CONFLICT, EDUCATION AND TRUTH COMMISSIONS:
THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Comparative and International Education at the University of Oxford, Department of Educational Studies

Julia Paulson

Green College
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MAP OF SIERRA LEONE
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFRC</td>
<td>Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (Sierra Leone)</td>
</tr>
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<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Educational Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDF</td>
<td>Civil Defence Forces (Sierra Leone)</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREPS</td>
<td>Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School (Sierra Leone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUREC</td>
<td>Central University Research Ethics Committee (Oxford)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (United Kingdom)</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>FTI</td>
<td>Fast Track Initiative</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICG</td>
<td>International Crisis Group</td>
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<td>ICTJ</td>
<td>International Centre for Transitional Justice</td>
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<td>ICTR</td>
<td>International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda</td>
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<td>ICTY</td>
<td>International Criminal Tribunal for the former-Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>INEE</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Junior Secondary School (Sierra Leone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEST</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Sierra Leone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCRDC</td>
<td>National Curriculum Research and Development Centre (Sierra Leone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
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<td>NPRC</td>
<td>National Provisionary Revolutionary Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD/DAC</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUF</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCSL</td>
<td>Special Court for Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLTRC</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSS</td>
<td>Senior Secondary School (Sierra Leone)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMSIL</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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ABSTRACT

This study presents a qualitatively designed case study investigating educational recommendations made by the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) (2004) as a part of its report following Sierra Leone’s decade long civil war. The study proposes that recent truth commissions have begun to pay greater attention to the education sector than did their predecessors and seeks to investigate the Sierra Leonean case in order to assess how the recommendations for educational reform and reconstruction made by the SLTRC are being received.

The research presented attempts to answer the following research questions:

1) How are the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC contributing to post-conflict educational reconstruction and reform in Sierra Leone?

2) Are the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC considered appropriate and desirable by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), by civil society and by the educational community?

3) In what ways have the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC been implemented and who is driving this?

The study draws on literature from the fields of education and conflict and of transitional justice in an effort to situate these findings as an early bridge for greater dialogue between the two fields. The conflict in Sierra Leone (1991 – 2002) is then investigated through the lens of education and conflict and the manifold ways that education was presented and perceived during the war are explored. The SLTRC process is then outlined and assessed before research findings from primary and secondary documentary data and from semi-structured interviews, collected during a June, 2006 field visit, are presented. Finally, we reflect on the case study as a whole, on areas for further research and on the broader relationships between education, conflict and transitional justice.
INTRODUCTION

At the launch of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (SLTRC) Final Report in October, 2004, two 12 year old children, a girl and a boy, addressed the assembled crowd. They spoke of their participation in the Commission’s work and of the publication - a first for a truth commission - of a Child Friendly Version to accompany the final report. They said:

We the children of this nation were the most vulnerable group during the decade long civil war. In this regard, we want to be the first priority on the Government agenda in terms of implementing the TRC recommendations. (as quoted in UNICEF, 2004b)

The SLTRC, conceptualized as a mechanism of transitional justice in the wake of a conflict that left over 50,000 dead, was mandated to:

Address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation. (Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, 1999)

The implementation of the recommendations that the Commission made to the Government of Sierra Leone, after periods of research and information gathering, public testimony around the country and thematic hearings, was to be mandatory. This marks another first for a truth commission.

These features of the SLTRC, along with a strong focus within the document on education, and the inclusion of specific educational recommendations merit close attention and raise questions for those interested in educational reconstruction in post-conflict situations. So too does the oft acknowledged (see for example Richards, 1996; Wright, 1997; Keen 2005) dialectic between education and conflict in Sierra Leone’s civil war. Despite the growing body of literature on education and conflict, few questions
have been asked about the ways that transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions, interact with the education sector and the ways in which these mechanisms can and do contribute to post-conflict educational reconstruction. I suspect that, as the relationships between education and conflict and the ways in which education can in fact contribute to conflict are increasingly articulated, and as education becomes an increasing focus of humanitarian and developmental response during and after conflicts, so too will education become a greater focus in the work of truth commissions. The SLTRC (2004) provides an example of this, as did the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2003) before it.

This dissertation presents a case study of the SLTRC and its educational recommendations and it investigates the extent to which these recommendations are impacting on educational reconstruction in Sierra Leone. The case study relies on an analysis of literature in the fields of education and conflict and transitional justice as well as on primary and secondary sources specific to Sierra Leone’s case, many of which were collected during a research visit in June, 2006. The case study also draws on empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives of the SLTRC, members of Sierra Leonean civil society, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) representatives, Head Teachers and lay-people, also conducted during the June, 2006 research visit. In order to allow space for a full, rigorous discussion of the methodology employed in this research project, appendices discussing it and outlining an interview schedule are included.

This project is guided by the following research questions:

1) How are the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC contributing to post-conflict educational reconstruction and reform in Sierra Leone?
2) Are the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC considered appropriate and desirable by the MEST, by civil society and by the educational community?

3) In what ways have the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC been implemented and who is driving this?

Chapter 1 opens by exploring the ‘developing field’ (Tomlinson and Benefield, 2005) of education and conflict, indicating potential for greater dialogue with social scientific theories of conflict, and perhaps, with literature on transitional justice. Chapter 2 turns to this literature on transitional justice, exploring briefly the principal debates around justice, truth and development following periods of conflict and human rights violations. It then introduces the concept of truth commissions, giving a brief history of their use and exploring the ways that they have included educational issues and outlining the potential for education to be further integrated. Chapter 3 applies Bush and Saltarelli’s (2000) idea of the ‘two faces of education’ to the conflict in Sierra Leone, arguing that education showed a multitude of faces as its promises and its collapse fed into the conflict in a number of ways. Having established the importance of including an analysis of education in any response to Sierra Leone’s conflict, Chapter 4 looks at the SLTRC and the ways that it included education, presenting the SLTRC’s educational recommendations. In Chapter 5 case study data is presented and assessed with the above research questions in mind. Finally, the Conclusion reflects upon the research process and the lessons learned.

Following the works cited section, appendices are included. Appendix A outlines the research methods chosen for this study, details the research process and considers ethical and methodological issues. Information provided to interview respondents and
the consent form that they were asked to sign are included in Appendix B while
Appendix C offers a sample of an interview schedule.
CHAPTER 1: EDUCATION AND CONFLICT

1.1: A field in its infancy

In the opening Editorial of a recent edition of the journal Compare (Dec. 2004, Vol. 35, No. 4) Fiona Leach writes ‘sadly, as with HIV/AIDS education, education and conflict has become a new and expanding area of specialization for academics, policy makers and development agency staff’ (351). Indeed, since the mid-1990s a growing body of literature and research has emerged on ‘education and conflict’ and on ‘emergency education’. Literature from the two areas is complementary, though texts under the heading emergency education also account for educational needs in situations of emergency other than conflict, such as natural disaster or famine, and are often written from a policy-oriented, practitioner-driven focus. Education and conflict literature is often seen to be more theoretical and academic. In this literature review, the emerging areas of education and conflict and emergency education are taken to be very complimentary and, indeed, are often treated as one and the same. As will be argued throughout this section, it is important to foster this interchange between theory and practice, and indeed to borrow from theory and practice outside the specific confines of education.

While, as Leach asserts, the urgent need for study in the area of education and conflict is unfortunate, the prevalence of conflict in the world has certainly not decreased in recent years. Much of the literature in this ‘field in its infancy’ (Tomlinson and Benefield, 2005) begins by contextualizing contemporary conflicts in the context of the post-Cold War world. Authors explain that conflicts increasingly occur within nations rather than between them (Gallagher, 2004), and that their battlegrounds encompass the
cities, towns, villages, homes and schools of civilians (Davies, 2004). Over two million children have lost their lives as a direct result of conflict over the course of the last decade, while at least a further six million have been seriously injured or permanently disabled (World Bank, 2005).

Many of the early contributions to education and conflict and to emergency education literature came from experienced agency staff and relief workers (see for example Sommers 1999; Sinclair, 2001 and 2002; and Crisp et. al. 2001) who saw first-hand the need for greater attention to the educational needs of those living with and recovering from conflict. Early academic publications in the area by Phillips (1989) and Retamal and Aedo-Richmond (1998) contributed to this growing momentum. Practitioners and academics alike highlighted the extreme importance that education holds for those affected by and living in conflict (see Ahlen, 2006; Sinclair, 2002; Crisp et. al., 2001). The 2001 ‘Machel Report’ entitled *The impact of war on children* based on a 1996 study by Grace Machel submitted to the UN, articulated the work and advocacy of early writers in this area by naming education as the ‘fourth pillar’ - along with food and water, shelter and health care - of humanitarian response in crisis situations.

That the Sphere Project, launched in 1997 to develop a *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, did not include a specific focus on education (Sphere, 2004), illustrates the context within which early authors in the area of education and conflict were advocating and the importance of their work. Subsequently the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) launched a project on *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early*
Reconstruction. Standards have been developed by a coalition of experts and are currently being used in over 60 countries (Anderson & Mendenhall, 2006). The current momentum around education and conflict is also demonstrated by the deluge of recent, major publications and policy-statements on the subject from such actors as the UNESCO/IIEP (2006), OECD/DAC Fragile States Group (2006), Commonwealth Secretariat (2006), World Bank (2005), DFID (2003), SIDA (2002) and CIDA (2002).

1.2: EFA, education and conflict and the ‘two faces of education’

At the Jomtein conference in 1990 leading to the ‘World Declaration of Education For All’ (EFA), there was very little mention of education in emergencies. ‘War, occupation, civil strife’ were simply included among the ‘daunting problems’ with the potential to ‘constrain efforts to meet basic learning needs’ in the preamble to the Declaration and no further analysis was offered (UNESCO, 1990). However, research and literature in the area of education and conflict has made it very clear that, without a concerted effort to address the needs of those living in crisis situations, emerging from them, or displaced by them, the EFA goals simply cannot be met. It is estimated that more than half of the approximately 115 million children currently not enrolled in primary school live in fragile states (Greeley and Rose, 2006).

Compared to its 1990 predecessor, the World Education Forum in 2000 and its resulting ‘Dakar Framework for Action’ does take into greater account the situations and educational needs of children (and adults) ‘affected by armed conflict.’ The Dakar Framework includes an explicit call for donor support to education in emergencies (Johnson and van Kalmthout, 2006).
The Dakar Framework states that ‘countries in conflict and undergoing reconstruction should be given special attention in building up their education systems’ (World Education Forum, 2000: paragraph 14) and acknowledges that ‘education has a key role to play in preventing conflict in the future and building lasting peace and stability’ (World Education Forum, 2002: paragraph 28). Rose and Greeley (2006) elaborate upon this ‘key role,’ arguing that ‘as one of the most visible state services and one that affects all people’ education can have an ‘important symbolic value in (re-)establishing the legitimacy of the state’ (4). Education, say Rose and Greeley (2006) ‘matters in a special way’, as does educational reconstruction, since they can serve as ‘a barometer of the relationship between the state and its citizens’ (25). This idea, that education can shed light on the way that people view the state and that the state views people will be important in considering the history of education in Sierra Leone, its collapse and its reconstruction.

Smith and Vaux (2003) point out that the common criticism levelled at the EFA goals – that they fail to address the crucial issue of quality education for all (see for example Delors et. al, 1998; Colclough and Lewin, 1993) – is terribly poignant in conflict situations where education of low quality or of questionable content may exacerbate conflict. With its 2005 Global Monitoring Report, the EFA initiative committed itself to the issue of quality. Much of the work that seeks to design quality educational responses to conflict is informed by reflection about the ‘two faces of education’ (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000), taking into account the ways in which formal education may prevent as well as contribute to conflict. Drawing on ideas developed by earlier thinkers, such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bush and Saltarelli explore the ways in which education
can reproduce social inequalities and injustices, deepening conditions for conflict. Research in this area shows that harmful curriculum content, segregated schools, limited access to education, authoritarian teaching styles, verbal and physical abuse in schools, politicization/radicalization of learning environments, and other negative features of systematized educational provision can produce situations where education is a contributor, or even a cause, of conflict (see for example Harber, 2002). Bush and Saltarelli (2000) give the example of Nepal, where state education of a poor quality and a growing, corrupt private educational sector have made education both a cause and principal battleground of conflict. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru (2003) includes evidence of the politicization of teacher’s unions and the active recruitment of teachers into the Sendero Luminoso movement, and it denounces the highly authoritarian teaching style popular throughout Peru, thus bringing aspects of educational provision to account for feeding into conflict. This paper hopes to show (as have others, see for example Keen, 2005; Richards, 1996) that the collapse and failure of the formal education system in Sierra Leone was a significant contributing factor to the inception and maintenance of the civil war.

Davies (2004) points out that in seeking to understand the most negative potential of formal education - for example its ability to reproduce inequality, to perpetuate (and, indeed, further entrench) hatred, and to foster violent conflict – researchers in this area must broaden their reflections to include not only the predominant orientation on war-torn areas in the developing world but classrooms all over the world. This point stresses a universal moral obligation in the face of conflict and human rights violations, emphasizes that a country or a community not being in a physical state of war or violence
does not imply that its educational system is teaching for peace and envisions peace education as a priority around the world. As Smith and Vaux (2003) point out, the importance of assessing and promoting sensitive education, if not peace education, is something that should be core to Education for All.

EFA Plans should have a clear analysis of the conflict dimension and also a focus on the type of education being provided as well as a focus on enrolment rates and levels of literacy and numeracy. The challenge is to develop methods of tracking whether ‘progress’ in the education field might also be creating tensions that could lead to or exacerbate conflict

(Smith and Vaux, 2003: 18, original emphasis)

The inclusion of this admittedly more qualitative, but eminently practical, target among the EFA goals is a main recommendation made by Smith and Vaux (2003). Unfortunately, educational environments dominated by outcomes, standards and targets make it difficult to focus on such intangible but crucial aspects. Perhaps the impact of insensitive, divisive educational systems will become much more tangible as research increases on the ‘two faces of education’ and on education and conflict. If so, this will be a sobering finding.

1.3: A strange silence

The final sentence in Tomlinson and Benefield’s 2005 publication, Education and conflict: Research and research possibilities, under the heading ‘Themes for further research’, reads: ‘When examining the impact of educational interventions in post-conflict areas take account of the wider societal approaches to discussion of conflict related issues’ (18). One could take this to mean that research on education and conflict should engage with broader theoretical literature within the social sciences on the nature and causes of conflict and on strategies to prevent it. That a researcher would have to infer this from Tomlinson and Benefield’s report, that such a suggestion does not even
figure in similar documents, and that most literature in the area does not draw on or engage with social scientific research on conflict is problematic. Conflict theorists often point to the impact that poor or non-functioning educational systems have had on exacerbating conflict. Keen (2005) and Richards (1996) both argue that the educational failure in Sierra Leone created a contingent of youth who were easily recruited into fighting forces. Generally, however, conflict literature does not draw or reflect upon education and conflict literature in the same way that education and conflict literature rarely engages with conflict theorists. Brock and Cammish (1997) found a similar neglect to engage between educational and social science literature in their study on gender, education and development. The gaps created by these mutual silences are unproductive and ought to be bridged.

Fortunately, this ‘theoretical silence’ is being recognized by leading thinkers and students alike within the ‘developing field’ (Tomlinson and Benefield, 2005) of education and conflict. Lynn Davies, for example, draws upon complexity theory to frame her arguments (2004) and Kate Chauncey (2005) investigates various theories of conflict in her exploration of education and conflict in Rwanda. Davies uses complexity theory, that ‘reveals vast global connectivity’ and is able to ‘isolate where small changes can have disproportionate effects,’ to argue that questions of education and conflict are indeed crucial to all educational systems, reinforcing her conclusion that the type of education provided matters.

This dissertation will draw particularly on work by leading social scientists who have investigated Sierra Leone’s conflict, most notably upon Keen (2005) and Richards (1996), to investigate the many faces of education and conflict in Sierra Leone. That
Keen’s conclusion that ‘simplistic interpretations of reconstruction’ could ‘reconstruct the source of the problem’ (2005: 296) echoes Davies’ that ‘education for reconstruction should not be a restoration of equilibrium’ and that reconstruction must instead create ‘new ways of learning and living which is to not reproduce the same causes of conflict’ (2004: 182) is meaningful and demonstrates the potential for collaboration between these disciplines.

