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National identities and the curriculum: socio-cultural legacies and contemporary questions

Camille Jacob & Linda Gardelle

Introduction

This volume focuses on the role of schools in producing and reproducing national identities in French-speaking Africa. At the heart of all chapters is the need to critically investigate the concept of “the nation” as a political project, and how discourses and feelings of belonging are constructed at school. Historically throughout the world, schools have been given a key role in nation-building. Is this the case in contemporary African countries, and if yes, how, with what objectives and with what tools?

The idea of a shared sense of belonging to a national community can be addressed in many ways. This volume explores how national identities are constructed, transmitted, understood and negotiated in the curriculum. Using the curriculum as a focal point entails investigating ideological and political aims, and the organisation and selection of knowledge at various levels of decision-making, as well as what happens in the classroom, in terms of transmission, pedagogy, and reception. The curriculum involves multiple actors: political and institutional decision-makers, education and administrative officials, teachers, pupils, but also external actors (trade unions, media, parents, etc.) who influence in one way or another, at one stage or another, the creation of education policies, their implementation and their reception. How are such identity-building processes understood by different actors, what do they mean politically, and what do they look like in practice? Between essentialist understandings of identity as fixed, objective and unchanging, and constructivist approaches foregrounding the “building” of the nation, what interpretations are at work in French-speaking Africa today? 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. Depending on contexts and locations, what forms of collective consciousness and group identities are being transmitted in schools? In contemporary African countries, how is a sense of shared belonging constructed? How is this collective identity understood, prescribed, transmitted?

Africa as a continent remains too often conceptualised as a monolith, despite the wide variations in colonial and post-colonial state-building experiences and wildly differing social, economic, political and cultural situations. In terms of nation-building, these simplifications ignore the diversity of education systems, language policies, and practices around the research and teaching of history (Auerbach 2018, Bassiouney 2017, Bertho, Martineau, Pauthier & Piton 2019, Cross & Ndofirepi 2017, Diallo 2016, Kadri 2014, Moore 2006, Taleb Ibrahim 1997), as well as how links with neighbours and the former coloniser(s) are envisaged (Diallo 2016, Erfurt 2018, Evrard 2018, Kane 2016). 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 2016, Omobowale & Akanle 2017, Richardson 2018, Shanyanana & Waghid 2016, Wai 2018). While the term “French-speaking Africa” is problematic, erasing the multilingual and translanguaging realities and reproducing a Euro-centric lens, there is comparatively less 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 can be helpful in providing an initial focus.

This volume provides an in-depth and interdisciplinary understanding of the role of schools in the various processes of identity-building. It showcases recent research from and about countries considered as “French-speaking”, either as individual case studies or through a comparative framework. It brings together scholarship from emerging and established authors regarding how national identities are constructed, reproduced and questioned by multiple actors through the prism of education policy and the school system. In order to investigate these issues, multiple angles of analysis are used: at the macro-level, in order to examine how institutions (governments, policy-makers, but also scholars) understand the links between identities and schools, and at the micro-level, from the point of view of what is actually happening on the ground. The chapters which follow include historical overviews as well as studies in today’s classrooms, drawing on archival research, content analysis, interviews, or ethnography, and covering ten countries across the continent. In this chapter, we locate the conclusions reached by contributors to this volume within the scholarship on national identities and the curriculum. We also provide an overview of some of the key debates and avenues still left to research on the differentiated role of schools in nation-building across time and space, the tensions and/or synergies between multiple identities and actors over time, and the legacies of colonisation and decolonisation.

Schools and national identities

Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1986) played a key role in conceptualising the nation as an

“imagined community”, brought together through shared discourses of history and memory. These shared narratives, in Sean Wilentz’s words ‘master fictions’ (1985), give shape to the idea of a “nation”. They are not fixed, but rather are brought to the political fore at certain moments in history: in several European countries during the 18th and 19th centuries, as a reaction to French imperialism; in Africa, in the fight against colonialism and at independence; in Central Asia around the fall of the USSR, etc. These discourses give meaning to social relations (Castoriadis 1975), and therefore the way they are expressed and their political importance depend on contexts, periods and perceived difficulties experienced by societies.

