this may reignite ethnic tensions. They caution, ‘The ultimate lesson for educators may be that, while the debate on best practices focuses on content of material or the process of creating materials, the real concern has to do with timing and context’

(Freedman et al. 2008, 686). Similarly, other studies conducted in Rwanda (Pham, Weinstein, and Longman 2004) assessing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have found that about one quarter of respondents were impacted. They conclude:

Those who met the PTSD symptom criteria were less likely to support the Rwandan national trials, to believe in community, and to demonstrate interdependence with other ethnic groups. These findings suggest that the relationship of judicial trials to reconciliation cannot be assumed, nor can we assume that all trauma survivors necessarily see justice in the same way. (Pham, Weinstein, and Longman 2004, 611)

The picture emerges of a society nursing deep wounds and hence caution with regard to ‘solutions’ often made in the West. Chakravarty (2005) labors the same point when she calls for single-sector NGOs, focused on human rights alone, to recognize the salience of *gacaca* courts as an example of a plurality of functioning human rights models in Rwanda and not pursue confrontational strategies alone. As she puts it: ‘The success of the *gacaca* depends in large part on how well these NGOs are able to negotiate the fine line between supporting and critiquing the state project, without slipping into either naïveté or cynicism’ (Chakravarty 2005, 143).

Neo-statism at the service of World Bank ideology

Rwanda has made extraordinary progress in recent years. It is one of the few countries anywhere in the world that has managed a ‘triple crown’ of fast economic growth, robust reductions in poverty, and a narrowing of inequality. This progress, so notable in this year marking the twentieth anniversary of the Genocide against Tutsi, has helped illustrate the possibilities and opportunities for any country seeking a new path of peace and prosperity. The fact that the poverty rate fell from 59 percent to 45 percent in the last decade and that Rwanda is now ranked as the second easiest place to do business in all of Africa, speaks volumes. (World Bank 2014a, i)

Rwanda will continue on its path to put in place macro-economic stabilization policies that are conducive for private sector development. This, together with a fiscal consolidation strategy aiming at expanding the domestic resource base while rationalizing spending, and increasing exports, is the only way to lessen aid dependence ... Government will focus on private sector development, desisting from providing services that the private sector can deliver more efficiently and competitively. With the policies in place, the economy will be able to take up the challenge of transforming into a knowledge-based society. (Vision 2020 ‘Progress and Way Forward’, 2011)

The Bank’s glowing tribute to Rwanda’s ‘extraordinary progress’ is premised on a narrow set of economic

indices. Accolades such as ‘triple crown’, ‘second easiest place to do businesses’, ‘speaks volumes’ etc. have proven premature in the past. In 1998, for instance, the Bank bestowed the laurel, ‘a model pupil of globalization’ on Indonesia before the dictator, General Suharto, who had been fêted by the USA and Britain, fled with \$15 billion, the lion’s share owed to the Bank. Suharto plunged roughly 70 million of his people into absolute poverty and the national debt spiraled out of control to an astronomical \$262 billion (Pilger 2002).

According to Harrison (2004), the Bank has transitioned from pure economic liberalism to institutionalism (conditionality to post-conditionality). The earlier policy of ‘rolling back the state’ during the heyday of the ill-fated structural adjustment policies (SAPs) has come to be substituted by the mantra of ‘good governance’. Harrison highlights the following four features that characterize governance states: order, the social formation of stable ruling elites, bureaucratic structures insulated from political interference and embedding a neoliberal program. Put differently, ‘conditionality’ has given way to ‘selectivity’. In this new modus operandi, countries which have emerged from protracted conflicts and go on to establish order, bureaucratic stability and spawn elites who kowtow to neoliberal policies, are touted as ‘success stories’.