In addition to treading into the gap produced by this theoretical silence, this dissertation seeks to explore another. Indeed, the abundant literature on transitional justice, within which literature on truth commissions falls, does not engage rigorously with social scientific theories of conflict and is completely silent with respect to literature on education and conflict. The next chapter will explore the literature on transitional justice and truth commissions, pointing to what I consider to be further potential for increased collaboration and dialogue between disciplines and more potential opportunities for sustainable post-conflict educational reconstruction.
CHAPTER 2: TRUTH COMMISSIONS, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATION

2.1: Truth vs. justice? The truth commission as a transitional justice mechanism

Jose Zalaquett argues that the mechanism (or mechanisms) chosen by a government to reckon with past human rights abuses in a time of transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, or in a transition from wartime to peacetime, has ‘a bearing simultaneously on the legacy of the past, on the present, and on the future’ (1999: 347). In the words of Juan E. Mendez:

Redressing the wrongs committed through human rights violations is not only a legal obligation and a moral imperative imposed on governments. It also makes good political sense in the transition from dictatorship to democracy. In fact, the pursuit of retrospective justice is an urgent task of democratization, as it highlights the fundamental character of the new order to be established, an order based on the rule of law and respect for the dignity and worth of each human person.
(1997: 1)

The field of transitional justice thus concerns itself with the ‘hows and whys’ of societal reckoning with past human rights abuses, and with debates about the best ways to accomplish this complex task.

Contributions to the immense literature on transitional justice include those from political theorists contemplating transitions from authoritarian rule to democratic governance (see for example Tilly, 2003; Huntington, 1995); those from moral, ethical, legal and religious philosophers concerned with the good and the right in the wake of violence and repression; (see for example Amstutz, 2005; Minow, 1998; Ignatieff 1998); from legal scholars contemplating domestic, international and hybrid approaches and the boundaries of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity (see for example Sikkink, 2006; Aukerman, 2002; Teitel, 2000; McAdams, 1997); from human rights activists examining best practices (see for example TRC Working Group,
2006; Bronkhorst, 1995); and from practitioners sharing lessons from involvement in various post-conflict experiments (see for example ICTJa, 2006; Schabas, 2004; Hayner, 2002; Zalaquett, 1999). All seek to answer the question, what is the best way to deal with human rights abuses of the past? Answers include trials, truth commissions, amnesties, lustrations (a bureaucratic purging), reconciliation efforts, traditional/indigenous strategies, conscious forgetting and combinations of the above. All the key debates have profoundly philosophical and moral dimensions, as authors argue the values of truth versus justice, the limits of accountability and the ills of impunity, the temptation to forget and the importance of remembering, and the tensions between the rule of law and the idea of reconciliation. Fraught and critical as the debate can get, it is important to be reminded of ‘the incompleteness and inescapable inadequacy of each possible response to collective atrocities’ (Minow, 1998: 5).

Many authors, particularly those coming from legal backgrounds, assume that trials conducted with due-process that permit convictions of the guilty are the mechanism that ought, ideally, to be pursued following a period of massive human rights violations. Diane F. Orentlicher (1991) argues that the duty under international law to prosecute human rights violations ought to be regarded and pursued with utmost priority. Trial-based scholarship places the post-WWII Nuremburg and Tokyo trials as the starting point of a gradual legal and human rights based movement towards ending the impunity from prosecution and punishment that those who have directed mass atrocities and human rights violations often enjoy. The trial-focused literature chronicles evolutions in international law as well as developments such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International
Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), hybrid courts (such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which will be discussed in Chapter 4, and the development of various human rights treaties and conventions (see for example Aukerman 2002; Sikkink, 2006).

For the majority of these authors, mechanisms of transitional justice other than trials, such as truth commissions, are viewed as highly inferior, for example Mendez, (1997) argues that a truth commission as an alternative to a trial is ‘the most extreme form of tokenism’ (15). However, arguments about the impracticality and infeasibility of trials, their potentially destabilizing political effects, their difficulty in the face of the amnesties often guaranteed in transition and peace processes, and the tendency of trials to be prohibitively expensive are all acknowledged by even their most staunch supporters. The obstacles to holding trials are especially great in contexts where elements of the former regime maintain some degree of power. However, the practical constraints of trials are not the only objections against criminal prosecution as the most apt manner of reckoning with past atrocities.

Many argue that justice, in the form of the rule of law, is not the most important priority for nations emerging from conflict, favouring strategies that pursue development, reconciliation, truth, or indigenous healing (see for example Shaw, 2005; Graybill and Lanegran, 2004). Others feel that the ends of truth and justice need not be mutually exclusive, and that processes of transitional justice such as trials and truth commissions can indeed be complementary and can lead to fuller processes that can help to consolidate peace and to promote reconciliation (ICTJa, 2006). Indeed, Sierra Leone provides an interesting case for investigating this hypothesis as both a hybrid Special Court and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission have been employed as mechanisms of transitional
justice. While the general appropriateness of transitional justice mechanisms is not an explicit focus of this dissertation, in order to contextualize the unique post-conflict situation in Sierra Leone it is critical to understand the debates surrounding transitional justice elsewhere and to explore how they have played out globally. The dynamics of the relationship between Sierra Leone’s TRC and the Special Court will be explored further in Section 4.2.

2.2: Defining truth commissions

In defining the truth commission, I will draw on literature by those who argue favourably for its use as an appropriate and effective mechanism of transitional justice, often preferring the truth commission to the trial and to other methods. Proponents of this view argue that truth-seeking exercises can bring forward a more meaningful and nuanced truth than can trials; can provide insight into historical and societal causes of conflict and into broader social consequences of conflict; and can facilitate cathartic experiences of forgiveness and reconciliation through truth-telling. For Skaar et.al.:

Various forms of truth commissions may uncover a more contextual truth, not only the forensic facts of isolated incidents, but also the logic behind the violence and the interacting of social forces that allowed the atrocities. Dynamics of truth commissions are held to be more conducive to reconciliation, since they may help create a collective memory of the past and a common understanding of what that past means for the present and the future.

(2005: 7-8)

The establishment of a collective memory, and the positing of a ‘truth’ that can subsequently be officially acknowledged can be, in themselves, very important political processes in the wake of repression and can represent a symbolic move from a culture of fear and silence to a more open one. According to Zalaquett (1999), official acknowledgement of past oppression is essential because of its ability to consolidate norms of transition, namely democracy and peace.
Priscilla Hayner, a leading scholar on truth commissions, made great progress towards defining and understanding them in her 2002 publication, *Unspeakable truths: Facing the challenge of truth commissions*. Hayner, who was involved as a consultant in the initial conceptualization of Sierra Leone’s TRC (Schabas, 2005), identifies five basic aims of truth commissions:

- to discover, clarify and formally acknowledge past abuses;
- to respond to specific needs of victims;
- to contribute to justice and accountability;
- to outline institutional responsibility and recommend reforms;
- and to promote reconciliation and reduce conflict over the past (2002: 24).

The truth commission can thus be conceptualized as a body investigating the human rights abuses of the past, relying on the testimony of victims, in order to report upon the abuses of all parties involved and to make recommendations aimed at various social actors and institutions to prevent future conflict and to institutionalize peace. These commissions often include a ‘reconciliation dimension’, the nature of which varies greatly given the commission. Although prominent in the literature, the connection between truth-telling and reconciliation is a tenuous one and is heavily reliant upon Western, religious ideas of confession and forgiveness (Shaw, 2005).

In addition to their common aims, Hayner explains that truth commissions are bodies that share the following characteristics:

- truth commissions focus on the *past*;
- they investigate a pattern of abuses over a period of time, rather than a specific event;
• a truth commission is a temporary body, typically in operation for six months to two years and completing its work with the submission of a report;

• these commissions are officially sanctioned, authorized, or empowered by the state (and sometimes also by the armed opposition, as in a peace accord).

(2002, p. 14)

Hayner’s 2002 publication counts 27 truth commissions. This number continues to rise, as Liberia has recently installed a commission (ICTJ, 2006b).

Since defining the truth commission has proven to be a notoriously difficult task (Bronkhorst, 1995), Hayner’s aims and commonalities are certainly helpful, however, her strong focus on understanding truth commissions as bodies looking primarily at the past overshadows the importance of the forward-looking recommendations that truth commissions often make. Equally helpful in understanding the nature of these bodies is to understand the multitude of ways in which they can and do vary. The differences between truth commissions highlight the fact that successful commissions must be tailored to the individual situation and to the local context in which they are to work. Table 2.1 shows some features which vary among truth commissions and provides examples of the ways that different truth commissions have dealt with them.

2.3: A brief history of truth commissions

According to Hayner’s chronological listing of truth commissions, the first took place in Uganda in 1974. It was created, due to international pressure, by the then Ugandan President, Idi Amin Dada, to investigate the disappearance of people since January 17, 1971 up until the commission period. This early commission has been ‘all but forgotten in history’ (Hayner, 2002: 52), likely because it was reporting to a President
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF PAST USE</th>
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| Mandate and scope       | Some commissions have very narrow mandates, while others are very broad and cover a range of abuses. The timeframe to be investigated is set out in the mandate and can vary enormously. The powers of the truth commission (for instance to compel information and testimony) are laid out in the mandate and also vary greatly. The actors involved in creating the mandate also vary, from purely domestic initiatives, to those led by the international community to a combination of the two.  
  **Chile:** the commission investigated only political disappearances and kidnappings. It excluded torture that did not result in death.  
  **Sierra Leone:** the commission was mandated to ‘address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation.’ It included an innovative focus on the experiences of women and children.  
  **South Africa:** the commission had the power to subpoena and to grant amnesty to perpetrators based on testimony.  
  **El Salvador:** the commission was mandated and administered entirely by the UN. |
| Budget                  | Commission budgets vary enormously, as does the extent to which contributions to the budget come from the international community  
  **South Africa:** by far the truth commission with the highest budget, the South African TRC had a budget of approximately USD 18.5 million per year over 2.5 years.  
  **Peru:** the second highest truth commission budget, a total of USD 11 million, largely from international contributions.  
  **Sierra Leone:** budgeted at approximately USD 10 million, only raised USD 6.5 million, nearly all from international donors, and suffered budgetary constraints throughout. |
| Style of testimony      | Commissions make use of public testimony, private testimony or a combination of both. Testimony and extensive research (archival, interview, historical, forensic, etc.) by the commission inform the commission’s final findings and recommendations, however the balance between sources varies greatly.  
  **Argentina:** all testimony was taken in private, but the commission retained a prominent public profile.  
  **South Africa:** public testimony, sometimes in exchange for amnesty in the case of perpetrators, widely televised.  
  **El Salvador:** conclusions were based heavily on research done by the commission.  
  **Sierra Leone:** public district hearings as well as closed hearings for victims of sexual violence, children and perpetrators should they be requested. Innovative for inclusion of children’s testimony. Institutional and thematic hearings as well. |
| Status of recommendations| Most truth commissions make recommendations for reform aimed at government, institutions, civil society and communities. Educational recommendations are beginning to figure in the work of TRCs.  
  **El Salvador:** Many recommended reforms were implemented, largely because of pressure from international actors who were deeply involved in the commission’s functioning.  
  **Sierra Leone:** The 2000 TRC Act gave the recommendations a ‘unique legal framework’ making their implementation mandatory. |
| Commissioners            | Commissioners are selected in a variety of ways, including nomination, election and appointment (and combinations of these methods). Commissions often use a mixture of national and international commissioners.  
  **Chile:** the commission was made up of 8 national commissioners, 4 who had supported the Pinochet regime and 4 who had opposed it.  
  **El Salvador:** the commission was made up of 3 highly respected international figures appointed by the UN secretary-general and employed 20 staff, none of whom were Salvadoran.  
  **Guatemala:** The Chair of the commission was non-Guatemalan and the other two Commissioners were reputable Guatemalans selected by the Chair, the UN and leaders of Guatemalan Universities.  
  **Sierra Leone:** The Chair of the commission was a Sierra Leonean Bishop, other commissioners were national and international human rights experts. |

Sources: SLTRC, 2004; Dougherty, 2004; Hayner, 2002.
still in power, who did not take its recommendations seriously and, in fact, stepped up his human rights violations in the years that followed (Hayner, 2002).

It was in the 1980s and 1990s that the most celebrated and publicized truth commissions occurred; bringing increased international and scholarly attention to the phenomenon as a transitional mechanism. Latin American commissions in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala and El Salvador drew considerable attention not because such commissions were not happening in other parts of the world - to date, the African continent is the region to host the most truth commissions (Hayner, 2002) – but because they were those having the most impact. The South African TRC, created in 1995 to reckon with the crimes of apartheid drew heavily on the experiences of Latin American commissions. Since then, the South African TRC has become by far the most researched, most publicized and best known truth commission.

Argentina’s truth commission, the first to have a large public profile and to receive significant international attention, began work in 1983 and published its final report, Nunca mas (Never Again), in 1985. The book-length version of this report is one of the best-selling books in Argentina’s history: selling 40,000 copies on the first day of its release (Hayner, 2002: 34). More than twenty years later the book is still available in kiosks around Buenos Aires. Evidence gathered by the commission was seminal in subsequent trials and convictions of military junta leaders in Argentina.

Subsequent commissions in Chile, Guatemala and El Salvador adopted different models and had different successes and failures than the Argentine commission. Chile’s 1991 report, though less publicly prominent than the Argentine one, resulted in the formation of a significant reparations program for families of those killed or disappeared,
a task subsequently taken up by many other truth commissions (Hayner, 2002: 37). The El Salvadoran commission, like others to follow, including the Sierra Leonean one, was agreed to as part of a peace accord. The peace accord was brokered by the UN, and the subsequent truth commission funded by donations from UN member states with its commissioners, all esteemed individuals from outside El Salvador, appointed by the UN Secretary-General. The final report of the Salvadoran commission was criticized by the military as ‘unfair, incomplete, illegal, unethical, biased and insolent’ (former Salvadoran Minister of Defence, Rene Emilio Ponce, as quoted in Hayner, 2002: 40). Furthermore, it was referred to by the civilian President as having failed to meet the Salvadoran people’s ‘yearning’ for reconciliation and to ‘forgive and forget this painful past’ (former Salvadoran President, Alfredo Cristiani, as quoted in Hayner, 2002: 40). The domestic response to the Salvadoran commission has led analysts to argue that the commission was too detached from Salvadorans themselves and too much a project of the international community. As truth commissions become more and more common as transitional solutions, and, especially, as the international community continue to push for and support their implementation, the Salvadoran lesson is important to remember: a commission detached from its context and unaccepted by local people simply cannot succeed (TRC Working Group, 2006; Shaw, 2005).

The Guatemalan commission, also created by a peace accord, differs greatly from that of its Salvadoran neighbour. It was innovative in the scope with which it covered the country, operating from fourteen field offices. Commission statement-takers trekked into remote communities, meeting, in some cases, villagers who did not know that there had been a peace agreement and that the thirty year civil war was over (Hayner,
The Guatemalan report was released in 1999 at a public ceremony attended by thousands. Its ample mandate called on the commission to ‘analyze the factors and circumstances’ of violence, including ‘internal as well as external factors’ (Agreement on the Establishment of the Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence That Have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer, 1994), and allowed the commission to investigate and write about broad social processes of racism, structural injustice and international politics. The use of ample mandate, as pioneered in the Guatemalan case, has been adopted by subsequent truth commissions, including Sierra Leone’s, and has allowed for some very thorough and meaningful documents to be produced. As best-practice literature emerges about the truth commission process and as commissions become more and more common, the use of an ample mandate appears to be becoming a necessary norm.

The Sierra Leonean TRC drew very heavily on the model of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an institution that received unprecedented international attention, made an international hero of its Chair, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and inspired considerable reflection on processes of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. The South African TRC was unique in its ability to grant amnesty to perpetrators in exchange for testimony that showed that their crimes were committed for political, rather than criminal motives (Graybill and Lanegran, 2004). The public nature of the South African TRC was a departure from the processes of the TRCs described above, as television and radio broadcasts of public testimony gripped the nation (Tutu, 1999). Many aspects of the South African TRC have made their way into the emerging
norms surrounding truth commissions; however its amnesty provisions have yet to be repeated.