For political elites, creating a shared memory is key to forging a sense of national identity and anchor their states. This collective memory can take different forms, from heroic tales to history textbooks and artistic production, and schools have often been a key location for the production of national identities and collective memory. From Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm (1990) to Cornelius Castoriadis, Sean Wilentz, Andy Green and Gérard Noiriel, many authors focusing on the construction of European nation-states in the 18th and 19th centuries have emphasised the crucial place of the education system in these processes. Nation-building and economic growth are also intertwined through the education system, and the role of schools in the economic development of some Asian countries has been discussed over the past three decades. For Green (2013), the rapid economic development of the Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) is due to the growth of the education system both in quantitative and qualitative terms, with citizenship now an important part of the curriculum (Kennedy 2005). In Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries, the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of the USSR have led to new research on national identities and the role of the education system in their production and evolution. There has been a boom in studies on the growing internationalisation of education and education policies, and at the same time a growing interest in the question of identities in schools, focusing on a local, regional or national level (Lessard 2009, Swing, Schriewer & Orivel 2000). In Africa, important research has been conducted by African and non-African scholars, in English and in French, and across various disciplines (Education, Sociology, History, Anthropology), and is referenced throughout this volume.

Schools represent ideal spaces within which to investigate the interactions between the local, regional, national and international in understanding the (re)production of and challenges to the state’s discourses about national identities. Schools are a catalyst for questions, tensions and convergence over who belongs, and who gets to define the Other. Concerns over how to organise and plan what to teach are not new, but the formal study of curricula and their development, adaptation and implementation dates back to the second half of the 20th century (Audigier, Crahay & Dolz 2006, Jackson 1992). After Durkheim’s *L’évolution pédagogique en France* (1938), what would come

to be termed the “sociology of the curriculum” appeared in the UK in the 1970s with the works of Basil Bernstein (1971) and Michael Young (1971). Studying the curriculum, from primary to higher education, its evolution in terms of policy-making and implementation, and the values and messages it carries, 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 how the future is envisaged by the state. The teaching of History, Geography, Literature, Citizenship, as well as languages (foreign and/or national) and sometimes Religious Studies, allow for the transmission of specific political and ideological discourses, the foregrounding of certain representations, and a particular way of imagining collective identification and belonging.

As Gamble (2017) underlines in the case of the colonial period, debates over education can be used as a focal point from which to understand the mechanisms of state-building as well as contested narratives of citizenship and belonging. This volume shows that this remains true of the contemporary period and that studying the curriculum allows for a comprehensive approach in understanding the role of schools in identity-building and wider social dynamics. This analysis of the curriculum can happen at different levels (Bernstein 1971, Forquin 2008, Mangez 2001, M. Young 1971):

- prior to enactment, examining how political and ideological objectives are debated and defined and how policies are talked about;
- as these policies go through various institutions, to understand how content and competences are selected, structured and organised;
- and finally in the classroom, as they are implemented, negotiated, appropriated.

Nevertheless, there have historically been few investigations into textbook content, and even fewer regarding classroom interactions, which renders nuanced and historically-informed analysis difficult. By showcasing research on textbooks, policy-makers, and practitioners in ten different African countries across the 20th and 21st centuries, this volume aims to provide insights into the diversity of issues and dynamics surrounding the question of schools and national identities.

In French-speaking Africa as elsewhere, policies with an overt focus on national identity have not always been at the forefront of education reforms, and at times both their purported ends and their methods have been heavily criticised. In Senegal, the ideological and political aims of “la négritude senghorienne” was particularly criticised in the 1980s (Ly 1981), as was the concept of “ivoirité” in the 1990s in Côte d’Ivoire (Akindes 2003). “Africanising” the curriculum was shaped by domestic and international political and economic constraints, giving rise to “French-style” education

systems after independence as well as innovations such as Côte d'Ivoire's "télévision scolaire" (Desalmand 2004, Manière 2012). The political dimension of the education system can be sometimes exacerbated through struggles between political parties or power relations within society, as demonstrated by Laurence Proteau in Côte d'Ivoire (1996), Yann Lebeau in Nigeria (1996), Pascal Bianchini in Senegal and Burkina Faso (2004), and Mamadou Yéro Baldé in Senegal (this volume). At the same time, this does not mean that the curriculum is always used as a key site of top-down imposition of national identities, as Daher Ahmed Farah shows for Djibouti (also in this volume). There is a paradox between the education system as an institution at the heart of political struggles, and the curriculum itself that is not always politicised to the same extent. In any case, the results of policies are not always those expected, as described in the case of Casamance by Céline Labrune-Badiane (this volume). A fine-grained analysis of role of the curriculum and multiplicity of actors involved, either directly or indirectly, is therefore essential to better understand the role of schools in producing a sense of national belonging.