Rwanda has been co-opted into the role of an African paragon showcasing the Bank’s rhetoric of ‘selectivity’ and ‘good governance’. Scholars have cautioned about Rwanda’s statistics purporting to show high levels of growth. They argue that research appears to contradict government interpretations of the dataset. Some conclusions challenged are:

Yields probably increased over the period of the implementation of the agricultural reforms, but less than what the most optimistic but least reliable data source suggests (FAO statistics). Poverty decreased significantly over the 2005/6–2010/11 period but with seasonal effects playing a partial role. Inflation over the 2010/11–2013/14 period was probably much higher (around 30%) than the assumed 16.7%. (Ansoms et al. 2017)

Following the above, the authors conclude: ‘Under this assumption, poverty did not decrease significantly over the 2010/11–2013/14 period, but remained constant’ thus highlighting the conundrum of overreliance on government-generated statistics in some African countries. The government of President Paul Kagame repeatedly refused to cooperate in investigations of alleged war crimes committed in the Congo in the late 1990s (Reyntjens 2004). In addition, the Bank itself was coerced into eliminating data which contradicted the President’s claim that he had improved the lives of Rwandans (Sundaram 2016). Even the omnipresent BBC Radio Service in

Kinyarwanda has been suspended indefinitely following controversial statements challenging aspects of the official version of the 1994 genocide (Baird 2015). As Marchak (2008) puts it:

But the (Tutsi-dominated) government cannot recognize that it is setting up the same problems that created Hutu distrust under the Belgian regime. It insists that any Hutus who object or criticize are engaging in ‘divisionism’ and must be jailed or otherwise punished. The Hutu remain the underclass; yet again they are uneducated and discriminated against. (Marchak 2008, 74)

The Bank’s report on Rwanda continues: ‘This progress, so notable in this year marking the twentieth anniversary of the Genocide against Tutsi, has helped illustrate the possibilities and opportunities for any country seeking a new path of peace and prosperity’ (WB Report 2014a, i). Given what is known about the human rights abuses and autocratic rule in the country, the Bank’s invitation for other countries to follow the example of Rwanda is questionable. Writing in 1990, Bernstein (1990) along with myriad other scholars, has written about the ‘anti-democratic’ and ‘imperialist’ character of the Bank whose policies (e.g. SAPs) have directly or indirectly overthrown African regimes or led to the further suppression of human rights. Twenty-six years later, the Bank appears to continue in an ‘amoral partnership’ with leaders who have a poor human rights record.

The Bank persists in the chimera that through a narrow set of parameters, among others what Moore (1999) referred to as ‘lean neoliberalism’ and ‘Hayekian neo-statism’, utopia is within reach for poor countries. The political philosopher and economist, F.A. Hayek, tried unsuccessfully to make a distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism in defending what he termed ‘transitional dictatorships’ in Latin America, such as Pinochet in Chile. Hayek’s vision of statecraft was one where the chief role of the state was to promote and safeguard the interests of the market, competition and prices through the legal order (Moore 1999). The current ‘partnership’ and accolades bestowed upon Rwanda must be seen in light of the Bank’s evolution in recent decades. From seeking to ‘roll back the state’ in the post McNamara era, it was forced to make a concession to the *East Asian Miracle* model, especially as crystallized in the Japanese strategy of the state-sponsored allocation of ‘directed credit’ (Berger and Beeson 1998) and subsequent report in 1993. The current ‘good governance’ model aligns with F.A. Hayek’s vision where ‘strongmen’ are seen as ‘partners’ as long as they internalize and embed the Bank’s neoliberal values. However, this ‘partnership’ has been an exploitative one:

Liberalization opened up African markets to goods from foreign countries, but the African countries had little to sell abroad. Opening up capital markets did not bring an inrush of capital; investors were interested in taking out Africa's bountiful natural resources. (Stiglitz 2012, 41)

Rwanda's Vision 2020 goes on to declare,

Rwanda will continue on its path to put in place macro-economic stabilization policies that are conducive for private sector development ... Government will focus on private sector development, desisting from providing services that the private sector can deliver more efficiently and competitively. (Rwanda Vision 2020, 6)

The above is commensurate with what Wade (1997) calls the 'Gramsci effect' – the machinations employed by the Bank in educating 'Third World' elites to internalize the discourse of global neoliberalism as 'common sense' or 'natural' (Gramsci 1971). Intellectuals in the Global South and the development industry internalize a carefully constructed ideology that privileges an 'emerging transnational capitalist class'. The Vision has been presented as one inspired by countries like China, Singapore and Thailand (Kinzer 2009) without mentioning the influence of the Bank. However, an intertextual content analysis of the Bank Report on Rwanda and Vision 2020 unpacks the origin of the latter. It is also significant that Kagame singles out China, Singapore and Thailand as examples; countries that have witnessed economic growth without being encumbered by democracy and human rights in the case of China's Deng Xiaoping and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew.

Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2012) employ the term 'developmental patrimonialism' to Rwanda and believe that this is the case

... when the ruling elite acquires an interest in, and a capability for, managing economic rents in a centralized way with a view to enhancing their own and others' incomes in the long run rather than maximizing them in the short run.

They positively review the case of Tri-Star/CVL, a holding company involved in a raft of economic activities from infrastructure to furniture (100% owned by Kagame's ruling party), and conclude: 'What the Tri-Star/CVL experience illustrates is that, in very underdeveloped capitalist economies, an incipient private sector may benefit from being led from the front and not just facilitated with the provision of a business-friendly environment.' However, Gökgür (2012) disagrees with this analysis and counters:

To date, however, no one has apparently demanded transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, Rwanda's technocratic elite, along with its business community, development partners and researchers, are

seriously and increasingly concerned about the high concentration of party statts in the economy. Even without proper analysis, they are suggesting elite capture and alleging favouritism, with the liberal mixing of government and private funds. (Gökgür 2012, 22)

Furthermore, Gökgür (2012) contends that comparisons with East Asian economies are truncated because, unlike the East Asian countries, the governing elites not only do not share any of their rents or profits with the government, but they have also not effectively managed rents with a view to benefitting the population at large *before establishing competitive economies*. There is no evidence that Rwanda has any mechanism for managing rents (whether effectively or temporarily) that resembles those employed in Korea, Taiwan or Malaysia' (Gökgür 2012, 33). Further issues that militate against any emulation of the East Asian economies include the narrow ethnic composition of the Rwandan elite, the resentment by segments of the population and the intolerance of any economically powerful private sector that could constrain the state (Gökgür 2012).

The role of 'unnamed chaperone' serves the purposes of the Bank in a plethora of ways. The events of the global financial paroxysm of 2008/9 is one such 'useful purpose'. The turbo-charged global markets were on the brink of collapse when the excesses piggybacking on Wall Street and London City's insatiable appetite for low taxes and light regulation, among others, caught up with them. Speaking of the collapse of the Lehman Brothers, the sub-prime mortgage losses incurred by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (collateralized debt obligations dubbed 'toxic waste') the Conservative British government's decision to ignore competition laws and induce Lloyds TSB to pay £12 billion to stabilize the vulnerable HBOS group (Halifax and Bank of Scotland), the collapse of Iceland and the ensuing Keynesian-style bail out of global financial institutions totaling trillions of dollars, Elliott and Atkinson (2008) wrote:

The world has changed utterly during the past 15 months. For the disciples of anything-goes finance, the events of 2007 and 2008 have been as traumatic as was the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to communist apparatchiks and their western apologists. The collapse of communism marked the dawn of market fundamentalism; the necessity for the US government to take a stake in Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley saw the sun going down on that era. (Elliott and Atkinson 2008, 335)

Recognizing in these and similar turmoils the dangers of 'casino capitalism', the Bank is sufficiently distanced from countries in the Global South, such as Rwanda, to scapegoat these countries when their economies shipwreck

and, conversely, stay close enough to share in the limelight when countries beholden to the Washington Consensus experience growth and 'vindicate' good governance. Crucially, Rwanda's commitment to 'focus on private sector development, desisting from providing services that the private sector can deliver more efficiently and competitively' rings hollow. The government decides what sector/s is to be developed and the party faithful control and accrue rents, for instance (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012). Eighty per cent of the output of the largest 47 manufacturing and agribusiness groups in Rwanda are controlled by foreign and a few, large local firms who tow the RPF-party line. Obviously, this has deleterious consequences for the entrepreneurial spirit promoted by the government in the 'Vision 2020'. Writing about these inequalities, Mann and Berry state:

These groups not only spearhead the much-needed economic development in a country with a weak private sector, but also contribute to a rapid accumulation of wealth among a politically connected elite. For instance, a group of Kagame's closest confidants were majority shareholders in Tri-Star Company (the predecessor to Crystal Ventures), which was awarded all road building contracts financed by UNDP and the European Union after the genocide. (Mann and Berry 2016, 131)