2.4: The truth commission prescription?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone should be understood as part of a global trend toward truth-telling. Demands for the truth, and for commissions to investigate it, are becoming the norm in societies emerging from periods of violent conflict or authoritarian rule (Kelsall, 2005: 27)

The brief history of truth commissions provided above shows how various commissions have borrowed successful aspects of process and design from those preceding them. This process has led to the development of literature about ‘best-practices’ regarding truth commissions, and, especially with the involvement of the international community and the UN, to a set of truth commission norms. The development of a ‘model for a truth commission’, which admittedly posits flexibility and adaptability as one of its pillars, nonetheless risks being applied prescriptively to any post-conflict or transitional context without due reflection as to whether a truth commission is indeed an appropriate, locally desired, response. There has not been an adequate exploration as to whether a mechanism that has proven successful for revealing the truth about human rights abuses committed by a repressive authoritarian regime is appropriate in the context of societies emerging from all out war. The culture of silence and fear that characterized the Argentine and Chilean dictatorships and that permeated apartheid South Africa are distinctly different from the encompassing violence that characterized the ten year civil war in Sierra Leone, for instance. Schabas explains that

The most celebrated truth commissions have operated not only when the conflict was over, but also when the transition, in a social sense, was well under way…. Sierra Leone is different. The end of the conflict was little more than a ceasefire, not a decisive victory by one side over the other, and, above all no triumph of a progressive social vision over the perverse values and practices of the past.
It may be that known and obscured aspects of ‘truth’ vary considerably in these situations, that the cultural value of truth-telling is not a constant across nations, and that the need for ‘truth’ may not be the same in a society where most were participants, victims or eye-witnesses to war. It is important to locate whether Kelsall’s ‘demands for truth’, are coming solely from the international community. For Shaw ‘after a civil war in which neighbours killed neighbours… truth-telling involves a much different politics of memory’ (2005: 2). A cultural practice of ‘forgiving and forgetting’ to facilitate reintegration and rehabilitation ought to be taken seriously should it exist, as Shaw (2005) argues that it does, in certain areas of Sierra Leone.

While these issues are of peripheral concern to this thesis, they are important in understanding the successes or failures of Sierra Leone’s TRC and they should certainly be considered as TRCs become an increasingly common institution of transitional justice.

2.5: Truth commissions and education

In Section 1.2 the ‘two faces of education’ were discussed and various ways in which formal education can contribute to conflict were explored. Do truth commissions, especially those with broad mandates to investigate societal causes of conflict – which, as we have seen, are becoming the norm – acknowledge the harmful potential of education and include the educational sector in their broader investigations? How do truth commission goals to outline institutional responsibility and recommend reforms include the education sector? These questions have not yet been addressed by the literature on education and conflict, nor by that on transitional justice and truth commissions. This dissertation hopes to link the two literatures, to build bridges and to point to possibilities while investigating, through the lenses of education and conflict, the case of the Sierra
Leone TRC and educational reform. Before turning to this case study, it is important to briefly outline historically the ways in which truth commissions have (and have not) included educational dimensions.

What I hope to show here is that, while earlier truth commissions did not concern themselves directly with education by investigating its formal institutions and making recommendations for reforms, more recent commissions are beginning to do so. Two of the most recent truth commission reports to be published are those of Peru (2003) and Sierra Leone (2004) and both have included an investigation of the educational system; both have identified ways in which formal education played a role in contributing to conditions ripe for conflict and both have made recommendations for educational reform. It remains to be seen whether this attention to education will become a norm in truth commission best-practice. However, as the research on education and conflict grows, it may become more and more difficult to find a basis for omitting it.

The omission of a direct focus on education in past commissions is, in some instances, quite shocking. The South African TRC, for example, held institutional hearings to assess response and participation in abuses with the following sectors: the religious community, the legal community, the business and labour sectors, the health sector, the media, prisons and the armed forces (Hayner, 2002). The education sector was not included despite the fact that education was highly and formally segregated under the apartheid regime. The early lack of attention to education by truth commissions points again to the urgency surrounding the area of education and conflict and to its need to interact in a greater capacity with literature in the social sciences and vice versa.
Thus early truth commissions, indeed truth commissions until the Peruvian one in 2003, did not concern themselves *directly* with education. However, education has certainly held an *indirect* or *peripheral* role in many truth commissions. Truth commissions are often seen as, and understand themselves to be, public education tools to some degree. The South African example of a highly public truth commission that made extensive use of many forms of public media certainly had a strong element of popular education built into its process. The South African TRC also produced video and audio tapes to accompany its final report, all intended to be used as tools for human rights education (Hayner, 2002). The Chilean commission also planned for substantial public education activities following its release, but these were never carried out due to changes in the political climate (Hayner, 2002). The Argentine (1985) commission recommended that laws be passed making the teaching of human rights mandatory – a recommendation that was also made by the Peruvian (2003) and Sierra Leonean (2004) TRCs.

Above, we have explored the ways in which education has been included in past truth commission activities and I have argued that there is some evidence that education is being included in truth commission processes and recommendations in a more explicit and direct way. There is considerable potential, I believe, for the fruitful inclusion of a focus on education within truth commissions. Table 2.2 below attempts to articulate some of this potential, by conceptualizing some of the ways that a focus on education could be included in each of Hayner’s five aims for truth commissions.

Having explored the literature on education and conflict and on transitional justice and truth commissions, I posited the hypothesis that there exists a potential for a TRC focus on education (in its process and in its recommendations) to contribute positively to
Table 2.2: Potentials for truth commissions and education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAYNER’S AIMS OF TRCs</th>
<th>POTENTIALS FOR INTERACTION WITH EDUCATION SECTOR DURING THE TRC PROCESS</th>
<th>POTENTIALS FOR INTERACTION WITH EDUCATION SECTOR AFTER THE TRC PROCESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To clarify and acknowledge the truth</td>
<td>• Investigation of curriculum and the way history is / was taught</td>
<td>• Recommendations for curriculum changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recommendations for curriculum changes</td>
<td>• Development of curriculum based on TRC findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To respond to the needs and interests of victims</td>
<td>• Investigation of educational needs, quality of service, access to service</td>
<td>• Recommendations for improved educational provision if identified as victim need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To contribute to justice and accountability</td>
<td>• Investigation of access to education</td>
<td>• Recommendations of efforts to improve access if found to be necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Investigation of corruption in the education sector</td>
<td>• Recommendation for increased attention to legal education, education in international humanitarian law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recommendations for comprehensive educational reform</td>
<td>• Recommendation for reforms to increase transparency and accountability in the education sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To outline institutional responsibility and recommend reforms</td>
<td>• Investigation of role of formal education system in contributing to conflict</td>
<td>• Recommendations for peace education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote reconciliation and reduce tensions resulting from past violence</td>
<td>• Schools as sites of reconciliation activities</td>
<td>• Schools as sites of reconciliation activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development of educational materials to facilitate reconciliation</td>
<td>• Development of educational materials to facilitate reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promotion of TRC itself as an educational tool</td>
<td>• Promotion of TRC itself as an educational tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recommendation for attention to issues of reconciliation in the curriculum</td>
<td>• Recommendation for attention to issues of reconciliation in the curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

post-conflict educational reconstruction and reform. This hypothesis will be investigated using the case of the Sierra Leonean TRC, which did include such a focus. Before exploring the case in detail, however, it is necessary to briefly consider the conflict in Sierra Leone, as well as Sierra Leone’s education system in general and to explore the relationships between the two.
3.1: A brief history of education in Sierra Leone

3.1.1: Education in colonial times: The Athens of West Africa

The educational history of Sierra Leone is a rich and interesting one. To chronicle it, one is necessarily involved in the history of colonization and of the slave trade and its abolition, as Sierra Leone’s past is interwoven with these themes (see Richardson, 1985). In the 1700s the coast of Sierra Leone was used as a port for the transatlantic slave trade. Sierra Leone’s capital, Freetown, was founded in 1787 by the British then involved in the movement to end slavery. The city was established as settlement for 400 Africans who had been freed from slavery (Richardson, 1985). Freetown became a British Crown Colony in 1808 and the rest of Sierra Leone was made a British Protectorate in 1896. This divided manner of colonial administration established tensions between the capital region and the ‘up-country’ regions that still exist today. Thus, Freetown – settled by outsiders who received considerable support from anti-slavery campaigners and the seat of British colonial rule in West Africa for a period - was privileged over the protectorate, populated by indigenous groups (the largest being the Mende and Temne) and governed from afar. The resulting dynamic of inequality, resentment and detachment is an important one for understanding Sierra Leone’s history and development, as well as its civil war.

While most educational histories of Sierra Leone (see Hillard 1957; Sumner, 1963) begin with schools established by Christian missionaries during the colonial period, Brown and Hiskett (1975) draw attention to earlier indigenous and Muslim educational endeavours. Large-scale, concerted efforts at education did largely begin
early in the nineteenth century, with both the colonial government and missionaries establishing schools (Hillard, 1957). Here it suffices to say that a system of grant-maintenance was gradually established between the government and the various religious missions (including Catholic, other Christian denominations and Muslim faiths) that administered most schools. Only a very few schools were administered solely by the government. Early teaching focused heavily on rote learning of the three Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic - and on religious instruction. Importantly, great discrepancies in access to schooling existed between children in the colony and children in the protectorate (Hillard, 1957; Sumner, 1963). In 1936 more than 50% of children in the colony of Freetown attended school, while less than 3% of those in the protectorate did. By 1954 the percentage of children in school in the protectorate had increased to 8%, but in Freetown at the same time approximately 85% of children attended school (Hillard, 1957). The Krio speaking population of Freetown – the freed slaves and their descendants – were privileged in their educational opportunities and in the access to jobs that such opportunity provided from the colonial period onwards. The regional disparity in enrolment can still be seen in Sierra Leone; in 2000 Freetown’s Western region had an enrolment of 75%, with the Southern region enrolling 48% of pupils, the Eastern 35% and the Northern region only 25% (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004).

In the educational history of Sierra Leone, it is also important to highlight the opening of Fourah Bay College in 1816. This institution, the first of its kind in Africa, was initially opened to train teachers and catechists but quickly grew into a reputed institution of higher education coined by many as the ‘Athens of West Africa’ (Paracka,
2003). In 1876 the College began an affiliation with Durham University in the UK and soon became one of its constituent colleges (Hillard, 1957). Fourah Bay was ‘the pioneer institution of higher education for the whole of West Africa’ (Hillard, 1957:13) and educated many youth from the rising elite African class who came to study at the University from around the continent. The educational golden age, characterized by polished, exclusive grammar schools and growing acclaim at Fourah Bay, is still remembered with pride by many in Sierra Leone. The Dean of Education at a Teacher Training College explained to me in an interview that the grammar schools in Sierra Leone used to outshine those in England (interview, June 21, 2006). However, this golden age touched and benefited only a small elite. Sierra Leone’s TRC emphasizes this point in its section on historical antecedents to the conflict, which includes a substantial section on education during the colonial period, focusing on the divisive and elitist nature of education (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 3A). Richards argues that ‘in a nation built up for two hundred years or more around systems of schooling in which Western models have been held out as the ideal, educational issues are one of the key aspects of the present [sic.] crisis’ (1996: 36).

3.1.2 Education since independence: ‘Education is not a right but a privilege’

Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain in 1961 and became a republic in 1971 (see Conteh Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999, for a detailed history of Sierra Leone). Its post-independence history is largely characterized by corruption, authoritarianism, patronage and a lack of functional, democratic institutions. The Sierra Leone TRC, in investigating the historical antecedents of the war, concluded that:

All the post-colonial regimes contributed shamefully in creating the structural and proximate contexts that led to the conflict in 1991… Since it appeared
impossible to halt the decline of state institutions and processes through democratic means, a number of Sierra Leoneans became convinced that the structures of governance could only be changed through violence… Today the state is an abstract concept to most Sierra Leoneans and central government has made itself largely irrelevant to their daily lives. (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 3A: 85-6)

It is important to recall that for a substantial part of the post-colonial period, Sierra Leone was, according to the UN Human Development Index (HDI), the country with the lowest quality of life in the world. According to the 2005 HDI figures Sierra Leone is in position 176 of 177 countries measured (UNDP, 2005). For most of the 1990s and up until 2004 the country was the very last on the list (UNDP, 2004). Sierra Leone also currently has one of the lowest adult literacy rates in the world (ranked 173 of 177), with only 29.6% of the over-fifteen population being literate (UNESCO, 2006). Leading up to and during the conflict of the 1990s, the illiteracy rate was even higher, with authors generally agreeing that approximately 80% of the adult population was illiterate (Shaw, 2005; Dougherty, 2004). The country’s current life expectancy at birth is 41 years – life expectancy fell to less than 35 years during the conflict - and its under-five infant mortality is currently the highest in the world (UNICEF, 2006). Freetown is still without electricity, access to health care is extremely limited and safe drinking water is often hard to come by. These figures are important to bear in mind not only for understanding the conflict and for reflecting on education and the potential for educational reform in Sierra Leone, but also when evaluating the SLTRC initiative. Indeed, many question whether a TRC was justified among the most urgent post-conflict needs of Sierra Leoneans.

Post-independence hopes were high among Sierra Leoneans as the first President, Sir Milton Margai, established a functioning democracy and allowed for a vibrant free
press. However, by the late 1970s, under Siaka Steven’s reign of intimidation the country had been converted into a one-party dictatorship and ‘development seemed to be going in reverse’ (Keen, 2005: 16). The Dean of Education argued that corruption and patronage were rife under Stevens, explaining that:

Our own generation, was the generation of people that said ‘for learning is better than silver and gold’ that was engrained in our minds ‘learning is better than silver and gold.’ Stevens came and said, ‘gold and silver is better than learning.’

(Interview, June 21, 2006)

Initially education expanded rapidly in the post-independence period, with increasing access, particularly outside of Freetown, however, ‘inequalities persisted as government tended to favour groups and regions which constituted their power base’ (Wright, 1997: 20). Educational administration, which had been decentralized to district councils in the 1960s, was re-centralized in 1972 and began to suffer serious decline under Steven’s governance. Fees were charged for primary and secondary schooling, costly uniforms became mandatory and additional fees were charged to sit examinations. Financial austerity measures imposed by the World Bank and IMF from 1977 led to cuts in social spending and worsened conditions in schools (Richards, 1996). By the late 1980s the country was in severe economic crisis, with soaring rates of inflation and collapsed social services. In 1986-87 the government of Joseph Momoh, which succeeded Stevens, spent more on servicing its debt than on its combined budget for health, education and other social services, thus school fees rose again (Keen, 2005). Girls’ enrolment numbers were already far below those of boys, and as fees rose girls were further disadvantaged as cultural bias favoured educating males when resources were low. The dire situation of the late 1980s is reflected in the current educational statistics - males aged 15 years or more in Sierra Leone have an average of just under
four years of schooling while females aged 15 years or more have an average of under
two years in school (World Bank and Sierra Leone MEST, 2006). These very low figures
reflect the degree to which Sierra Leone’s education system collapsed in the decades
leading up to the civil war, and of course during the conflict itself.

In the face of economic crisis, teachers’ salaries, very low to begin with, were paid late if at all.
Teachers in rural areas were paid last of all. Necessity led teachers to seek supplemental
income from other activities, and thus, to their increasing absence from classrooms
(Richards, 1996). Teachers began charging for extra lessons in order to supplement their
income. By 1989 teachers had not been paid for over twelve months and many schools
went on strike to protest (Richards, 1996). President Momoh illustrated both the depth of
the crisis in education in Sierra Leone and, arguably, the historically prevalent attitude
with respect to educational development in the country, when, in a speech made in
Kailahun, he pronounced that ‘education is not a right but a privilege’ (as quoted in
Richards, 1996: 19). Recalling Rose and Greeley’s (2006) argument that education can
serve as a barometer for the relationship between the state and its citizens, we see the
extent of exclusion in Sierra Leone, and the regard the state held for those Sierra
Leoneans who were not among its elite. Not surprisingly, the SLTRC included
conditions of poverty, exclusion and bad governance among the antecedents to conflict
that it identified.

Having briefly explored the history of educational development in Sierra Leone,
we turn now to an overview of its civil war, with a particular focus on the many faces of
education within it.
3.2: Education and conflict in Sierra Leone: How many faces?