Inclusion, exclusion and multiple identities

The role of schools in national cohesion has been highly contested, as has the definition of "national cohesion" itself (R. Young 2015, pp. 77–84). 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 & Lee 2010, Schnapper 2000), although "harmonious" can sometimes be a shorthand for "unitary". 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 exclusion and inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron 1964, Dubet, Duru-Bellat & Véréout 2010, Green 2013). The construction of an inclusive definition of the nation is not always (if not rarely) the priority for political elites. In Mali, for instance, the drive under President Alpha Oumar Konaré to create a sense of national identity based on shared cultural and artistic heritage led to the exclusion of some of the population from the curriculum. The negative portrayal or outright erasure of North Mali's Tuareg populations from textbooks (for instance, in French and History textbooks), compounded by structural and short-term difficulties, contributed to making identification with the Malian nation far from straightforward (Gardelle & Adam 2017). Valuing or devaluing certain groups within society, a way of life, a language, a profession, has an impact on individuals, as these discourses shape the construction of social meaning and representations.

At independence, school systems were seen as crucial in order to shape citizens attached to the nation as put forward by the state, whatever the historical political legacies that regimes were drawing on. With language seen as key to

how people defined themselves and related to the world, writing and teaching African languages became part of the debate around building a sense of national identity after independence (see, for instance, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o 2005[1981], Sylla 1997). In some cases, representations of languages as unitary, distinct and linked to identity became portrayed as a key unifying trait for the nation (e.g. Arabic for Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) (Saraceni & Jacob 2019). The colonial language was associated both with cultural alienation, and thus antithetical to the building of a strong national identity through schools, and crucial for “modernisation”, the precursor to today’s “development”. In others, the former colonial language was reinvented as a “neutral” language of national unification, at the expense of African languages (Boutin 2008, pp. 63–38, Diallo 2018, pp. 14–24, see also Boutin 2019). More recently, the binary of describing former colonial language in postcolonial contexts as either liberating or oppressive has been shown to continue reifying language, as well as ignoring how practices are localised and entangled within complex discourses of class, whiteness and gender (Pennycook 2010, Tupas 2015).

Nonetheless, many studies into national identities across the continent not only take the monolithic nation-state as a given but also take ethnic conflict as an obvious and inevitable result of artificial colonial borders. This ignores the fact that “ethnic groups” are themselves imagined communities, with colonial-era scientific “exploration” entailing the labelling and categorisation of groups according to linguistic criteria inherited from Europe, often resulting in the creation of ethnolinguistic groups considered an objective “reality” to this day (Irvine & Gal 2000, van den Avenne 2017). The delineation of ethnic groups based on linguistic features (often the most common criteria used by researchers to categorise people) and the Eurocentric expectation of a monolingual ethnolinguistic group sharing an ancestral language have been challenged (Lüpke 2017, building on Mufwene 2017; cf. also Lüpke & Storch 2013). Nevertheless, few studies have explored how concepts of “ethnic identity” are de/re-constructed in schools alongside national identities.

In addition, 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* (أمة) and historical and contemporary attempts at regional integration (Mali Federation, ECOWAS). Nonetheless, dual citizenship remains viewed with suspicion, from the legal impossibility of holding multiple citizenships (e.g. Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi) to preventing bi-nationals from accessing key political posts (e.g. Algeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana). Ahmed Sékou Touré and Thomas Sankara’s open political support for pan-Africanism was in marked contrast to Léopold Sédar Senghor’s priorities for Senegal, and textbooks do not always foreground an “African identity” (Djané, this volume, Sow 2012). How are national and transnational forms of belonging present in the curriculum, and how has the balance between the two evolved over the past six decades?

Furthermore, processes such as globalisation, the internationalisation of education and services, and new forms of mobility can be seen as challenging monolithic top-down 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). 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 (cf. for instance, Sabaratnam 2017), it is crucial to understand whether schools still play the same role in the construction of national identity that they did at independence, and how their role has changed across time. Other actors (social media, diasporas, religious institutions, cultural and political non-profit organisations, etc.) play a role in the construction and transmission of values, ideologies and feelings of belonging to a community. Boulay & Freire's (2017) collection underlines the importance of cultural production and interactions between the local, the national and the international in political struggles and in reshaping narratives of identities, especially in the case of the Sahrawi (Solana 2017). Is the education system still envisaged as crucial in producing a shared and unique discourse of belonging, and how do other influences participate in the elaboration, complexification or questioning of a national narrative? How have transnational forms of belonging found an expression within the classroom and in policy, and how has this changed over time?

