

## Routledge

### Call for book chapter contributions:

*Schools and national identities in French-speaking Africa: political choices, means of transmission, and appropriation*

#### Editors:

Linda Gardelle, ENSTA Bretagne (FR)

Camille Jacob, University of Portsmouth (UK)

Please send a one-page outline of your proposal for a 5,000-6,000 words contribution to the volume by **4 May** to [linda.gardelle@ensta-bretagne.fr](mailto:linda.gardelle@ensta-bretagne.fr) and [camille.jacob@port.ac.uk](mailto:camille.jacob@port.ac.uk).

Authors will be notified by 20 May, and **full chapters will be due on 18 August 2019**.

The volume will be published by Routledge in the Series "Perspectives on Education in Africa" in 2020.

### Context and presentation

Africa as a continent remains too often conceptualised as a monolith, despite the wide variations in colonial and post-colonial state-building experiences and the diversity of education systems, language policies, and practices around the research and teaching of history, as well as how links with neighbours and the former coloniser(s) are envisaged (Auerbach 2018, Bassiouney 2017, Cross & Ndofirepi 2017, Diallo 2016, Kadri 2014, Kane 2016, Moore 2006, Taleb Ibrahim 1997, amongst many others). This volume aims to go beyond a narrow focus on "problems" of state- and nation-building in Africa, which mostly reduces countries to case studies of application of Western-centric theories rather than envisage knowledge from and about the continent as a source of theory-building (Chakrabarty 2000, Makalela 2018, McKinney 2017, Omobowale & Akanle 2017, Richardson 2018, Shanyanana & Waghid 2016, Wai 2018). While the term "Francophone Africa" is problematic, erasing the multilingual and translingual realities and reproducing a Euro-centric lens, there is comparatively little published in English on countries which were not formerly colonised by Britain, and the particularities of French and Belgian colonial rules and continued French influence is helpful in providing an initial focus. This volume which will be published in the Routledge series "Perspectives on Education in Africa" and aims to foreground research from countries often overlooked in Anglophone publications. Chapters questioning the relevance of this colonial frame of dividing the continent, whether through comparative or single case studies, are encouraged.

Studying school curriculums, from primary to higher education, their evolution in terms of policy-making and implementation, and the values and messages they carry, is particularly enriching in seeking to understand not only the purpose assigned to the education system by the state, but also how the links between past and present are constructed explicitly, what should be salient in shaping citizens' notions of themselves within the wider community, and the future is envisaged by the state. The teaching of History, Geography, Literature,

Citizenship, as well as languages (foreign and/or national) and sometimes religion, allow for the transmission of certain political and ideological discourses, the foregrounding of certain representations, and the shaping of a particular way of imagining collective identification and belonging. If curriculums aim to bring people together around common values or objectives, and enhance national pride, it can also serve to structure exclusionary discourses and pit groups against one another. Historical discourses and their writing in school settings thus operate at both the intellectual and emotional level simultaneously.

At independence, the African and Asian states 'nationalised' their education system and aimed to reclaim and 'decolonise' the writing and teaching of their national histories, sometimes in the name of 'authenticity' and 'tradition' (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2013, Havard 2007, Stora 2008). Many authors focusing on the construction of nation-states in the 18th and 19th century in Europe, had emphasised the crucial role played by schools in the construction of 'imagined communities' or 'master fictions', from Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm to Cornelius Castoriadis, Sean Wilentz, Andy Green, Gérard Noiriel, Anne-Marie Thiesse, and others. Postcolonial Studies, Subaltern Studies, the 'nouvelle histoire africaine' movement guided by Cheikh Anta Diop and Abdoulaye Ly, the Ibadan School and the Dar-es-Salaam School all studied the links between cultural identity and dominations, analysed the economic, social and cultural consequences of colonisation, and questioned the Eurocentrism of social sciences (Havard 2007, Maurel 2013, Mbembe 1989, amongst others). This 'demarginalisation' at the academic level was accompanied by a strong political, nationalist and panafrican engagement (Havard 2007, Thioub 2002).

In a time where quantitative and qualitative studies point to the increase in scepticism towards and distrust of the state, this volume interrogates the links between schools and the (re)production of discourses of national identity. Especially within the context of intensified transnational flows of people and ideas, the internationalisation of education systems, the NGO-isation of social services and increased mobilities worldwide, do schools still play the same role in the construction of national identity that they did at independence? Is the education system still envisaged as crucial in producing a shared and unique discourse of belonging, and how do other influences (media, diasporas, religious institutions, social networks...) participate in the elaboration, complexification or questioning of a national narrative? Whether in francophone or anglophone research, the beneficial role of the education system in driving economic growth and a supposed 'harmonious' society has been emphasised (Baudelot & Leclerc 2005, Durkheim 1938, Kennedy 2010, Schnapper 2000). Nonetheless, social realities are complex and the education system also represents a pivotal element of mechanisms of elite closure, and often contributes to reproducing rather than challenging inequalities and exclusionary identities (Bourdieu & Passeron 1964, Dubet, Duru-Bellat & V  r  tout 2010, Green, Janmat & Preston 2006). A finegrained analysis of role of schools in discourses of national identity (and other forms of belonging) is therefore essential to better understand the relation between the individual and society, from debates over increased individualism and the reshaping of collective identities to questions of the relation between academic frameworks and classroom realities (Makalela 2016, Omobowale & Akanle 2017).