3.2.1: The conflict in Sierra Leone

The first instances of violence in Sierra Leone’s decade long war occurred near the Liberian border in 1991. The rebel force, Revolutionary United Front (RUF), at this point made up of only approximately 100 fighters including Burkinabe and Liberian mercenaries (Richards, 1996), attacked towns in Kailahun district. The RUF claimed that their mission was to overthrow the Momoh one-party regime and to restore multi-party democracy to Sierra Leone (Richards, 1996), however, they have been consistently criticized for lacking a coherent ideology or political vision (Keen, 2005). The conflict that ensued - between the RUF, government forces and civilians-turned-community-defenders - spanned a decade and was characterized by terrible atrocities committed on all sides. Sierra Leone’s war is often remembered for the prevalence of child soldiers, the drug use among fighters, brutal amputations, atrocities against civilians and the use of rape and sexual violence as weapons of war (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2003, 1999, 1998). The conflict killed between 50,000 – 75,000 people, left 4,000 victims of purposeful amputations - only 1,000 of whom survived, involved the rape and forced sexual slavery of tens of thousands of women and girls (Dougherty, 2004), and displaced more than half the population of the country (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004).

The Sierra Leone Army (SLA), Civil Defence Forces (CDF) established locally to defend communities and later supported by the Kabbah, and the RUF, all committed atrocities against civilians. The collusion, at many points of the conflict, between SLA and RUF fighters surprised many analysts, especially when a group of soldiers, the
Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), allied with the RUF in a 1997 coup and together formed a military government which ruled until elections in 1998 (Keen, 2005; HRW, 1998). The conflict has been well-documented (see for instance HRW 2003, 1999, 1998; International Crisis Group (ICG), 1996) and has been analyzed from a variety of perspectives. Authors have emphasized the role of diamonds in the conflict (see Hirsch, 2001); the influence of the conflict in neighbouring Liberia (Global Policy Forum, 2006); the role of politics and culture (see Bangura, 2004); the disenfranchisement of youth (see Richards, 1996); and the functionality of violence with reference to political grievances (see Keen, 2005). While space does not permit an in-depth analysis of the conflict in Sierra Leone, nor a detailing of its events and actors, the following is a helpful summary to ground our understanding:

Many of the characteristics of the war in Sierra Leone have reflected the weaknesses of the Sierra Leonean ‘state’, weaknesses that simultaneously generated resistance and an inability – in many ways an unwillingness – to crush this resistance with a ‘disciplined’ counter-insurgency. Despite the almost universal condemnation of the RUF, a key problem has been that some people – both inside and outside Sierra Leone – have found the RUF to be a ‘useful’ phenomenon, not least because it has provided an alibi for abuse and a justification for various forms of undemocratic or abusive rule. The characteristics of Sierra Leone’s war also reflect the incompleteness of the country’s incorporation into a global system – a system that has provided access to dreams of a Western lifestyle, access to arms, access to quick money from diamonds for a few, and, increasingly, access to a discourse about rights and the need for legal ‘justice’, but at the same time precious little access to development (education, health, jobs), dignity or recognition. (Keen, 2005: 5)

3.2.2: Education and conflict in Sierra Leone

In 1990, before the outbreak of war, enrolment at the primary level for school-aged children in Sierra Leone was only 55% (Republic of Sierra Leone, 2001). As we have seen above, Sierra Leone’s education system, for at least the two decades leading up to the war, had been in a state of serious decline. A teacher in Bo explains:

> Even before the conflict, a [school] principal may go on admitting drop-outs from many schools, maybe getting money from them. When you have an overcrowded classroom, you are not going to learn. They can start singing Bob
For many, especially those outside of Freetown, education in Sierra Leone had already collapsed before the outbreak of war. Interestingly, Bellows and Miguel (2006), found that ‘1989 school enrolment is strongly negatively related to war violence’ (396); thus showing that areas with higher enrolment levels experienced less violence. This finding lends empirical evidence to Nicolai and Triplehorn’s (2003) argument for schools as safe spaces.

However, for many who were in school before the war, its arrival meant, among a multitude of other things, a cessation of educational opportunity as schools were destroyed, communities displaced, and children and youth abducted into fighting forces. It is estimated that up to 70% of the school age population had limited or no access to schooling during the 10 years of war, and that 68% of the population between 15 and 20 years old and approximately 500,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 14 have never attended formal education (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004).

In Sierra Leone’s conflict the spectre of education was powerful, with education appearing at once as a victim of conflict, as a provocative outlet for violence, as an ‘accomplice to rebellion’ (Wright, 1997: 20) and as one of the many factors setting the stage for conflict. The MEST has recently declared that ‘the decade long war destroyed the infrastructure of the country’s education system; the quality of teaching and of the
learning environment reached the lowest levels in the world’ (World Bank & Sierra Leone MEST, 2006: vii). While Cream Wright, reflecting on education and conflict in Sierra Leone, explains that ‘the impact of civil war on education goes well beyond being ‘caught in the cross-fire’’(1997: 24). In this war, education clearly had multiple meanings and showed many faces, these will be explored in greater depth below.

3.2.3 Youth, disenfranchisement and the ‘lost decade’

In 1992, junior officers in the SLA who had been fighting in Kenema district mutinied in Freetown to protest against late pay – front line troops had not been paid for at least three months (Gberie, 2005) – as well as enduring poor conditions on the front. In the words of one Freetown resident ‘they came with anti-aircraft guns pointing at the State House. They came early in the morning. On the surface, they came to protest at lack of salaries, but by midday it turned out to be a coup’ (as quoted in Keen, 2005: 93). The National Provisional Revolutionary Council (NPRC), as these officers called themselves, governed until 1996. They chose Captain Valentine Strasser as their leader and he served as Head of State for the duration of NPRC rule. Strasser was 26 years old at the time he took office; in his post-coup radio broadcast he stated that ‘our schools and roads are terrible’ (as quoted in Richards, 1996: 9). The NPRC coup was very widely supported by youth in Sierra Leone (Richards, 1996) while others joked that the NPRC stood for ‘Na Pikin Rule Contri’, Krio for ‘kids are running the country’ (Keen, 2005: 94).

The support that Sierra Leonean youth felt for Strasser, as well as the readiness with which they took up arms, joining the SLA, the RUF or the CDF forces, has been a theme explored by many authors. Richards has argued that the RUF was a movement of
‘excluded intellectuals’ and of disenfranchised youth who, in fighting, saw opportunity where elsewhere there was none. For Richards ‘the war in Sierra Leone is [was] a tussle for the hearts and minds of young people’ (1995: 87). The poor quality and the elitist nature of the Sierra Leone education system led to high numbers of drop-outs and out-of-school children and youth that created a large group of unemployed semi-educated youth and fostered a strong sense of disenfranchisement among young people. These young people are Wright’s ‘forgotten aspirants’ (1997), they are the ‘lumpen youth’ referred to by Rashid (2004), they are those cut off by what the SLTRC calls ‘the lost decade’ (2004), and they ‘joined up – rebel army or government, no matter – in their thousands’ (The Economist, March 1996: 62). Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Dr. Alpha Wurie, was referring to these youth when he said ‘partial education is more dangerous than illiteracy’ (as quoted in Skelt, 1997 quoted by Keen, 2005: 71). For youth, and indeed for some children, the war offered a chance to reverse entrenched power structures – as deference to elders is culturally very strong in Sierra Leone – and to escape the powerlessness of lack of opportunity. That Strasser, a former competitive disco-dancer, became President at age 26 demonstrated the degree to which war allowed for a reversal of traditional power dynamics and an opportunity for youth.

The war, and its factions, also offered promise of educational opportunity, as shown by the case of one boy interviewed by Keen who fought for the SLA and was subsequently captured by the RUF: both forces promised to send him back to school after the war finished (2005: 105). Although the appeal - be it educational, opportunistic or power-seeking – of joining one Sierra Leone’s warring groups is important to note, it is crucial to draw attention to the fact that many of the youth and children ‘recruited’ into
all factions fighting in Sierra Leone’s war were forcibly captured, detained under terrible conditions and forced to fight. Many of the fighters on all sides of Sierra Leone’s war were not choosing a perceived opportunity over another, but rather, were struggling to stay alive. In the words of Richards, writing about the RUF in 1996, ‘the movement survives on the energy, wits and desperation of the young Sierra Leoneans it has captured and initiated’ (2).

3.2.4: ‘A love-hate relationship with education’

Wright argues that the RUF had a ‘love-hate relationship with education’ (1997: 26). This theme - the anger at exclusion from opportunity combined with a great desire for education within the RUF - has also been highlighted in the analyses of Keen (2005), Rashid (2004) and Richards (1996). The early RUF movement is described as having ‘radical intellectual roots’ (Pratt, 1999: 10) with its initial Sierra Leonean membership consisting of ‘a group of about 20-30 quite highly educated dissidents’ (Richards, 1996: 1). For Richards this group of ‘excluded intellectuals’ shared a background of ‘social exclusion for political protest and student activism’ (Richards, 1996: 25); their violence was the ‘product of the intellectual anger of an excluded educated elite’ (Richards, 1996: 27) and they drew in youth living on the margins of society. Richards’ thesis has been criticized (see for example Abdullah, 2004; *Africa Development*, 1997, Vol. XXII, nos. 3 and 4) for attempting to justify the horrific levels of violence of the RUF, however, as Keen states ‘Richards’ argument that the roots of the rebellion lay to a significant extent within Sierra Leone – and in particular with the country’s discontented youth – appears both accurate and important’. (2005: 58). To some degree at least, the RUF was made up of and capitalized upon the ‘partially educated’ youth who, seeing no chances for
employment or further opportunity, did see some incentives in fighting and violence. As Keen points out, ‘often, they had very little to lose’ (ibid: 59).

Playing on such vulnerability, the RUF was able to tap into the ‘strong sense of delusion’ that ‘persisted amongst learners that society owes them something once they have gone through the education system’ (Wright, 1997: 22). The incredible levels of unemployment in Sierra Leone prior to the conflict make tangible this sense of delusion. However, the brutality of the RUF and their lack of coherent ideology or political goals, created a dynamic whereby, in the words of a former RUF captive, ‘an educated man is not going to be convinced by the inconsistency of the rebels’ (as quoted in Keen, 2005: 54). Yet war persisted, and many of Sierra Leone’s uneducated and illiterate began to blame the fighting on the educated elite who failed to stop it. Keen sites a ‘fairly successful farmer and a preacher’ from Kailahun District who, along with other civilians, was forced into being a porter for the rebels:

They [the civilians] were all undereducated and couldn’t even speak pidgin English. They complained that all these rebel activities that had plagued the nation were [brought about] through the educated elite… ‘Oh you book-people – you want to ride in vehicles, live in mansions, travel around the world. You people are the cause of the war today.’ This was their accusation and they kept pointing their fingers at us who were a little educated among them. In my own opinion they were right. We who were educated ought to have justified ourselves by doing the right thing to better our living standards scrupulously, equitably and above all with dedication… these qualities were all lacking in a majority of us. Almost everyone wanted to be fed with a silver spoon…”

(As quoted in Keen, 2005: 66)

Wright echoes this point when he argues that the RUF appeared to be making, with their ‘political re-education’ in the bush, an ‘indictment’ against the Sierra Leonean education system for failing to transmit ‘the discipline of making do with available resources, the virtues of sharing with others and the responsibility of caring for others’ (1997: 26).
Although, as he points out, ‘such claims from a rebel movement which has committed so much of the atrocities against innocent civilians ring very hollow’ (Wright, 1997: 26)

As the war became more brutal, the rebels, who always included free education as one of their core demands – indeed Wright explains that ‘one of the few explicit demands made so far by the RUF leadership is for free education’ (1997: 26) –, became increasingly suspicious of the educated. The elitist elements of Sierra Leonean education were sharply criticized by the RUF, those educated abroad became targets of violence, and educational institutions were attacked with great frequency (Keen, 2005; Richards, 1996). In several incidents drop-outs, ex-students or bitter former teachers returned as rebels to terrorize and destroy their former schools.

The RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, rather than viewing himself as an ‘excluded intellectual’ appeared to be intimidated and enraged by the educated, executing up to 300 educated individuals within the RUF (Richards, 1996). Contact between rebels and those seeking to negotiate peace was difficult throughout the conflict. Richards explains:

For their part the rebels were afraid of negotiation, aware that there is a language of international diplomacy and that they do not speak it. The fear was expressed that an incomplete education might let them down. RUF leaders told conciliators, frankly, that they lacked the clothes, manners and knowledge to sit around a table to talk peace in an international setting. (1996: 70)

Here we recall Keen’s placement of the conflict within a globalized world to which Sierra Leoneans have only partial access. An education system that has long valued and modeled itself on Western ideals and that has failed to deliver these to its students indicates the dramatic failure of the Sierra Leonean state, which holds a place near the centre of Sierra Leone’s collapse into conflict. For Keen ‘anger at a collapsing education
system has powerfully fed into conflict’ (2005: 48). It seems that education, as it fed into conflict, was at once an untouchable dream, an ever-present spectre and a visible target.

3.2.5: Educational destruction and resiliency

In 1997, Wright wrote that ‘in every town or major settlement attacked during the rebel war, schools have been vandalised and destroyed for no obvious reason. … in the case of schools, there is usually no attempt to loot anything. It often seems to be a case of wanton destruction!’ (24). The incredible destruction of educational institutions in the country throughout the war demonstrates the centrality of education in this conflict, shown tangibly the charged feelings it provoked. Two rebel incursions in Freetown led to the destruction of 70% of local schools according to the MEST (as cited in Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004). In 2003, a survey by the District Recovery Committee found that 55% of schools in the country to be ‘destroyed and in need of total reconstruction’ (as cited Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004). Bunumbu Teacher’s College, an innovative centre for training rural teachers, which received considerable international acclaim in the 1970s and 1980s, was totally destroyed. Njala University College was repeatedly attacked, its records destroyed and its students and lecturers dissuaded from resuming classes (Wright, 1997). Primary and secondary schools were also destroyed throughout the country, and students and teachers were abducted from schools.

Despite this overwhelming destruction, it is important to note as Lynn Davies does, that one of the faces of education in conflict situations is often of remarkable resiliency. For Davies, educational efforts that persevere in times of conflict are:

… looking back, recreating what was there; but also looking forward, the sense of working towards a new future, the modelling of a better world. Both are surrounded by three dimensions: first the ‘wartime spirit’, the resistance, the
sense of agency, of doing something in the face of adversity; second, innovation or improvisation; and third, connectivity – working with others, getting help, publicising what is going on. This is education with a deep social purpose, and while the content may be traditional, the aims and effects are startlingly transformative (2004: 108)

In Sierra Leone this resiliency manifested itself in a remarkable absorption of displaced children into existing schools. Schools in major cities such as Bo, Freetown and Kenema experienced swelling numbers of students as communities were displaced. Many schools built additional classroom blocks and moved to double shift operation. Some of the most prestigious secondary schools in the country took on pupils ‘from what would be considered very sub-standard schools’ (Wright, 1997: 27) and did so successfully. New schools were opened for displaced children by NGOs, religious bodies and private organizations. Child combatants being demobilized also entered into what were often innovative educational programs aimed at reintegration (Wright, 1997).

While these initiatives certainly are not without problems, not least of which is the burgeoning numbers of students in urban centres – a continuing problem, with class sizes well over 60 in many primary schools and many displaced children out of school – it is important to note that the civil war did not create a complete collapse in educational provision. Education can, and often does, provide a safe space and a sense of normalcy in times of crisis (Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003), and there are indeed examples of this occurring in Sierra Leone. Davies’ question, how to inject this spirit of resiliency into peacetime schools, is an important one, as is how to harness this spirit for post-conflict reconstruction.
We turn now to an exploration of the SLTRC and its educational recommendations, before assessing, in Chapter 5, its impact on educational reconstruction.
CHAPTER 4: THE SIERRA LEONE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION AND ITS EDUCATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Having outlined the context of the Sierra Leonian civil war and having explored in depth the faces of education within it, we can now turn our attention to the case of the Sierra Leonian TRC and its educational recommendations. This chapter will explore the TRC process in Sierra Leone and will outline the educational recommendations presented in its Final Report.