Decolonising, nation-building, and legacies

Studying the curriculum allows for a lens through which to analyse how various actors understood decolonisation, and the tensions between decolonisation as a moment and decolonisation as a process (Jansen & Osterhammel 2017, pp. 1-34). Did decolonisation entail decolonising textbooks, staff, teaching practices, education paradigms, at what point in time and to what extent? How are these initiatives remembered today, if at all? What are the legacies of decolonisation as moment, and as process? The use of binary concepts such as colonial/post-colonial or resistance/collaboration has been challenged by field research over the past decades (Clancy-Smith 1994, Scott 1985). Similarly, as Pascal Bianchini (2004) points out, the simplistic and misleading dichotomy often drawn between "traditional" and "modern" schooling has obscured the ways these education systems have been appropriated by local actors, and instead reifies traditional education as "natural" and unchanging. How has analysing national identities in the curriculum changed, and to what extent have frameworks inherited from the former coloniser or the Global North(s) more widely influenced research and policy?

At independence, many African states aimed to nationalise their education system 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). This volume shows how the nationalisation of education systems occurred in different ways, to a different extent, with different foci and with varying political objectives across former French colonies. Interrogating how decolonisation and nation-building processes are entwined also entails investigating whether ‘the mythographical and pedagogical work’ of nation-building (Cabanel 2010, p. 33, see also Green 2013, Sauvage 2012, Thiesse 2001) remains (or ever was) the main impetus behind discourses around national identities in schools. What are the visible and invisible legacies of “father of the nation” figures such as Houphouët-Boigny in Ivory Coast, Senghor in Senegal or of the moudjahidines (مجاهدين) in Algeria? How questions of national and cultural heritage beyond colonisation are formulated, in other words which and whose history is taught, influence the content of history curricula as well as that of other disciplines, especially languages. In Arabic-speaking countries such as Morocco and Algeria, the links between awareness of historical moments and becoming a “good citizen” are not only present in textbooks and policy guidelines but also enacted and even embodied in the classroom (see, for instance, Zouaoui, Pellegrini, this volume). In contrast, Djane (also in this volume) questions the idea that prevalent theoretical and ideological critiques of the period surrounding independence (such as Négritude) are reflected in contemporary discourses of Ivorian identity as presented in the official curriculum. “Legacies” are never straightforward or unchanging, and key figures and moments are reinvented and reframed at both the local and national level (see also Labrune-Badiane, Dureysseix, this volume).

In turn, coloniality has appeared as an alternative conceptual framework through which to understand ‘the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, produced by colonial cultures and structures in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system’ (Grosfoguel 2007, pp. 219–220). The concept of coloniality highlights the intersections between constructions of modernity and forms of domination (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, Quijano 2000, pp. 221–222). While it is present in International Relations and Political Science more widely, it does not seem to have applied critically to school settings, from curriculum content to teacher training. Nonetheless, the continuity of colonial forms of domination and the long process of post-colonial disentanglements have been explored through various angles, from art to language policies (e.g. Bellisari 2017, Diallo 2016). In this volume, both Koné and Labrune-Badiane question the strict boundary between pre- and post-independence, between the colonial and the post-colonial, highlighting continuities and legacies in terms of how teachers construct their sense of belonging and how schooling is used for social advancement. Several chapters also hint at the notion of an ill-defined “golden age”, further blurring the neat boundary between the colonial and post-colonial periods in terms of national pride in school staff and content.