In addition, the government has done little or nothing to safeguard the rights of laborers who fall prey to, for instance, telecommunications firms, such as MTN, Tigo and Airtel, who are permitted to exploit low-skilled workers (Mann and Nzayisenga 2015). The Bank reports on the progress of African countries have long been known to have an economic focus when reporting on growing inequalities while embellishing statistics that align with its vision. The much-touted 'decrease in poverty' in Rwanda in 2010/11 by 57% must be countered by the fact that the steep population growth actually means that more people are subject to poverty today than ever before. The discussion thus far has considered the contours of the Bank's evolution in dealing with countries in the Global South with an emphasis on Rwanda. From seeking to undermine the role of the state, the Bank has found it useful to transition to a view that seeks alliances with states which answer to the criteria of 'good governance' outlined earlier. It has been argued that, when deconstructed, 'good governance' is a convenient platitude which makes possible dubious liaisons between the Bank and countries such as Rwanda where lip service is paid to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The 'holy grail' of economic growth supersedes the latter concerns. Although unmentioned, the statements from the two documents

demonstrate a clear conflation of linguistic formulations and ideology.

Recent years have seen some equivocation on the part of some aid donors to Rwanda. The second largest donor, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) suspended, reinstated, and then suspended again budgetary support for Rwanda (McDoom 2013). According to the Economist (2013), 'Other European governments have stopped or reduced their contributions. The Americans have suspended military aid, albeit worth a mere \$200,000, and may cut development projects'. The reticence in propping up Rwanda's aid budget, which comprises about 40% of the country's budget, has been, among others, blamed on Kagame's authoritarian style and interference in the Congo. The severe cutbacks may potentially have implications for Rwanda's economic and political stability. According to the World Bank Group (2014), aid accounted for between 40% and 50% of Rwanda's total revenues between 2002 and 2012.

The volume of Official Development Assistance (ODA) increased from US\$360 million in 2002 to US\$0.9 billion in 2012 (13 percent of GNI) and these substantial inflows of foreign aid have stimulated the services sector through Government expenditures.

While the former coercive logic of conditionality may be absent, Rwanda's extreme dependence on aid makes it susceptible to formulating policies amenable to the World Bank. Speaking of Tanzania and Uganda's comparable predicament in relation to aid from donors, Harrison argues, 'In fact, rather than conceptualizing donor power as a strong external force on the state, it would be more useful to conceive of donors as *part of the state itself*' (Harrison 2004, 87). In addition, 'The country strategies are clearly produced by African officials with an eye to the international orthodoxies within which donors' work, currently an emphasis on pro-poor growth, based on basic social provision and market friendly policy' (Harrison 2004, 88). The conflation of development vocabulary and policy aims between the Bank and aid-recipient countries in Africa has led some to cynically call these 'Strategy' papers 'shopping lists' (Harrison 2004).

Holtom (2005), in his essay on why Tanzania's Nyerere capitulated to the World Bank in the mid-80s, highlights the role of the 'epistemic community'. Haas (1992, 18) describes it as 'a shared set of causal principles (analytical and normative) and beliefs, a consensual knowledge base, and a common policy enterprise (common interests) that distinguishes epistemic communities from other groups' (Haas 1992, 18). These pro-reformers were opposed to Nyerere's handling of the economy

and worked on Bank-sponsored projects such as the Tanzania Advisory Group (TAG). Holtom (2005) argues that Tanzania's policies, although centralized and bureaucratic, were 'rational' in the sense that policies that genuinely led to development were valorized. This 'rational' outlook, and not any coercion on the part of the Bank, relinquished power to the emergent alliance between the Bank and this endogenous, neo-liberal, 'epistemic community' that 'brought together economists from the University's economics department and Economics Research Bureau (ERB) together with private consultants and staff from key ministries such as agriculture, transport, industry and trade' (Holtom 2005, 560).

In a similar vein, Goldman (2004) considers the machinations of the World Bank's involvement in Laos in the 1990s with a focus on the way it positioned itself as a champion of ecological sustainability. Commensurate with Holtom's (2005) analysis in Tanzania (i.e. epistemic community), Goldman (2001) highlights the role of what he calls the 'hybrid actors'. Local civil servants, Northern (semi-nomadic) consultants and Northern professionals who run shadow governments each work under the auspices of the Bank to territorialize epistemological space and run Laos in effect. Laos has been carved up by Bank officials into 'eco-zones' assigned to various Bank-designated purposes to the detriment of local populations who have been relocated and indigenous species that are threatened. Locals are trained abroad in Bank institutions and imbibe neoliberal ideology. Employing Foucault, Goldman (2001) draws attention to the manner in which the above *modus operandi* produces a knowledge/power nexus which allows the Bank in concert with other transnational agents to use the environment as a pretext for producing new regimes of truth. The Bank cannot accomplish this alone but in collaboration with 'a growing network of translocal scientists, technocrats, NGOs, and empowered (or "responsibilized") citizens to help generate the data and construct the discursive strategies of sustainability' (Goldman 2005, 156). The magnitude of the intervention is captured in the citation below.