4.1: The SLTRC beginnings and mandate

The Lomé Peace Agreement was signed on July 7, 1999, providing for a cessation of hostilities, the beginning of processes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, and the conversion of the UN observer force in Sierra Leone into a peacekeeping force of 6,000 troops, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Article IX of the Agreement granted ‘absolute and free pardon and reprieve to all combatants and collaborators in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives as members of the RUF, ex-AFRC, ex-SLA, or CDF, from March 1991 up to the time of its signing’ (Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, 1999). Thus, the Lomé Peace Agreement granted amnesty to perpetrators of human rights abuses on all sides of the conflict. In the words of then Attorney General and Minister of Justice, now Vice President, Hon. Solomon Berewa, this ‘blanket amnesty’ was necessary because ‘what every Sierra Leonean wanted most was peace and reconciliation’ and furthermore:

The RUF would have refused to sign the Agreement if the Government of Sierra Leone had insisted on including in it a provision for judicial action against the RUF and had excluded the amnesty provision from the Agreement.
(2001: 55-6)
Despite a widespread and general tolerance of the amnesty inclusion, at the signing of the Lomé Agreement, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Secretary General attached a reservation to his signature, stating that the amnesty shall not apply to those who had committed international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law (Dougherty, 2004).

Already drafted into the Agreement, however, was the recognition of the ‘need for alternative accountability’ (Bennett, 2001) in the face of the blanket amnesty. To address this, Article XXVI of the Lomé Agreement reads:

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission shall be established to address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation.

(Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, 1999)

When asked if there had been much debate around the inclusion of the blanket amnesty in the agreement, the Chair of the TRC Working Group and member of a human rights group active during the Lomé process said:

Well, unfortunately, no. It was just amongst some of us - that were very concerned about the message of impunity. So my colleagues in UK were trying to say lets challenge this amnesty, let us go to the courts. I was saying, hmm, no, people of Sierra Leone wanted peace at all costs so let’s do what we could do, thank God there is a provision for TRC, let’s make use of this TRC.

(Interview, June 21, 2006)

The idea of the SLTRC, and its inclusion as a post-conflict accountability mechanism, was generally supported by civil society in Sierra Leone and its initial momentum was strong (Dougherty, 2004; Bennett, 2001). The Lomé Agreement called for the SLTRC to be established no more than 90 days after its signing and initial steps did proceed quickly. Almost immediately after the signing of the Agreement, the UN
High Commissioner for Human Rights wrote to President Kabbah offering to assist with the establishment of the Commission. The President replied, inviting the High Commissioner to play a leadership role in Commission, asking particularly for help in securing international financial support (Bennett, 2001). Thus, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) played a lead role in the conceptualization and administration of the SLTRC, involving itself in ‘every phase of the development’ of the commission. (OHCHR, 2003: 56). While, as we have seen, the UN has certainly been involved in previous truth commission processes, the OHCHR itself had not. The SLTRC was the OHCHR’s ‘first substantial undertaking in support of a transitional justice mechanism anywhere in the world’ (OHCHR, 2003: 56).

The OHCHR hired consultants with considerable international expertise in transitional justice and truth commissions who were involved in conceptualizing Sierra Leone’s TRC. Priscilla Hayner, whose work I have drawn upon considerably in this dissertation and who is recognized as a leading authority on truth commissions, along with other experts worked as OHCHR consultants throughout the SLTRC process (Schabas, 2005; Bennett, 2001). Hayner was involved in the creation of a draft TRC Act, which was circulated nationally and internationally for feedback, and passed by the Sierra Leonean Parliament without significant changes in February, 2000. Lessons learned from other TRCs are clearly present in the design of the SLTRC; indeed, it seems to have been conceived as an experiment in best-practice. The TRC Act gave the SLTRC broad powers to access information and to subpoena if necessary. In order to fully address the depth of human rights violations in Sierra Leone’s civil war and to provide a forum for the voices of its most vulnerable victims, the Act called upon the SLTRC to pay ‘special
attention to the subject of sexual abuses and to the experiences of children within the armed conflict’ (TRC Act, 2000, Part III, 8; Part III, 6(2)b). The Act also called upon the Sierra Leonean Government to ‘faithfully and timeously implement the recommendations of the report that are directed to state bodies and encourage or facilitate the implementation of any recommendations that may be directed to others’ (TRC Act, 2000, Part V, 17). Thus, the recommendations of the SLTRC are mandatory. The SLTRC’s recommendations are conceived as:

Concerning the reforms and other measures, whether legal, political, administrative or otherwise, needed to achieve the object of the Commission, namely the object of providing impartial historical record, preventing the repetition of the violations or abuses suffered, addressing impunity, responding to the needs of victims and promoting healing and reconciliation.

(TRC Act, 2000, Part V, 15(2))

The SLTRC is unique in the degree to which it has been enabled to direct change through its recommendations and is the first truth commission to be empowered to make mandatory recommendations.

The ‘unique legal framework’ (SLTRC, Vol. 2) that should enable the SLTRC recommendations is important to keep in mind when assessing the degree to which SLTRC educational recommendations are contributing to post-conflict reconstruction and reform as discussed in the following chapter. It is also important to note, for the purposes of this dissertation, that the Lomé Peace Agreement itself included a short article on ‘Education and Health’. Pilvi Torsti argues that ‘education issues – and particularly the study of history – should be at the heart of peace agreements’ (2005: 64). It is perhaps difficult to imagine education ever playing a central role in the negotiation of a peace agreement, given the urgency often associated with such processes, however, Torsti’s point that peace agreements ought to take education into account is an important one.
While education falls short of holding a place at the heart of the Agreement, the Lomé Accord does call for the Government to ‘provide free compulsory education for the first nine years of schooling (Basic Education)’ and to ‘endeavour to provide free schooling for a further three years.’ (Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, 1999: Article XXXI). As we will see in Section 5.1, the Government has only recently made the first six years of primary education free, and many contend that fees are, in effect, still being charged. The strong contrast between enabling policy frameworks and tangible changes in schools in Sierra Leone is demonstrated by education’s inclusion in the Lomé Peace Agreement – the phenomenon of ‘on paper we are excellent, it is in practice that we have problems’ (interview with Junior Secondary School Principal, June 23, 2006) is a recurring one in educational reconstruction in Sierra Leone.

Despite Sierra Leoneans’ high hopes for peace, which were embodied in the Lomé Peace Agreement, violence and fighting resumed in 2000. The initial momentum surrounding the SLTRC was lost as preparations for the Commission were severely delayed. Workshops, public awareness activities and sensitization campaigns about the SLTRC were conducted by various parties including local NGOs and UNAMSIL in the interim period; but the SLTRC was not inaugurated until 5 July, 2002. The delay, a host of budgetary problems, – the initial OHCHR estimate of a budget of USD 10 million for 12 months of operation, was cut to USD 6.5 million in 2002 (Dougherty, 2004) – staffing complications, coordination difficulties between the SLTRC, the OHCHR headquartered in Geneva and other UN bodies active in Freetown, and confusion about the roles and interactions of the SLTRC and the Special Court plagued the SLTRC throughout its
operation (Schabas, 2005, 2004; Dougherty, 2004). These problems were further complicated by the fact that as Shaw argues, many ‘Sierra Leoneans … did not wait for the TRC before working to rebuild their lives and social communities’ (2005: 9).

4.2: The SLTRC and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)

It is necessary to explore briefly the relationship between the Special Court and the TRC in Sierra Leone because the simple fact of the two institutions existing simultaneously has certainly impacted the SLTRC process and its outcomes. Commentators have taken great interest in Sierra Leone’s two transitional justice mechanisms as the situation of a TRC and a Special Court operating together is a unique one (Schabas, 2005). In June 2000, President Kabbah wrote to the UN Security Council requesting the establishment of an international tribunal in Sierra Leone. Hon. Berewa, current Vice President of Sierra Leone, explained that:

… in the Lomé Agreement the only means for accountability provided was through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was then thought that with peace at hand, the wounds of the war would be healed through reconciliation. In other words it was recognized that truth was as good as, or at least, an adequate substitute for justice. The government of Sierra Leone reassessed this position only in May 2000.

(2001: 56)

With the reassessment of the Government’s position on transitional justice in favor of legal accountability, the Special Court for Sierra Leone was established to ‘prosecute persons most responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law’ (Berewa, 2001: 57). The court has indicted ten people, including Liberia’s ex-President Charles Taylor and Sierra Leone’s former Deputy Defense Minister, Sam Hinga Norman, who had been responsible for commanding the CDF. Schabas points out that it is an ‘unresolved question’ that ‘pro-Kabbah minister’ Norman was arrested and charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes, while the President – who following chain-of-
command logic would have greater responsibility than Norman – ‘remains untouched by prosecution’ (2004: 1086).

While the co-existence of the two transitional justice bodies drew the interest of scholars and of the international community, it also created confusion in Sierra Leone. In a country with a high level of illiteracy and a malfunctioning national judicial system, sensitization activities were necessary to educate the public about both of the institutions and the relationship between them (Schabas, 2005, 2004; Dougherty, 2004). Many have argued that confusion about the two transitional justice institutions dissuaded many ex-combatants from participating in the SLTRC process because of fear that their testimony could be used to indict them in the Special Court (Dougherty 2004; interview with Chair of TRC Working Group, June 21, 2006). This was especially problematic since the SLTRC’s delayed statement-taking and hearings phase coincided with the Special Court’s indictments in the first half of 2003 (Shaw, 2005). Both institutions, and particularly the Special Court with a budget considerably larger than the SLTRC’s, have been criticized as being excessively expensive and removed from the needs of the local population, who still struggle to access basic necessities like clean drinking water, health care and education (Sorbara, 2005).

A further problem Sierra Leone’s ‘conjoined twins of transitional justice’ (Schabas, 2004) may pose is raised by Dougherty, who points out that ‘Sierra Leone must grapple with the possibility that its two transitional justice institutions may offer competing narratives of the conflict and differing assessments of blame’ (2004: 51). Rosalind Shaw makes a further important point, arguing that while much attention has been paid to the interactions between Sierra Leone’s transitional justice mechanisms, far
less has been paid to the ways in which these institutions interact and interrelate with local and traditional practices. Shaw argues that ‘in Sierra Leone, this question was especially important, since the imperative to remember violence during the SLTRC was at odds with widespread local techniques of healing and reintegration, which are based on the social forgetting of violence’ (Shaw, 2005: 3).

4.3: The TRC process in Sierra Leone

The SLTRC had the ‘enormous task of not only allowing victims and perpetrators to tell what happened, but to uncover why it happened’ (Dougherty, 2004: 40). To accomplish this, the SLTRC undertook significant research into a variety of themes following the statement-taking and testimony phases. Although education was not among the nine themes allocated to lead researchers, there was a research team investigating ‘institutions of government, rule of law, governance, human rights, democracy and issues of corruption’ under which education would, and did, fall (OHCHR, 2003b: paragraph 51). Among other findings, the SLTRC’s research team concluded that ‘education clearly did not rank as a priority for successive regimes prior to the war’ (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 3A). The focus on research - on uncovering why the conflict occurred in Sierra Leone - led to the production of a very well written analysis of conflict in Sierra Leone that points to the legacies of colonial rule, poor governance, poverty, a lack of human rights and corruption as creating conditions ripe for conflict. The research component of the SLTRC, and its clear analysis of the conflict and its causes, has been widely applauded (TRC Working Group, 2006; Shaw, 2005).

However the truth-seeking process that the SLTRC was mandated to facilitate was not simply a research exercise. The Sierra Leonean TRC, based heavily on the South
African example, demanded participation and testimony from those involved in and affected by conflict and human rights abuses. The commission aimed to include testimony from women and girls, children, amputees and ex-combatants, all of whom it identified as main stakeholder groups, and it succeeded in engaging witnesses from all of these groups. The SLTRC’s desire to include testimony from children generated considerable attention internationally and domestically, and workshops were organized by UNICEF and others to design appropriate procedures to collect children’s testimony and to avoid re-traumatizing experiences (UNICEF et al, 2001). Procedures developed included ‘special hearings for children, closed sessions, a safe interviewing environment, protected identity for child witnesses, and training of staff in providing psychosocial support for children’ (UNICEF, 2005: 51). Dougherty concludes that ‘the experience did not seem to be difficult for those [children] who testified’, stating that the majority of children who testified were victims; despite this fact, however, more children testified as perpetrators than did adults (2004: 47). A Children’s Version of the SLTRC Final Report was created by UNICEF, the first time such a tool has been compiled to accompany a truth commission report (UNICEF, 2004a). At the launch of the SLTRC’s Final Report, in October, 2004, a boy and a girl, both aged 12, addressed the assembly, including the President and the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Sierra Leone.

Among other things, they recommended:

- That this Child-Friendly Version be incorporated in the School Curriculum and that the version should be made available to every child.

- We want to see the needs of war affected children being addressed in a much more pragmatic way: This includes measures to meet the basic needs of children and their families, including improved access to quality education, health care and nutrition, water and Sanitation, the elimination of child labour and sexual abuse/exploitation and recreational space for children.
We want the role of education in building a culture of respect for human rights, especially in relation to the development of educational materials on peace, human rights and democracy for use in both formal and non-formal educational settings. (as quoted in UNICEF, 2004b)

These recommendations made by children align closely with the SLTRC’s educational recommendations, which will be presented below.

The SLTRC collected over 9,000 statements, heard the public testimony of 350 witnesses and visited each of Sierra Leone’s twelve districts to hold public hearings. The SLTRC was roundly criticized for the limited amount of time it spent in each district, allocating only a week to each district due to budgetary and time constraints. Despite these criticisms, public hearings were generally well-attended and the accompanying radio and television broadcasts had large audiences. Nearly all of those who testified publicly before the SLTRC ended their testimony by appealing to the Commission for economic assistance for themselves and their families. To Shaw this suggests that many witnesses had believed that by testifying they could possibly gain access to such assistance, and that they may have testified for this reason rather than out of a genuine desire to participate in a truth-telling exercise (2005). Witnesses were asked at the end of their testimonies what they would like to see included in the Commission’s recommendations, to which ‘they invariably responded: free education for our children, access to medical care, adequate housing’”(Graybill & Lanegran, 2004: 10) A member of SLTRC staff interviewed by the present author said ‘people across the board recommended education, that was really a driving force. I would definitely say it was at the forefront’ (interview, June 19, 2006). William A. Schabas, one of the international Commissioners of the SLTRC, in contrast to Shaw, argues that witnesses’ calls for such services showed how the people of Sierra Leone understood ‘the truly indivisible’ nature
of human rights. Schabas argued that in their testimonies witnesses spoke of ‘the most appalling attacks on the life and bodily integrity’ but also showed and understood that ‘the causes of conflict may well be rooted in violations of economic and social rights’ (2005: 136).

Following each of the regional hearings, a reconciliation event was held and often it drew on local, or traditional practices of reconciliation. However, due to time and budgetary constraints the bulk of reconciliation efforts were left to the localities to conduct, and thus the nature and scale of such activities varied considerably across the country (Dougherty, 2004). In the preparatory phase of the SLTRC, a report was commissioned and prepared by the local NGO, Manifesto 99, on ‘methods of conflict resolution / management of possible complementary value’ to the SLTRC. The report concluded that ‘the bulk of the population comprising of aggressors and victims are illiterate (70%) and will understand the TRC better from a cultural context’ and argued that the SLTRC should ‘be responsive’ to a variety of traditions and customs ‘for determining or confessing guilt, granting of pardon and forgiveness’ which could precede or facilitate reconciliation (Manifesto ‘99, 2002: 3). It seems that in the area of reconciliation, and especially of reconciliation along cultural lines, the SLTRC’s initial good intentions fell short. The Chair of the TRC Working Group, a coalition of local NGOs, was disappointed that only USD 18,000 was spent on reconciliation activities by the SLTRC and that the only national reconciliation event was held at an elite venue in Freetown, discouraging popular attendance (interview, June 21, 2006). Anthropologist Tim Kelsall, who attended the SLTRC hearings in the district of Tonkolili, argues that ‘public truth telling – in the absence of strong ritual inducement – lacks deep roots in the
local cultures of Sierra Leone,’ stating that the most reconciliatory moment of the hearings he witnessed occurred during the ‘staged ceremony of forgiveness’, organized at the end of the hearings that drew on Christian, Islamic and traditional beliefs (2005: 363). Kelsall’s argument that ‘in certain circumstances ritual may be more important to reconciliation than truth’ (2005: 361) and Shaw’s point that ‘in northern Sierra Leone, social forgetting is a cornerstone of reintegration and healing’ (2005: 1) are important factors to bear in mind when considering the SLTRC’s methodology and the culturally specific value of the truth-telling process.