The former colonial power as well as international donors and institutions influence how national identities take shape within textbooks and teacher training guidelines. This influence can express itself directly or indirectly, through soft power and continued close links, for instance, in shaping the structure of the education system and what is considered “good teaching” and “expertise” (Brock-Utne 2003, Karmani 2005, Manière 2012, Medici 2018). In this volume for instance, Baba-Moussa and Jarroux deal with the interactions and tensions between international influence and the ways national identities are projected onto and constructed within schools. “Development” policies such as the Structural Adjustment Plans of the 1980s, as well as externally defined benchmarks of quality and priorities such as the UN’s Millenium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals have shaped the resources available for schools in terms of government and international funding. Since 1998, the WTO has considered education as a market like any other, and in 2004, education is part of the WTO’s General Agreement on Trade in Services signed by more than 130 countries. Higher education has been strongly impacted by these new pressures (Charlier & Croché 2017; Laval & Weber 2002; Lebeau 2006), which added to existing ideological and political tensions (Ghouati 2014, Leney 2003, Mazzella 2007). Barrère and Delvaux (2017) suggest that the result is a fragmentation of national education systems, and others point to the risk of ‘unlearning national solutions’ (Charlier & Croché 2017, Offe 2003) in the face of international institutions attempting to spread norms and values presented as “universal”. Although these initiatives are now often cloaked in the language of “collaboration” (Charlier & Croché 2017, p.129), the uneven power dynamics between international bodies and individual African governments mean that the pressure on the latter to conform is extremely strong.

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. Postcolonial Studies, Subaltern Studies, the nouvelle histoire africaine movement led 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 2001, amongst others). This “demarginalisation” at the academic level was accompanied by a strong political, nationalist and Panafrican engagement (Havard 2007, Thioub 2002). How has historiography evolved in the decades since independence, and how has it been integrated in national curricula? Very little has been published in English regarding how paradigms and approaches within academia (ubuntu, global history, decolonial approaches, histoire connectée, amongst others) are reflected in debates over the role of schools and the teaching of history in former French and Belgian colonies.

Many researchers have sought to deconstruct the mechanisms of knowledge production. Nevertheless, the influence of theoretical frameworks inherited from the former coloniser (partly through educational trajectories) continues to play a role, as does the fact that academic research is largely facilitated by large funders from the Global North (Mavoungou 2008). These realities invite further research into the impact of academic traditions in different languages on how social objects are studied. What appears throughout these chapters is the weight of French concepts of Republicanism and the place of school within the nation-state, which, while very strong in some contexts (Algeria, Morocco), has not been so profound in others (Djibouti). Nonetheless, these frames of analysis continue to shape academic research. What “the nation” and “nationhood” are remains mostly unsaid and under-investigated in curriculum research: studies would benefit from further crossing with other disciplines, unpacking “Republican values” or the very notion of “identity” (cf. Brubaker & Cooper 2000, Chabal 2015).

The chapters which follow have responded to these questions from a variety of angles, approaches, methods and case studies, providing rich material from which to understand political choices and mechanisms of transmission and appropriation. They critically interrogate how discourses of national identities are produced, shared and challenged in schools, how processes of nation-building since independence (and before) are refracted through curricula and classroom practices, and the roles played by different actors, from teachers to policy-makers, textbook writers and international donors to researchers. The authors draw our attention to the importance of renewing the theoretical, conceptual and methodological frameworks used in studying these topics. Although many education systems were “nationalised” at independence, what this has meant in practice differed widely, covering transformations in discourses of nationhood, the nationality of trainee teachers, language choices and curriculum content. What constitutes “the national” is thus problematised throughout, whether directly or indirectly. Studying the curriculum allows for such a comprehensive approach to understanding the interactions between schools and national identities over time.

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

The chapters in this volume demonstrate the importance of covering the topic of schools and national identities from interdisciplinary perspectives. Several chapters highlight the discrepancies, contradictions, and challenges between different layers of the production of national identities by schools: discourses about education, education policies, curricula, textbooks, teacher training, and classroom practices. The variety of approaches taken and sources considered highlight how necessary insights across different disciplines are in order

to make sense of the complex interactions between schools and national identities. Across the following ten chapters, a variety of scales and focal points are used to make sense of the relationship between schools and national identities, including a focus on a single institution, an international programme, textbooks for different disciplines for a given age range, as well as an entire region or even an overview of the whole country. As Badwan (2019) highlights in the case of language policy in higher education, not all actors, even within the same “strata” of decision-making, see themselves as having agency over policies. The intersections between individual, group, and structural dynamics (including socio-economic privilege) are a key part of understanding how curricula are enacted in the classroom. Different disciplines also often entail different approaches, and this volume showcases the range of data collection and analysis methods which can be used to analyse how curricula (re)produces, shapes or questions national identities in schools, from participant observation and interviews to archival work, oral history, and textbook analysis.