The aim of this volume is therefore to provide an in-depth and transdisciplinary understanding of the role of schools in the various processes of identity-building, and to showcase research from and about countries outside the former British empire, either as individual case studies or through a comparative framework within or beyond the continent.

It will include contributions focusing on the multiple and changing role of schools in the construction of collective identities and the (re)production of national imaginings in francophone Africa. It will also consider how different actors (media, diasporas, social networks, religious communities) shape the appropriation, formulation and implementation of curriculums and discourses about education. Chapters can be empirical or theoretical, based on one case study or on comparative work, and should reflect critically and reflexively on the data, methodologies or conceptual frameworks used.

## **Suggested themes**

The following three themes are not mutually exclusive and should not be taken as indicative of the final organisation of the volume but rather aim to suggest questions and orientations for contributors.

### **1. Internationalisation and multiple identities**

The idea of the nation-state is attached to a specific historical context, which is neither static nor unquestioned. Processes such as globalisation, the internationalisation of education and services, and new forms of mobility can be seen as challenging monolithic discourses of national identity. While some see the disappearance of the nation-state, replaced by transnational networks and spaces (Toynbee 1972), others contend that porous borders should not be equated to an undermining of the state (Dufoix 2010, Meyer 2013). Transnational forms of belonging have always been an integral part of the questions around nation-building across the continent, from pan-African ideals to the 'Umma, and historical and contemporary attempts at regional integration (Mali Federation, ECOWAS). Nonetheless, dual citizenship remains viewed with suspicion, from the legal impossibility of dual citizenship since independence to the 2016 constitutional reforms in Algeria which prevent access to key governmental posts to bi-nationals. How have transnational forms of belonging found an expression within the classroom and in policy, and how has this changed over time? Does national identity preclude other forms of social identities? How do states (at all levels of decision-making) and actors (at all levels of implementation) envision and manage these multiple networks of belonging? What place is there for multiple identities and/or multilingualism within national discourses? How do discourses around national belonging intersect with the construction of the 'Other', and how are these debates enacted and refracted through the school system and in the classroom?

### **2. Historiography and contents**

Schools played a crucial role in state-building and nation-building since independence. African universities were at the forefront of historical research focusing on Africa before the 18th century, especially institutions such as Dakar, Ibadan, Nairobi, and Dar es Salaam. How has historiography evolved in the decades since independence, and how has it been integrated in national curriculums? How have global processes such as the marketisation of higher education and accelerated 'brain drain' since the 1990s affected the writing of history and its translation into education policy? Conversely, could a 'brain gain' (Gaillard & Meyer

1996) be expected from members of the diaspora who work in academia? How are questions of national and cultural heritage beyond colonisation formulated, and how are paradigms and approaches within the discipline (ubuntu, global history, decolonial approaches, histoire connectée, amongst others) reflected in debates over the role of schools and the teaching of history? Is 'the mythographical and pedagogical work' of nation-building (Cabanel 2013, Green 2013, Sauvage 2012, Thiesse 2001) still the main impetus behind discourses around national identities in schools? To what extent and with what results? What are the visible and invisible legacies of 'father of the nation' figures such as Nyerere in Tanzania, Senghor in Senegal, and Sekou Touré in Guinea, or of the 'generation of independence' in Algeria? How do debates around the choice of the medium of instruction, from the recognition of endogenous norms of the former colonial language to the legitimacy of 'indigenous' languages and translanguaging, impact on discourses and practices of belonging in the classroom?

### 3. Multiplicity of actors and levels

The media, mobilities and other factors play a role in the transmission of values, ideologies and feelings of belonging to a community. Is the role of schools still as central as it was? Or are other actors (social networks, cultural, political, religious, or linguistic organisations, etc.) and other factors more important in understanding the construction of collective identities and worldviews? As history is also written 'from below', are the mechanisms of appropriation transformed by new means of transmission and new conceptions of language? To what extent do different social actors see themselves as playing an important part in the construction of national identities? If the role of education systems has been changing within local, national, regional and global settings, do schools remain central to the transmission of national narratives, and what are the most pressing challenges that they face in defining shared notions of belonging?

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