In addition to collecting statements and hearing testimony, the SLTRC also held thematic hearings. Again, education was not the subject of a focused hearing, but it did fall under the remit of the hearing conducted on ‘good governance, including participation in political processes and respect for human rights’ (OHCHR, 2003b, paragraph 46). Thus, the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC are based on results of its whole process, including research, statements, testimony and thematic hearings.

The SLTRC released its Final Report, months overdue, on October 5, 2004 at a well-attended hearing in Freetown, which, as mentioned above, was attended by some school children (TRC Working Group, 2006). However, the Report itself was not made available to Sierra Leoneans until August, 2005, having been delayed in the editing and printing stage (ibid.). The Final Report comprises 4 volumes and totals nearly 5,000 pages including appendices; it is also available on-line. A short video was made to accompany the SLTRC Final Report by the NGO Witness. In addition to the Children’s Version, mentioned above, a Senior Secondary School Version of the SLTRC was
produced by the TRC Working Group. This 123 page version is, in many ways, the ‘popular version of the TRC’ (interview with Chair of TRC Working Group, June 21, 2006) since more Sierra Leoneans have seen it than have seen the Final Report. Some argue that the SLTRC itself, rather than an NGO coalition, ought to have published an accessible version like this one (interview with Chair of TRC Working Group, June 21, 2006). The argument made by the TRC Working Group (2006) that the dissemination of the SLTRC, and of its accompanying materials has been very poor, aligns with my own field research. I did not find copies of the SLTRC Final Report, the Children’s Version or the Secondary School Version in any of the schools I visited, nor did I find copies in the MEST or at the National Curriculum Research and Development Centre (NCRDC).

The principal of one government administered Junior Secondary School, who did not have a copy of the SLTRC or the Secondary Version, when asked about widespread distribution said ‘that’s a big lie (…) they put them in the cupboard’ (interview, June 23, 2006).

In addition to the disappointing dissemination of the SLTRC, the very format of its Final Report – written in an academic tone - and its bulk, are perhaps not appropriate in a society with illiteracy rates as high as those of Sierra Leone. The same principal explained:

What is interesting is that most probably for those who suffered the war, you see, the Sierra Leoneans, some of them have even forgotten about this episode. Because of the level of illiteracy in the country you will observe that so many people are just not interested in what they [the TRC] are doing and what they are saying. (…) The TRC, 4 volumes and whatnot, I don’t think it is really penetrating through the population. All of those things are on paper, but implementing it (…) I mean the paper is just lying there. (Interview, June 23, 2006).

President Kabbah, speaking at the SLTRC release ceremony, said that the SLTRC was ‘not just another report, but a sacred document’ and that government was ‘committed
to taking seriously the report and the recommendations contained in it’ (Civil Society Alternative Process et. al., 2005). However a ‘vague and noncommittal’ (Civil Society Alternative Process et. al, 2005) White Paper was released in June, 2005, before the final printed versions of the SLTRC had actually arrived in Sierra Leone. The White Paper acknowledged few of the SLTRC’s recommendations, agreed to act on even fewer and did not offer any timeline or action plan for implementing recommendations, effectively ignoring the ‘unique legal framework’ within the TRC Act that made the recommendations mandatory. The Chair of the TRC Working Group explained that:

I look at it [the government’s White Paper] as more of a legal argument, why they cannot do x or y or z. It was more like a defence, not something you take willingly and say “well, we’ll achieve this, we’ll work towards this in the next six months or the next one year.” Or, “yes, this is good but we’ll need some support,” you know. It wasn’t like that.

(Interview, June 21, 2006)

The Government’s White Paper, and its lukewarm reception of the SLTRC document, is unfortunate given Zalaquett’s argument, which we explored in Chapter 2, which stated that an important function of a TRC is to facilitate official acknowledgement of past wrongs in order to symbolically break with the past. However, at the time of writing, it is rumoured that a Bill is being drafted in response to the SLTRC’s proposal ‘that Parliament enact an ‘omnibus bill’ to address those imperative recommendations that may be implemented by mere repeal of existing legislation or parts thereof” (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 2), which could be a very positive step forward.

4.4: The SLTRC educational recommendations

Many of the Recommendations are dramatic and far-reaching, carefully crafted to be free of significant economic consequences and therefore conceived in such a way as to be subject to immediate implementation. The government cannot invoke cost implications so as to avoid them. They are largely inspired by the big issues in contemporary human rights.

(Former SLTRC Commissioner William A. Schabas, 2004: 1086)
The Commission views the implementation of its recommendations as the starting point to prevent the repetition of conflict. (SLTRC Final Report, 2004 Vol. 2: 119)

The SLTRC made hundreds of recommendations ‘designed to facilitate the building of a new Sierra Leone based on the values of human dignity, tolerance and respect for the rights of all persons’ (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 2: 117). As we have seen above, the government is required under the 2000 TRC Act to implement the recommendations made by the SLTRC, despite its slow progress in doing so. In light of this ‘unique legal framework’ (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 2: 117), the Commission ‘has been mindful of its heavy responsibility to make recommendations that are indeed capable of being implemented’ (SLTRC, 2004, Vol.2: 118), confining recommendations to ‘those that are aimed at preventing the repetition of the conflict, addressing impunity, responding to the needs of victims and the promoting of healing and reconciliation’ (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 2: 118). The Commission divided its recommendations into three categories: ‘imperative’, ‘work towards’ and ‘seriously consider’ in order to not overwhelm the government and to give clear priority to those recommendations that ‘establish and uphold rights and values’ (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 2: 118).

The recommendations that the Commission made with respect to education are as follows:

- Children are the future of Sierra Leone. There is no justification for permitting another generation of children to be subjected to brutality, whether this is in the name of education or ideology. The Commission recommends the outlawing of corporal punishment against children, whether this be in schools or the home. This is an imperative recommendation. (SLTRC, 2004, Vol. 2, Paragraph 92: 135)

- The Commission recommends the development of a compulsory programme of human rights education into schools at the primary, secondary and higher levels of education. Human rights education should become part of the formal curriculum and be examinable. Appropriate human rights and peace programmes should be compulsory for the training of recruits into the army,
The government should work towards the fulfillment of these recommendations.


- The civil war has aggravated matters for the youth. After ten years of war, thousands of young men and women have been denied a normal education and indeed a normal life. Their childhood and youth have been squandered by years of brutal civil conflict. Many young Sierra Leoneans have lost the basic opportunities in life that young people around the world take for granted. These young people constitute Sierra Leone’s lost generation. The Commission recommends that the youth question be viewed as a national emergency that demands national mobilisation. This is an imperative recommendation.
  

- Steps should be taken to promote the enrolment of girls in schools and other training institutions. The Commission recommends that the Government work towards providing free and compulsory education to girls up to and including the level of senior secondary school.
  

- The practice of expelling girls who become pregnant from educational institutions is discriminatory and archaic. This is an imperative recommendation.
  

- The Commission recommends that primary school education be compulsory for all children. It should be an offence not to send children to primary school. This is an imperative recommendation.
  

- The Commission notes that primary school education is supposedly made available free of charge to all children. The Commission recommends that no ‘hidden charges’ or ‘chalk fees’ be levied against parents. Free primary school education must mean free in every sense of the word. The Government should work towards the fulfillment of this recommendation.
  

- The Commission recommends that the Government should work towards the creation of incentives to encourage children of school going age to attend secondary school.
  

- The Commission recommends that the contents of its report be incorporated into the education programmes in all schools, from primary to tertiary level. The Children’s version of the Report can be used as tool of education at the primary school level.
  

The recommendations listed above are those that relate to the formal public education system at the primary, junior secondary and senior secondary levels. The Commission
also made recommendations for popular education programmes, particularly focused on
the rule of law, the rights of women and human rights education for the police force,
judicial authorities and the military. It also makes recommendations to end child
trafficking and ensure educational opportunities for working children. A further
recommendation by the Commission calls on the Government to ‘seriously consider the
creation of a new constitution for Sierra Leone’, citing as one of the reasons for this
recommendation the fact that ‘Some fundamental rights to which Sierra Leone is bound
by international law do not figure at all, such as the right to education’ (SLTRC, 2004,
Vol. 2: 141).

Although the 2000 TRC Act does not directly call upon the SLTRC to develop a
reparations programme, it does call upon it to ‘address the needs of the victims,’ and to
‘restore the human dignity of victims’ as well as to ‘promote healing and reconciliation’
(Government of Sierra Leone, 2000). The SLTRC therefore included a programme of
reparations that it recommends the government implement in order to compensate those
victims made most vulnerable by the abuses that they suffered during the war. The
reparations suggested involving education include:

• In addition to its general recommendation that free education should be
  provided to all children at the basic level, there should be free education until
  senior secondary level for specific groups affected by the conflict. Those
  eligible include children who are amputees, other war wounded, and victims of
  sexual violence; children who were abducted or conscripted; orphans of the
  war; and children of amputees, other war wounded who experienced a 50% reduction in earning capacity as a result of their injuries, and victims of sexual
  violence.

• Existing programmes such as the Community Education Investment
  Programme (CEIP) and the Complimentary Rapid Education for Primary
  Schools (CREPS) programme should be made available for all eligible children.
  Priority should be given to all permanently disabled children and victims of
  sexual violence (both adult and children) for scholarships to secondary and
  tertiary schools. The government should expand on existing education and
  teacher training programmes, with incentives for qualified teachers in remote

Up to this point we have concentrated on locating this research at an unexplored intersection between the fields of education and conflict and transitional justice, and in providing necessary contextual information regarding education in Sierra Leone, civil war in Sierra Leone and the TRC in Sierra Leone. Having now presented the SLTRC’s educational recommendations, we can now turn to a detailed consideration of the guiding research questions in order to investigate the utility of the SLTRC’s educational recommendation to post-conflict educational reform and reconstruction in Sierra Leone.
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS: THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE

5.1: Education since the conflict: A ‘remarkable recovery?’

The lead-up document to Sierra Leone’s education sector plan, which, when complete should allow the country to benefit from funds available through the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI), opens by stating that ‘Sierra Leone’s education system has made a remarkable recovery in several key areas’ (World Bank and MEST, 2006: vii). According to the report, since the war, Sierra Leone’s education system has benefited from significant government commitment, has greatly improved access, has seen no decline in primary examination results despite the increase in access and has successfully begun a decentralization process that will ensure better service delivery (World Bank and MEST, 2006). Indeed, figures such as a doubling in student enrolment between the 2001/02 school year and the 2004/05 one, do point to impressive educational developments since the war. Figure 5.1 charts primary school enrolment before, during and after the war and shows the dramatic increase in enrolment since the end of the war. It is important to note that a gender gap still exists, with girls making up only 45% of primary school enrolments in the 2004/05 school year.

Several educational policies and programmes enacted after Sierra Leone’s civil war have contributed to this surge in enrolment, not least of all the implementation of free primary education. In 1999 the government eliminated fees for grades 1 – 3, and in it 2000 expanded free education to grades 4 – 6 (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004).
The government was also able, following the conflict, to implement the new 6-3-3-4 schooling structure that had been developed in 1993 with the creation of the National Commission for Basic Education and set forth in the 1995 New Education Policy for Sierra Leone but that was severely delayed due to the war. The development of this system can be traced back to the Jomtein EFA conference and was seen as ‘a bold attempt to move the country away from a predominantly grammar school type of education’ and to take into account ‘the varied talents of the pupils’ and the ‘socio-economic needs of the country’ (World Bank and MEST, 2006: 16). The 6-3-3-4 system aims to modernize education in Sierra Leone and to introduce vocational and technical training options, making education more relevant. Figure 5.2 shows the present structure of Sierra Leone’s educational structure under 6-3-3-4; it is important to note, however, that many of the vocational options conceived of under the new system are still under development or are barely functioning (World Bank and MEST, 2006)
Donors also introduced emergency and post-conflict educational recovery programmes to reconstruct schools that had been destroyed and to provide rapid or alternative education to those who had missed out on schooling during the conflict. The largest of these, the Sabubu School Reconstruction Project funded by the World Bank, and the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) project, which condenses 6 years of primary education into 3 and is funded by UNICEF, continue to operate (World Bank and MEST, 2006).

In addition to questions concerning the ‘remarkable recovery’ of education in Sierra Leone that will be raised in the following sections, it is important to note that significant issues of attrition, class size, gender disparities and unqualified teachers continue to trouble the education system. In the 2002/03 school year 87% of students...
enrolled in the education system were in primary school, with one third of those enrolled being in the first grade. Only 50% of students in primary school reach the fifth grade and only 36% complete primary school by taking and passing the National Primary School Examinations (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004). A marked gender gap exists behind these attrition figures; of the small percentage of students enrolled in secondary education less than 40% are girls (World Bank and MEST, 2006). In 2002/03 there was one teacher for every 56 pupils in Sierra Leone, in Freetown’s Western Area the ratio rose to 70:1. In 2003 only 56% of teachers were qualified and the majority of teachers (77%) were male (Women’s Commission on Refugee Women and Children, 2004). Distance learning courses have been introduced to provide teacher training to unqualified teachers while they continue to teach.

When asked to reflect on the changes to Sierra Leone’s education system since the war, a Junior Secondary School (JSS) principal said, ‘we are making progress in terms of numbers, but it is not satisfactory at all in terms of quality’ (interview, June 23, 2006). This comment is certainly reinforced by the fact that to retain literacy in Sierra Leone one requires ten years of schooling, as compared with the accepted minimum standard of four years (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004). Only 36% of students complete sixth grade; in the school year 2002/03 there were less than 10,000 students enrolled in the tenth grade, meaning that a very small number of Sierra Leoneans who do attend some schooling leave literate. A principal of a private primary school explained that students ‘have lots of disadvantages going into government schools’ (interview, June 14, 2006) and an unemployed father explained that ‘both primary, both secondary, they don’t have quality education. If you want to do quality
education, you put your child in the private school’ (interview, June 20, 2006). Although pupils enrolled in private schools accounted for only 5% of the total number of those in schooling in 2003, the number of private schools operating in Sierra Leone has increased substantially since the war and enrolment in them appears to be growing (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004).

The problems with Sierra Leone’s public education system discussed above, and the fact that in 2002, although figures are not precise, approximately 1 million school aged children were out of school in Sierra Leone (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004), are generally acknowledged by the MEST and by international donors. The World Bank and MEST’s draft document, which will inform the education sector plan that Sierra Leone will submit to the FTI, along with the recent Education Act 2004 and Sierra Leone’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) all make efforts to address aspects of these issues.

From this brief synopsis, the energy and sense of priority surrounding post-conflict education in Sierra Leone is obvious; it is felt in the educational sector, among donors and more broadly in society. The doubling of enrolment figures and the introduction of free primary education into a system long known for its elitism and exclusion are very noteworthy accomplishments and may indicate a momentum for progressive change in Sierra Leone. Davies points out, however, that ‘there is a debate about whether education post-conflict is about a return to normality, or a radical departure’ (2004: 165). Roche argues that a ‘developmental approach to recovery’ aims to bring about change or to consolidate gains made during the crisis and is not about ‘returning to the “normality” or status quo which led to the crisis in the first place’ (as
Chapter 3, which explored the many faces of education in the Sierra Leone conflict, demonstrates that a return to the ‘normality’ of the educational situation in pre-conflict Sierra Leone could be dangerous. Educational reforms in Sierra Leone must be concerned with the consolidation of peace and with righting the many injustices wrought by the education system prior to the war. The accomplishments highlighted above show that a simple reversion to the state of education pre-conflict is not occurring in Sierra Leone, however, a principal of a government JSS said that, since the conflict, education ‘has not changed much, except that we see that the schools are overcrowded’ (interview, June 23, 2006). He explained, ‘it is the bad governance, it is still perpetuating itself, right through every sector… the very factors that led to the war, as if we had forgotten’ (interview, June 23, 2006). A young newspaper vendor said ‘education in the country is still a privilege because we the poor people we don’t have access to education in Sierra Leone’ (interview, June 19, 2006). To what extent, then, are the educational reforms we have seen to date a ‘radical departure’? Is the ‘opportunity’ provided by the post-conflict context being capitalized upon? And, importantly for this dissertation, are the truth commission’s recommendations for education contributing to post-conflict educational reform and reconstruction.