The **first section** of this volume questions the boundaries between colonial and post-colonial, and the idea of independence as a complete turning point. The roles of education under colonial rule had been shifting, from occasional nods to the “civilising mission” to producing the small elite necessary for supporting the administration of these territories (Gamble 2017, see also Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume). Nonetheless, independence did not mean a clear break from past structures, personnel, norms and values, or the unequivocal transformation of schools into a privileged space of nation-building, as the five chapters in this section demonstrate. The authors question whether a sense of national belonging is being constructed on school benches, and what it means today for schools to be simultaneously a place of learning and a key political battleground. Based on political speeches, education policies, school archives, interviews and textbook analysis, these chapters interrogate how representations of national identity in the curriculum have changed since independence, and the intermeshing of schools and identities at the local, national and regional level.

Both Chapters 2 and 3 invite readers to consider the links between schools and state-building projects beyond the colonial/post-colonial divide, in terms not only of education policy but also of teacher training decisions and pupil enrolment. **Chapter 2** takes the more rarely studied setting of rural normal schools in French West Africa to ‘deconstruct the paradigm of 1960 as a zero hour’ (p. 25). Through careful archival research and interviews, Jean-Léon Koné demonstrates the role the school system played in mediating the transition between identities at the regional, national and federal scale. By focusing on teacher training in Dabou, Koné examines how the question of belonging was expressed in a rural normal school within the French West Africa framework, and how changes in political structures and the nationalisation of education impacted these teachers as well as how their role was understood.

Combining archival *fonds* that had not been analysed up to now with oral history methods, this chapter illuminates not only evolutions in what teacher training entailed and how political decision-makers understood teachers' role within the political system, but also the trajectories of these teachers, and ambivalent discourses regarding "golden ages" in education.

In **Chapter 3**, Céline Labrune-Badiane deconstructs the idea that high rates of school enrollment automatically equate to adherence to the national project, by placing the conflict ongoing since the 1980s in Casamance, sparked by school protests, within its larger historical context. The chapter analyses how the school system under colonial rule and since independence has not only served to integrate Casamance within the nation-state through access to the civil service and discourses of belonging to the nation, but also simultaneously 'crystallised the tensions that crossed society' (p. 53). Labrune-Badiane brings together primary and secondary literature to show how education policies and school experience provided a common ground on which to base both separatist and nationalist demands, beyond simplistic understandings of schooling as equivalent to nation-building.

The next two chapters offer contrasting historical overviews of how "the nation" was given shape in discourses about education and curricula since independence. Focusing respectively on Djibouti and Senegal, Daher Ahmed Farah and Mamadou Yéro Baldé analyse shifts and continuities in political discourse and education policies through document analysis and interviews. In Djibouti (**Chapter 4**), the focus on "the nation" did not appear in textbooks until the 1999 reforms, with the regime focusing on other socio-economic policies instead, and channelling nation-building through the single party. It is only with the political upheaval of the turn of the century that the question of "djiboutianising" the curriculum was brought to the fore. Comparisons between education policies and textbook analysis reveal how national identity after 1999 is framed within a broader sense of belonging to the African continent and continued close links to the former colonial ruler, France. In Senegal in contrast (**Chapter 5**), debates over the Senegalisation or Francisation of the curriculum happened immediately upon independence, with the latter being equated to "modernity" and links to the outside world, and the former heralded as crucial to nation-building. Mamadou Yéro Baldé scrutinises education policies and the impact of timetabling, curricula, teacher training and international assistance from France (*coopération*) on the presentation of Senegalese identity in primary, secondary and higher education systems, as well as how these issues were seized by opposition groups and trade unions as key themes on the political stage.

The links between the ideals of independence and contemporary textbook content are also explored in **Chapter 6**. With Negritude a key concept in the cultural and then political movements before independence, Kabran Aristide Djane in his chapter analyses how Negritude in its cultural, historical, and political components is present in upper primary textbooks for French and

History–Geography in Côte d’Ivoire. Adapting a grid from Nigerian scholar Francis Abiola Irele, Djane shows how conceptual frameworks from Philosophy and Literature can be applied to the study of curricula, and brings to the fore new ways of understanding how national identities are being conceptualised in teaching content. The analysis reveals that while Ivorisation of the content has indeed taken place, in the sense of case studies and themes pertaining to a certain definition of “the local” are present, the erstwhile influential critical insights from Negritude are only present in a truncated form. Negritude itself, as a movement and a framework of critique, is not explicitly mentioned, privileging instead a ‘non-radical negotiated nationalism’ in keeping with the “father of the nation”, Félix Houphouët-Boigny (p. 104).