It has also begun the process of converting the previously inconsequential forest, hill, and river communities into visible, communicative, and accountable populations. In short, the Bank has instigated a proliferating domain of human activity - the activity of government and subject creation - that works to make sites and populations more compatible for these large capital investments, even as these investments evolve to include new ways to improve biodiversity, mountain populations, and the professional class. (Goldman 2001, 506)

The next section considers the stated aim of the World Bank and Rwanda in aspiring to become 'repositories of knowledge'.

The 'knowledge society' and the 'knowledge bank'

With the policies in place, the economy will be able to take up the challenge of transforming into a knowledge-based society. (Rwanda Vision 2020, 6)

What has been achieved as a result of the 1,000 Bank publications on education? One way of answering this question is to ask how far these publications have influenced thinking in the development field. This is a reasonable question, since the Bank thinks of itself as a 'knowledge bank' and aspires to be both a generator of new knowledge and a synthesizer of existing knowledge. An obvious measure of the Bank's success as a generator of knowledge is citations. The broadest citation data available today come from Google Scholar, which covers not just journal articles, but also books, book chapters, working papers, dissertations, and technical reports... The median citation count for Bank education articles is 13, while that of Bank books is 10. (World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020)

A comparison of the two texts leaves little doubt about their kinship. Rwanda's Vision 2020 talks of a 'knowledge society' while the Bank prefers the more grandiose 'knowledge bank'. Whereas the former has national ambitions, the latter's is global. The reader is invited to believe that this can be achieved through the enterprise of economics alone: '... the *economy* will be able to take up the challenge of transforming into a knowledge-based society.' A heuristic exercise in imagining the kind of knowledge that the economy alone can generate is a first step in demonstrating the untenableness of this dictum. The sum total of activities that constitute human experience is crudely reduced to the knowledge that the *economy* can generate. There is no elaboration or attempt to define this 'knowledge' which the economy promises to spawn. The other cogs in the wheel of the human experience, such as the arts, obviously have no place in this 'knowledge society'. One is reminded of John Dewey's metaphor of the parts of a machine in *Democracy and Education*:

Individuals do not even compose a social group because they all work for a common end. The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, but they do not form a community. If, however, they were all cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulated their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community. But this would involve communication... Consensus demands communication. (Dewey 2011, 11)

In the case of the economy producing knowledge, we witness the futility of one part of a machine (i.e. economy) working through a ruling elite and expecting national edification. The notion that the citizens of Rwanda are cognizant and privy to the precise machinations of how neoliberal ideology, driven by the Bank, will forge a 'knowledge society' is disconcerting.

The Bank makes explicit its ambition to become a 'knowledge bank'. Klees (2012, 56) has calculated that the Bank spent about \$ 175, 000 per piece of research between 2001 and 2010. To his mind, the Bank's aspiration to become a clearing house for all knowledge and best practice is 'frightening' as there can only be an 'Opinion Bank' competing with other opinions in the market of ideas. Despite the fact that the Bank claims to incorporate the views of civil society, indigenous people and other marginalized voices, Klees observes that 'The theories, practices, and even names of noted educators like Dewey, Freire, Montessori, and Vygotsky are curiously absent from decades of World Bank documents about education' (Klees 2012, 56). A case in point is the Bank's so-called 'evidence' of its impact in education: 'An obvious measure of the Bank's success as a generator of knowledge is citations'. One wonders whether the Bank has considered the nature of these 'citations' culled from Google Scholar, and, more crucially, as Dewey eloquently writes, whether the one who seeks to communicate is transformed in the process.