5.2: Progress towards SLTRC educational recommendations

Table 5.1 presents findings from my field research in Sierra Leone in June 2006 regarding progress made towards meeting the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC. The findings presented are drawn from policy documentation collected and from semi-structured interviews conducted. As has been noted above, much of Sierra Leone’s educational policy is currently under review and some documents are not yet
available outside the Ministry. These findings, therefore, must be considered in the context of their collection – a short research trip, in a period of considerable educational change – and should not be considered to represent the final status of action taken towards meeting the SLTRC’s educational recommendations. The following sections will elaborate upon these findings, exploring common themes that respondents consistently highlighted.

5.3: What is free? The hidden costs of education in Sierra Leone

A UNICEF Education Program Officer in Sierra Leone said:

Even wherein the government says it’s going to be free education, what is free? Is it just tuition? There are other costs that parents are encumbered with, you know, there are the development costs, there are the costs for uniforms, there are the opportunity costs, there are other costs that have to be factored into the government’s plans and how can we strengthen families so that they can support their kids in schools? These are for me the challenges.

(Interview, June 20, 2006)

The Director of the Human Rights and Rule of Law division of UNIOSIL, the current UN mission in Sierra Leone, spoke of students having to buy photocopies, explaining that ‘this is how the teachers make money’ (interview, June 28, 2006). The Women’s Commission on Refugee Women and Children received ‘several reports’ that ‘many primary schools continue to charge fees despite the government’s official policy of free primary education’ (2004: 64). I heard many similar comments about primary schools still charging fees during my own research, largely from people outside of the education sector.

Many respondents argued that teachers’ salaries were too low, leading not only to a disincentive to teach in the public sector but also to teachers seeking other ways to supplement their incomes. The Dean of Education at Milton Margai College of
### Table 5.1: Progress towards SLTRC educational recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL RECOMMENDATION</th>
<th>PROGRESS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outlawing corporal punishment in the school and / or home – imperative recommendation</td>
<td>Corporal punishment is discouraged in schools. Teacher training institutes highly discourage corporal punishment. Some interview evidence did point to corporal punishment continuing in primary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights education as part of the formal, examinable curriculum – work towards recommendation</td>
<td>Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at Fourah Bay College, and several NGOs are developing human rights and peace education materials. The National Curriculum Research and Development Centre (NCRDC) reports being ‘under a lot of pressure’ from government and others to include ‘human rights and conflict resolution’ in the curriculum. The inclusion of ‘human rights and civic education’ in the general curriculum was a benchmark in the 2002 <em>National Recovery Strategy for Sierra Leone</em>. Peace and human rights education have been included as ‘emerging issues’ in a 2003-08 curriculum review. The World Bank and MEST Discussion Draft to be submitted to the FTI makes very little mention of human rights education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National mobilization around youth issues, as a state of national emergency – imperative recommendation</td>
<td>Inconclusive results, not a focus of research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide free and compulsory education for girls up to and including the level of Senior Secondary School – work towards recommendation</td>
<td>Free education provided up to the primary level for all students, though hidden fees identified as an on-going problem by many. Programme introduced in Northern and Eastern region to pay JSS fees and costs for girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End the practice of expelling girls who become pregnant from educational institutions – imperative recommendation</td>
<td>Inconclusive results, one respondent mentioned the practice does still occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sending a child to primary school should be considered an offence – imperative recommendation</td>
<td>Strong focus on meeting EFA goals throughout the MEST, and in the World Bank and MEST Discussion Draft. No mention, however, of making it an offence to not send a child to primary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free primary education to be free in every sense of the word, with no hidden fees – work towards recommendation</td>
<td>Many respondents identified hidden fees as an on-going problem. This is acknowledged by the World Bank and MEST Discussion Draft as an area to be worked on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives for children to attend Secondary School – work towards recommendation</td>
<td>No evidence found of incentives aside for the programme mentioned above to pay girls’ fees in the Northern and Eastern Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents of the SLTRC report be incorporated into the education programmes of all schools, from primary to tertiary level. Children’s Version to be used in primary schools – work towards recommendation</td>
<td>The NCRDC had not seen and did not have copies of the SLTRC Final Report, nor of the Secondary School Version or of the Children’s Version. Distribution of the Secondary School Version and Children’s Version appeared patchy as none of the schools visited had copies. The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at Fourah Bay College was making use of the SLTRC’s Final Report.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Field research interviews, June 2006; World Bank and MEST, 2006; Government of Sierra Leone, 2002.
Education and Technology explains:

The teachers, sometimes, if they are not well paid, they fall on these children, they take their lunch. You should hear some of the things that are happening. Most of the female teachers take small, small business to class, they are selling cake, they are selling biscuits, they selling these things. So that falls back on the children, you know. (Interview, June 21, 2006)

Although most respondents felt teachers’ salaries were too low, it was universally acknowledged by respondents that the government is making efforts to pay teachers in a regular and timely manner and that the situation of punctual payment has improved significantly from its pre-war state, with the exception of new teachers who must wait up to eight months before being recognized by the system and receiving payment (several interviews, June, 2006). However, a primary school principal criticized the government for delivering the subsidies, to be paid in place of student fees, late. He said:

At present they have not paid for second term. We’ve passed second term. They’ve not yet paid for this third term and the academic year is coming to a close. (Interview, June 20, 2006)

Despite the Lomé Peace Agreement’s (1999) call to ‘provide free compulsory education for the first nine years of schooling’ and to ‘endeavour to provide free schooling for a further three years’ there are no plans to drop fees at JSS or SSS levels. At government schools, fees for JSS are 160,000 leones for year (approximately USD 60) and 195,000 leones per year for SSS (approximately USD 65), plus uniforms, textbooks and fees to sit exams (interview, June 23, 2006). This is a significant expense in a country where 70% of the population lives below the national poverty line of just under one US dollar per day (DFID, 2006). Thus, as the unemployed father mentioned above expressed it, ‘secondary school is still a privilege’ in Sierra Leone (interview, June 20, 2006).
The SLTRC’s recommendation to provide incentives for students to attend secondary school has not been acted upon, except in the Northern and Eastern region, where a program has been introduced to pay the school fees (including associated costs such as uniforms and textbooks) of girls in order to address their very low enrolment level in these regions. Sierra Leone’s National EFA Coordinator said ‘we would like to extend it [this initiative] to the whole country but we are constrained’ (interview, June 16, 2006).

5.4: ‘We want the role of education in building a culture of respect for human rights’: Peace education in Sierra Leone

Echoing the call made by the children at the launch of the SLTRC’s Final Report, the Director of the Human Rights and Rule of Law division at UNIOSIL said:

I think the TRC picked it [the need for peace and human rights education in Sierra Leone] up very well in their salient recommendation. I will be very satisfied if we could have, and this is something that this government could do as a legacy, to make human rights education mandatory in all of the schools.

(Interview, June 28, 2006)

Some would argue that the Director should, therefore, be satisfied. In a curriculum review underway in Sierra Leone from 2003 – 2008 issues such as ‘peace and conflict education, HIV/AIDS education and girls education’ were ‘brought in as emerging issues (...) added on to the curriculum so that they are not left out, because we noticed that they too are important and need to be brought in’ (interview with UNICEF Education Program Officer, June 20, 2006). The Dean of Education at Milton Margai explained that the teacher training programme at his institution is incorporating these issues to the extent that he feels the programme is overcrowded and ought to be harmonized (interview, June 21, 2006). A Peace and Conflict Studies Centre has been established, with support of the University of Bradford and DFID at Fourah Bay College, and its degree course is
currently the most subscribed at the University (interview with Director, June 21, 2006). In addition to offering academic courses, the Centre coordinates training courses in human rights for members of the armed forces and is developing a similar course for the police force - courses such as these were recommended by the SLTRC. The Director of the National Curriculum Research and Development Centre (NCRDC), when asked about peace and human rights education in the curriculum, said ‘yes, there is a lot of that,’ explaining that, in the curriculum review, they were ‘under a lot of pressure to include human rights and conflict resolution from the government’ (interview, June 28, 2006). Indeed, including ‘civic/human rights education in the general curriculum for all schools’ has been a policy priority of the government since 2002 as it was included as a benchmark to accomplish by 2003 in the *National Recovery Strategy for Sierra Leone*.

However, when principals were asked about human rights and peace education in their schools, one explained briefly how the rights and the duties of the child are taught before going into a lengthy description of discipline practices in the school, listing the number of lashes dolled out with the cane for different offences by pupils (interview, June 20, 2006). Another said, ‘there has been no change in the curriculum, no not as such’ (interview, June 26, 2006). Thus, it cannot be said that civic/human rights education has been incorporated into schools in a stream-lined way.

While efforts to incorporate peace education into the curriculum were certainly noted during my research, especially in policy and on paper, the SLTRC and its educational materials were absent in every instance. None of the schools that I visited had copies of either the Children’s Version of the SLTRC or the Secondary School version.
One principal said, ‘I have not heard anybody saying that the TRC has gotten to the schools yet’ (interview, June 14, 2006). Another said:

No, were not given the report. I don’t know why. Maybe they want to keep it for themselves, they will be telling us in bits. We are hoping for them to send it, so that we will know what happened. (…) How will I know what to tell the government that these recommendations were made for the schools and for education in Sierra Leone when I have not read the book yet? (…) Maybe they are afraid to share these things, it will stir us up, so we will revolt again, so another revolution, which we are not hoping for. We are not hoping for that again.

(Interview, June 20, 2006)

The Director of the NCRDC, whose office approves educational materials for use in schools and through whom all additions to the curriculum would have to pass, had never seen the Final Report of the SLTRC or the accompanying educational materials. He had, however, approved educational materials produced by the Special Court and was unclear about the distinction between the two transitional justice institutions (interview, June 21, 2006). I was unable to speak with the Minister of Education, Science and Technology, but I did speak briefly with the Deputy Director of JSS and SSS, who had none of the SLTRC documents. The National EFA Coordinator, working out of the National Commission for Basic Education office, said he had neither seen nor read the Final Report and that there were no copies in his office. He said that poor dissemination was the ‘crux of the problem’ and that his office ‘would like to have it [the Final Report],’ but that he did not think there was a copy anywhere in MEST (interview, June 16, 2006).

The Chair of the TRC Working Group, the NGO that produced the Secondary School Version, did say that, upon the Version’s release, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology displayed it widely, praising it as work done by MEST (interview, June 21, 2006).
The Children’s Version and Secondary School Version of the SLTRC are considered to be of high quality, and were sensitively developed by experts to incorporate creative pedagogy for learning about Sierra Leone’s conflict (UNICEF, 2004b). The fact that these educational tools are not being used in schools is disappointing. The absence of these tools in the schools that I visited likely stems from inadequate resources for distribution and dissemination, lack of coordination between the SLTRC and MEST, and the nature of the TRC as a body that ceased to exist upon the completion of its work, thus limiting the momentum behind its recommendations. However, the fact that these educational resources do exist means that, with time, they may make their way into schools and into Sierra Leone’s curriculum, just as peace and human rights education may do. Here, the agency and energy of educators and civil society will be crucial, and I was fortunate to meet several people who displayed high levels of commitment to peace education in Sierra Leone.

5.5: ‘Sierra Leone is a time bomb; I want you to write that’

The above quotation comes from my interview with an unemployed father (June 20, 2006), reflecting, as did many, on the continued entrenchment of many of the causes that led to Sierra Leone’s civil war. According to a JSS principal, ‘what is interesting is that the problems that led to the war, as if we had forgotten, the problems are building up again’ (interview, June 23, 2006). Many respondents pointed to a trend observed by De Capua (2006), that violence in schools in Sierra Leone is increasing. De Capua points to students causing riots in schools, beating up teachers and burning vehicles; a primary school principal reported to me that ‘some of these children are troubled, some of them
come with knives to school’ (interview, June 20, 2006). The Director of the Human

Rights and Rule of Law division at UNIOSIL said:

Violence in the schools is becoming a major problem, students are burning
police stations and attacking police officers and all of that. Why do you have a
culture of violence in the schools? Why? Is it symptomatic of the society out
there?
(Interview, June 28, 2006)

The Director of the Peace and Conflict Studies Centre also brought up the issue of

violence in schools, arguing that:

Instead of us seeing the reduction of violence among children, there is an
escalation of violence amongst school children, so this is not a culture of peace.
In as much as we are looking at the recommendations to provide for the strategic
needs of children, we should also view the recommendations in the light of
changing the mindset of children, changing the attitudes of children, addressing
violence. How do we do that? You can’t do that without a culture of peace, you
can’t without peace education.
(Interview, June 21, 2006)

The Dean of Education at Milton Margai College of Education and Technology, when

speaking about problems of violence and discipline in schools said:

(…) the attitude even of the parents, you know, all those are problematic. Plus
the poverty of the parents as well, you know, lets face it, there’s general poverty
in the country to the extent that I don’t think parents are giving the kind of
support they are supposed to give their children (…) So, talking about the
problems, you can go backwards and forwards. I think the key thing is our
poverty. The poverty. Where there is abject poverty, you cannot have any
serious education.
(Interview, June 21, 2006)

The three quotes above emphasize the depth of the challenge facing not just the

educational reconstruction and reform in post-conflict Sierra Leone, but the

reconstruction and development of the country as a whole. I left many interviews struck
both by the desire for a ‘radical departure’ from the conditions that led to conflict, and by
the tangible frustration felt as many of those broad structural conditions remained the
same. Davies quotes Kevin O’Donnell as saying ‘peace education is a process of seeking
alternatives to despair’ (2004: 125). In Sierra Leone, as demonstrated by the research
findings presented here, these alternatives – as well as those developed in other sectors – ought to be aimed squarely at addressing the root causes of conflict and, thus, at addressing the nation’s abject poverty. Such obligations, as Davies argues throughout her work, are indeed global as the structures of inequality in Sierra Leone stretch beyond its borders and implicate us all. That the SLTRC has been able to shed light on the causes of conflict in Sierra Leone and offer recommendations to address them is one of its greatest strengths. As a former SLTRC staff member said, the SLTRC has hoped to ‘open a space where civil society and the population in general can engage in a dialogue with the government, however hard this dialogue will be’ (email interview, June 23, 2006).

5.6: ‘There are things that a TRC cannot do, for instance reform the education system’

As Table 5.1 shows, steps have been taken towards meeting several of the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC, however, a main conclusion of my research is that these educational reforms were not in fact being taken as a direct response to the SLTRC recommendations. This indicates several things: firstly, that the SLTRC educational recommendations were sensible and in-line with government and donor visions for educational reform in Sierra Leone. Secondly, as we have seen above, that the education system in Sierra Leone is and has been undergoing serious transformation since the conflict. Thirdly, that the SLTRC educational recommendations have not been, and are not currently, a driving force behind post-conflict educational reform and reconstruction. Indeed, it is safe to say, that the MEST is, for the most part, unaware of the educational recommendations. The situation described above aligns with a description given by the Chair of the TRC Working group about government action on the SLTRC recommendations in general:
Quite a lot has been done already in terms of implementing the TRC recommendations, but the government is not aware that they are doing it. So, they should have scored some marks by just saying that they are already doing this, doing that. But they are not aware. Education, the justice sector, the code of conduct of the judiciary, the law reform, these are all part of the TRC recommendations and they are most of them imperative. So, they should say “yes, we are moving, we are trying, we have done a,b,c. It is time, give us some time, we will continue”

(Interview, June 21, 2006)

Some are disappointed by the failure of civil society to take up strongly the SLTRC recommendations and to lobby the government for their full implementation (interviews with Chair of TRC Working Group and with Director of Human Rights and Rule of Law division of UNIOSIL, June 21 and 28, 2006). Disappointment also exists about the government’s failure to create the ‘Follow-up Committee’ which the SLTRC calls for as part of a government Human Rights Commission – while an Act was passed in 2004 to establish the Commission, the Commission as such still does not exist and nor does the Follow-up Committee (TRC Working Group, 2006). Perhaps, it would also have helped to generate momentum behind the SLTRC recommendations if the SLTRC itself would have put more effort into ensuring that the Sierra Leonean public knew that the recommendations it made would be mandatory. Ensuring that the public had easy access to those recommendations could also have made a difference.