The **second section** focuses on the various ways in which national identities are mediated, refracted, understood and produced through language-in-education policies. The chapters discuss questions relating to the choice of the medium of instruction, the interplay between local, national and international priorities of different actors, as well as the choice of analytical categories. All deal with the issue of what to do with the issue of what decolonisation means in practice for schools, and the coloniality of language policies, school structures and patterns of cooperation. The diversity of approaches (from content analysis to ethnography) lead to a variety of questions being asked of these situations: what role does language play in the state’s understanding of the national identity? How are discourses about national identity adapted and appropriated between the macro-, meso- and micro-level? What roles do teachers play in questioning, reproducing or reshaping international or national priorities on the ground? How do governments balance nation-building and international demands? What is the impact of academic blind spots in understanding the intersections between language and expressions of national belonging?

In **Chapter 7**, Fanny Dureysseix poses the question of what the “national” means within the context of African territories still under French control. Taking the case of Mayotte and the opening provided by recent teacher training reforms, Dureysseix analyses how processes of contextualisation of curricula (even within a highly centralised and prescriptive education system) are refracted through debates over language. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, she examines teachers’ beliefs regarding Maore identity through survey responses and the production of teaching materials. The chapter underlines the key role played by teachers from both Mayotte and mainland France in interpreting and enacting the proposed ‘valorisation and recognition of local languages and cultures’ (p. 119). Dureysseix also highlights the importance of producing teaching resources in these languages considering the poor language skills of teachers from mainland France, and the role of students in themselves producing the corpus which forms the basis of further language standardisation, thus both building bridges and creating tensions between national identities at the Maore and French levels.

In **Chapter 8**, Abdel Rahamane Baba-Moussa and Pauline Jarroux present an extensive investigation into the interplay between local, national and international priorities of different actors, and raises the question of how international cooperation programmes and related development campaigns can be reconciled with locally-defined notions of national identity. This is particularly crucial in questions involving literacy programmes and other campaigns related to languages, as international funders tend to raise the profile of European languages while maintaining other languages as “local”, in addition to ignoring the needs and expertise of local teachers. Decision-makers at the local and national level are caught between international objectives, the need to raise money to fund more textbooks and campaigns, and the demands from their constituencies. While teachers are often not consulted before reforms are passed, as they are in charge of implementation, they hold a large amount of power over how these reforms are implemented. This chapter illustrates well the challenges of balancing priorities at different levels, as well as the importance of considering dynamics on the ground in addition to top-down policy-making.

While the vast majority of studies into medium of instruction focus on discourses about language at the policy level only, Chloe Pellegrini in **Chapter 9** presents an ethnographic research into how policy regarding the central role of Arabic for the production of Moroccan national identity is enacted in the classroom. She demonstrates how both curriculum content and classroom interactions serve to construct a sense of Morocanness built on both national and religious belonging. Pupils are expected to become both celebrants and “guardians” of this Moroccan identity, with the curriculum thus creating a form of “identity literacy”.

Chapter 10 in contrast focuses not on debates over the medium of instruction but rather of textbook content for the teaching of foreign languages. Amira Zaouaoui compares how the language itself is framed in textbooks of French and English in Algeria. Discourses of national identity are commonplace in textbooks of French, with identity being constructed throughout in opposition to French as a legacy of the colonial period, while English is depicted as the medium through which to develop intercultural skills. Textbook writers’ choices respond to official guidelines as well as wider socio-cultural discourses, and these choices in turn feed into wider discourses of national identity as defined through language attitudes.

The question of research blind spots is also raised by Rada Tirvassen in **Chapter 11** on the islands of the South-West Indian Ocean. The author contrasts the colonial and post-colonial discourses regarding language and national identity and language-in-education policies in Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles, analysing how “colonial language”, often used as shorthand to denote French, in fact covers a multitude of situations which are erased by this simplistic label. By comparing the historical experience during colonial rule as well as the place of languages in the independence

movement and nation- and state-building processes, Tirvassen highlights how the “colonial language” covers widely differing realities, a single label therefore simplifying and erasing the singularities of each context and preventing in-depth analysis. This chapter’s conclusions echo existing research in History pointing to the complex ways language was used in nation- and state-building prior and after independence, although such insights are rarely taken into account in Sociolinguistics.

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