Nor is the one who communicates left unaffected. Try the experiment of communicating with fullness and accuracy, some experience to another, especially if it be somewhat complicated, and you will find your own attitude toward your experience changing; otherwise you resort to expletives and ejaculations ... To formulate requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see ... (Dewey 2011, 7)

Wanner shows how the Bank's 'knowledge' discourse since the mid-1990s has now shifted its focus to knowledge itself as the 'main source of economic productivity'. Knowledge is in essence valorized as long as it informs the neo-liberal, economic activity favored by the Bank. This is a truncated and reductionist view of knowledge which no number of Google Scholar citations can redeem. The unstated discourse is confident that the knowledge from the 'north', once injected into the ailing 'south' with the 'expert' guidance of the Bank, will lead to health and prosperity. The Bank, hence, leaves no stone unturned in expending any effort (research, books, publications, conferences) towards this goal of defining what ought to be considered 'useful' knowledge in development. As Wanner (2007, 159–160) states, 'In knowledge capitalism, it is

increasingly the knowledge and language of economists that dominate all areas of social reality'.

Conclusion

The World Bank is committed to the task of making Rwanda an attractive destination for private investment, and considers the country 'a model for the entire world' (New China 2017). I have critiqued this narrow preoccupation with economic growth to the detriment of social divisions, inequalities and human rights violations. The Bank's neoliberal policies in Rwanda in the past have been implicated in exacerbating social divisions and, as such, underscores the need for the Bank to tread carefully in its current dealings with Rwanda. Furthermore, scholars have challenged reports published by the government of Rwanda that purport to show a reduction in poverty in the 2010/11–2013/14 period and argue that the changes are constant. Clearly, the above would suggest a more critical engagement with the often optimistic government-generated statistics in Rwanda.

In particular, I have argued that the Bank's portrayal of Rwanda as 'a role model for the entire world' is reckless given what is known about the human rights situation in the country. In addition, the paper argues that any comparisons with East Asian economies is flawed given the domination of just one ethnic group in Rwanda, growing discontent among the population and exclusion of any competing forces in the private sector (Gökgür 2012). I have also drawn attention to the contradiction inherent in Rwanda's *Vision 2020* which seeks to promote entrepreneurship and the current reality where 80% of the output of the largest 47 manufacturing and agribusiness groups are controlled by foreign and a few, large local firms which are faithful to Kagame's RPF party.

An analysis of *Vision 2020* and the World Bank's *Rwanda country partnership strategy for the period FY2014–2018* (World Bank 2014b) raises concerns about the internalization of Bank discourse, what has been called the 'epistemic community' (Holtom 2005). Individuals often trained and loyal to the Bank collaborate with 'hybrid actors' – a growing network of translocal scientists, technocrats and NGOs, to name a few – territorialize epistemological space and run shadow governments. It is in the interstices of such a Foucauldian knowledge/power nexus that the Bank's claim to be a 'knowledge bank' must be understood.

As an educator, the Bank's preoccupation with Google citations as a measure of its impact in the field of development is disconcerting. Klees (2012) regrets the absence of the philosophy of educators such as Dewey,

Freire, Montessori and Vygotsky in the Bank's Education Strategy 2020. Significantly, it was Paolo Freire who coined the term 'banking education' to critique the traditional model of education in which the student is perceived in terms of a blank Lockean state in which the teacher 'deposits' knowledge. For Freire (1996), the task of education, among others, is to induce critical consciousness – a state in which the oppressed learn to read not just the 'word', but the 'world' and the circumstances responsible for their oppression. I have argued that vulnerable countries like Rwanda, that are heavily dependent on aid, succumb to pressure and adopt policies recommended by the Bank. Regrettably, this becomes a case of 'banking education' given that social divisions, human rights abuses and other injustices are ignored – what Simms (2017) calls a 'human-rights free zone'.

Notes

1. According to Barnett (2002), 'What sets the Rwandan genocide apart from all other genocides is that the international community could have intervened at relatively low cost before the effects were fully realized.' He calls the international community's complacency in intervening in Rwanda 'wilful indifference'. Among others, he mentions the UN's Canadian General Romeo Dallaire's pleas for reinforcements and equipment to stop the massacre and the UN's decision to pull out all but 270 troops.
2. Obviously, as a development bank, the World Bank pursues a standard approach to lending and program reform and cannot be faulted for some of the short-term issues – crop failure, war in the north of the country, conflict in Burundi etc. However, and as the evidence in this study suggests, at issue is the Bank's resumption of a development policy vis-a-vis Rwanda that does little or nothing in regard to the country's democratic and human rights deficit.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by University of Southeast Norway.

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