A SLTRC staff member said:

I think we fulfilled the mandate. Some people expected too much and were maybe disappointed, but there are things that a TRC cannot do (for instance, reform the education system or provide electricity to Freetown!).

(Email interview, June 23, 2006)

This point, along with a conscious consideration of the SLTRC as an institution of truth-telling and transitional justice, are important when evaluating it; however, I do not think it unreasonable to hope that a TRC, especially one whose mandate includes ‘break[ing] the cycle of violence’ and ‘facilitat[ing] genuine healing and reconciliation’
(Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary
United Front of Sierra Leone, 1999) could align itself with and create momentum for the
developmental and post-conflict reconstruction needs of the country in which it is
working. Indeed, TRCs could be uniquely positioned to bridge the oft acknowledged
gaps between post-conflict reconstruction and development. Greeley and Rose (2006)
state that the artificial and nature of the ‘relief-development dichotomy’ is being
recognized by educationalists, who are acknowledging that ‘education must be planned as
a long-term endeavor’ (14). If TRCs continue to include a focus on education in their
investigations of the causes of conflict and continue to make recommendations for
educational reform, they could play a key role in informing long-term educational
planning that is sensitive to pre-conflict problems and is aligned with the post-conflict
context. By making meaningful recommendations and, importantly, ensuring that there
is momentum behind them by working with relevant government and civil society
organizations, TRCs could also be uniquely positioned to address needs beyond those
related solely to memory and justice.

***

This dissertation has, in many ways, been the investigation of a potential. When
returning to the research questions that have guided it, it appears to be a potential already
lost. We concluded above that the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC are
not contributing explicitly to post-conflict education reform and reconstruction in Sierra
Leone. This answers our first research question, ‘how are the educational
recommendations made by the SLTRC contributing to post-conflict educational
reconstruction and reform in Sierra Leone?’; rather negatively. The second research
question, ‘are the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC considered appropriate and desirable by the MEST, by civil society and by the educational community?’ can be answered in a somewhat more positive light. Those that I questioned who did know about the educational recommendations did consider them relevant. However, of my respondents, the only ones who knew about the SLTRC’s educational recommendations were the SLTRC staff, the Chair of the TRC Working Group and the UNIOSIL Director, who were all involved in the SLTRC process, making this a rather meaningless finding. The members of the educational community that I questioned were unaware of the recommendations, although in their work and its demonstrated priorities, many of the recommendations do seem relevant.

The third research question, which asks about the ways in which the SLTRC’s educational recommendations have been taken up and about who is driving their implementation, is answered in the observation that the recommendations do align, in many ways, with the priorities of the MEST and the international donor community, and, therefore, have in many instances been taken up unconsciously in their initiatives.

A positive aspect, however, about researching a potential, is that, while it can appear unfulfilled, it is never completely lost. As mentioned in Chapter 4 there is considerable discussion in Sierra Leone about the rumor that the government may pass the Omnibus Bill that the SLTRC recommends. This would implement several of the SLTRC recommendations that require changes to the country’s laws and may create a new momentum behind other recommendations. High quality educational materials have been produced as a part of the broader SLTRC initiative and may make their way into schools and into curriculum. I visited only a small number of schools in Freetown, it is
certainly possible that these materials are in use in other schools in Sierra Leone. As the Director of the Peace and Conflict Studies Centre at Fourah Bay says:

We have endemic social and economic problems that underlie some of the value in terms of these recommendations, and the reality is the country, to a large extent, is not yet on its footing to be able to provide for them. (Interview, June 21, 2006)

As is increasingly being acknowledged, the post-conflict context ‘offers opportunities as well as challenges’ (Buckland, 2006: 7) and, it appears, in the case of Sierra Leone, that the SLTRC educational recommendations do the same.
CONCLUSION

Listen to us. We are not tomorrow’s generation. We are the generation of today. The events of yesterday have become part of who we are. Like someone waking up after a long nightmare, we are stepping out in the morning to find our place in the world, to look for the way forward. And if even the road has been destroyed, then, with our footsteps, thousands and thousands of us will build a new road into the future.

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report for the Children of Sierra Leone, 2004)

The SLTRC included an innovative focus on children and on their experiences of war. As a SLTRC staff member commented ‘part of the mandate of the TRC was to deal with vulnerable groups like children and women, automatically when you talk about children you talk about education’ (interview, June 19, 2006). Educational tools such as the Children’s Version of the SLTRC’s Final Report quoted above, and the Secondary School version, produced by an NGO coalition, are among the results of this sustained focus on children; so too are the specific recommendations made by the SLTRC regarding educational reform and reconstruction. ‘People across the board recommended education,’ the same staff member commented, ‘that was really a driving force, I would definitely say it was at the forefront’ (interview, June 19, 2006).

This dissertation has investigated those recommendations in an attempt to assess how they are contributing to educational reconstruction and reform in Sierra Leone. As the previous chapter concluded, the explicit impacts of the SLTRC’s educational recommendations have not been substantial to date. Indeed, in many ways the educational recommendations align with a larger phenomena within educational policy making in Sierra Leone, described by a JSS principal as ‘on paper we are excellent, it is in practice that we have problems’ (interview, June 23, 2006). However, the degree to which the SLTRC included a focus on education in its research, its process, its findings
and its recommendations, along with its production of accompanying educational tools, is noteworthy and deserving of attention.

I do not believe that the minimal impact, to date, of the SLTRC’s educational recommendations on education reform and reconstruction in the country indicate that an emerging focus on the education sector within truth commissions is unproductive. On the contrary, I hope that the analysis of the Sierra Leonean conflict through an education and conflict lens and the discussion of the various ways in which truth commissions and the education sector could interact, have pointed to the potential that transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions could have for contributing to reform and reconstruction of education systems in post-conflict contexts.

While it cannot yet be said that a trend to include a greater focus on education is emerging within truth commissions, research into current and future truth commissions and their inclusion of educational issues would be fascinating. So too, would comparative studies of these issues, and investigations into the ways that other transitional justice strategies do and do not include focuses on the education sector.

With this case study of the SLTRC’s educational recommendations and their impacts I have attempted to point to and investigate a potential, and to build a fragile bridge from it. The study seeks to contribute in a small way to the call for more ‘creative responses’ (World Bank, 2005) to conflict and to educational reconstruction by sparking curiosity about the intersections between disciplines and approaches and by offering an early, qualitative exploration of how a potential within such an intersection is being articulated in practice.
WORKS CITED


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APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH METHODS

This Appendix details the research process involved in producing this dissertation. It considers the formulation of research questions and the choice of research methods, outlines the type of data gathered and provides information about field work conducted in Sierra Leone. The main ethical and methodological issues and challenges dealt with in this project are considered, and areas for future research are suggested.

A.1: Conceptualizing the project and locating the researcher

According to Walford, ‘current research interests are always the result of complex interactions between various prior interests and accidents of personal histories’ (2001: 99). I have long held an interest in education in the developing world, and was accidentally in Peru when its Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report was released. I was working on an educational project there and was fascinated by the way the TRC Report made its way into the project and into the thinking of the Peruvian Ministry of Education. This experience left me asking questions; it led me into this project and will likely spark future ones. My experience with the Peruvian case made me wonder how other TRCs were dealing with the educational sector and how other educational sectors were responding to them. I wondered if a greater attention to education by transitional justice mechanisms is indeed an emerging trend. If so, this emerging trend has not been systematically researched, nor has field work been conducted to see whether educational recommendations made by TRCs are well-founded or whether they are having an impact and being adopted.

While a large-scale comparative or evaluative study, possibly combining quantitative and qualitative research methods and conducted in several countries, would
be ideal for investigating this trend and its impact, a study of this nature was clearly outside of the scope of this project. Time and resources obviously impacted my decision to undertake a smaller, more-focused, qualitative study, but so too did the fragile nature of the processes being studied, and the fact that they certainly have not reached an end point at which they could be easily quantified. Broad research interests then were refined to deal with a single ‘revelatory case’ (Yin, 1994) and Sierra Leone has been chosen for the particularly strong focus on education in the *Final report of the truth and reconciliation commission of Sierra Leone* (2004). Sierra Leone also makes a convenient case study because of my own contacts there, the excellent contacts and experience my Supervisor has there. That I have previous research experience in West Africa, I believe, helped to prepare me for this project.

Throughout the research process, and certainly throughout the writing of this dissertation, I strove for the reflexivity necessary of a competent qualitative researcher. Walford (2001) explains that it is necessary to review the evolution of ideas and to attempt to articulate the assumptions and values of the researcher that are implicit within the research. In addition to attempting to do this, I also found myself struggling to check my personal attachment to an imagined outcome and, often, my disappointment about the actual research findings. In Sierra Leone I quickly found that my assumptions and values came with a vested interest in certain research findings. Realizing this, I tried to work hard against it. I hope that the fact that the dissertation I have written is very different from the one I imagined before arriving in Sierra Leone demonstrates my attempt to be faithful to the findings themselves rather than to my own preconceived and idealistic notions about them.
A.2: The case study method

In Yin’s (1994) useful discussion of how to choose the most relevant research strategy, he lays out three questions to consider. Namely, the form of the research question (does it ask ‘how and why’ questions or ‘what, where, how many, how much’ questions), the degree to which the research requires control over behavioural events, and the degree to which the research focuses on contemporary events (Yin, 1994: 6). Using this framework, I questioned my own research. My research questions,

4) How are the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC contributing to post-conflict educational reconstruction and reform in Sierra Leone?

5) Are the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC considered appropriate and desirable by the MEST, by civil society and by the educational community?

6) In what ways have the educational recommendations made by the SLTRC been implemented and who is driving this?

are primarily about ‘how and why’, though a ‘what’ question is also asked. Not only does my research project not require behavioural control, it wishes to actively avoid it. Finally, the research focuses very much on the unfolding of contemporary events.

Answering Yin’s questions in these ways pointed towards the use of a case study method, which, in addition to being well suited for studying the type of questions I was asking, ‘is preferred in examining contemporary events… when relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated’ (Yin, 1994: 9).

While the decision to use a case study method was a relatively straight-forward one, subsequent thinking about which research tools to incorporate into the case study, and about epistemological and ontological understandings of the purpose and possibilities of this case study were, and remain, much more complicated. In several ways, the case
study, as I hoped to conduct it, seemed to fall between categories put forward by researchers writing about case study method. Stake (1995), for instance, distinguishes between intrinsic case studies aiming solely to understand the particular case in depth, and the instrumental case studies, where the individual case study may be instrumental in helping to understand something other than and outside of the particular case. Other authors (see for instance Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991) do not insist on such a distinction, seeming to allow that a case study can, or can at least attempt, to do both. I feel it is important and valuable to investigate and attempt to understand the very specific case of the SLTRC educational recommendations and their impact in Sierra Leone, and feel it is quite obvious that no generalizations will be able to be made based on the findings presented in this study either within or outside of Sierra Leone. However, I do feel that it is possible that certain lessons or insights drawn from this case study may be relevant and useful in broader debates about post-conflict educational reconstruction. This may be especially true given the trend that may be emerging towards an increasing focus on the educational sector within truth commissions.

A.3: Qualitative case study method

Creswell (1998) advises researchers to ‘…select a qualitative study because of the nature of the research question’ (18). This seemingly straightforward piece of advice encompasses many of the warnings, cautions and caveats outlined in texts on designing and conducting qualitative research. Many (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) warn that qualitative methods ought not to be chosen simply because one has an aversion to quantitative ones. Nor should the researcher assume that because they have chosen methods that do not involve quantitative data gathering and analysis they
have escaped from engaging in a demanding, rigorous and systematic investigation (Vulliamy, Lewin & Stephens, 1990; Walford, 1998). Qualitative methods, therefore, should be chosen for no other reason than that they are the most appropriate methods available to answer the research questions.

I believe that the research questions posed in my study and the nature of the situation being researched clearly point to a qualitative strategy. Not only do the questions demonstrate an interest in gathering opinions and perceptions of processes, they aim to investigate what is an incredibly fragile and changing situation. Pring (2000) argues that case studies ought to be qualitative in nature when ‘it is believed that the unit under investigation cannot be understood except within the broader context of the understandings shared and not shared by the participants’ (41). In this case, the understandings and actions of participants at the MEST, in schools and in civil society, and the ways in which their understandings interact with each other, are largely what will determine the value of the educational recommendations of the SLTRC for educational reconstruction.

There is very little in the literature on qualitative research design and field work in education that focuses explicitly on doing research in developing countries. The work of Vulliamy, Lewin and Stephens (1990) is a notable and welcome exception. These authors argue that the early trend of conducting almost exclusively quantitative educational research in developing countries did a disservice to the understanding of the complex needs and realities of these educational systems, and insist that ‘qualitative research strategies have a potentially important, but to date relatively neglected, role to play in the study of education in developing countries’ (Vulliamy et. al, 1990: 22). They
argue that there is a need to understand the processes of educational change in developing countries by looking at the actual processes involved in implementing educational innovations. I believe that in situations of post-conflict reconstruction, where the education system must not simply contribute to economic growth and development and to preparing children for active participation in their societies, but also to building peaceful futures, it is all the more essential to understand processes that contribute to and impede change. Thus in order to attempt to understand a potential process of change at work, I chose qualitative methods to conduct this study.

A.4: The case study: Primary and secondary documentary research and semi-structured interviews

Having established that the most appropriate way to investigate my research questions would be through qualitative case study, I next asked what methods the case study itself would utilize. This was a complicated question due to the fact that, ultimately, what I was investigating was a potential. I was interested in the potential of a trend and how this potential was or was not being enacted. I was wondering whether this potential was in fact, in the case of Sierra Leone’s TRC, a process. In investigating how to best research ‘a process’ one realizes the importance of attempting to triangulate data. Feagin et. al. (1991) discuss that a ‘great strength’ of the case study method is ‘that it does permit the observer to assemble complementary and overlapping measures of the same phenomena’ (19). I, therefore, attempted to draw on data gathered through documentary research including primary and secondary sources and on data from semi-structured interviews as well on additional non-documentary materials. These materials included a video, produced by the NGO Witness to compliment the process of the Sierra Leonean TRC, and various radio programmes.
The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone, which is a massive document, served as a primary source, as did its accompanying educational tools. Policy documents gathered from the MEST, internal NGO documents and various reports, statements and reflections collected in the SLTRC Archives housed at Fourah Bay College were invaluable sources of information. The secondary documents consulted included writings on education and conflict, transitional justice, the history of Sierra Leone and education in Sierra Leone. An interesting finding of this research, and one that made the triangulation process difficult, was the fact that data drawn from interviews often contradicted that found in primary policy documents.

A total of 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted with SLTRC staff, with representatives from the MEST, with representatives of local and international NGOs and civil society, with Principals at the Primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) levels and with laypeople. Table A.1 documents the interviews done for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>TYPE OF INTERVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 14, 2006</td>
<td>Private sector Primary School Principal</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 16, 2006</td>
<td>Programme Officer, Campaign for Good Governance (local NGO)</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 20, 2006</td>
<td>UNICEF Education Programme Officer</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 20, 2006</td>
<td>Unemployed youth</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 20, 2006</td>
<td>Primary School Principal</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21, 2006</td>
<td>Dean of Education, Milton Margai College of Education and Technology</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21, 2006</td>
<td>Chair, TRC Working Group (local NGO coalition)</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23, 2006</td>
<td>Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Fourah Bay College</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23, 2006</td>
<td>Junior Secondary School Principal</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28, 2006</td>
<td>Director, Human Rights and Rule of Law, UNIOSIL</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28, 2006</td>
<td>Director, National Curriculum for Research and Development Centre (NCRDC)</td>
<td>Face to face, unrecorded at respondent’s request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 29, 2006</td>
<td>Director, Adult Education and Extramural Studies, Fourah Bay College</td>
<td>Face to face, recorded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All respondents were given information about the project prior to being asked to participate, and all signed a form giving their consent. The project information and consent forms were both approved as a part of a larger research ethics proposal submitted to and approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). In giving their consent, participants agreed that their names would not be mentioned in the written study but that mention could be made of their professional positions. All of the face-to-face interviews except one were recorded and the data gathered from these interviews has been stored safely according to British Educational Research Association (BERA) and CUREC requirements. I have attached a copy of the Description of the Project and the Letter of Consent given to each of the participants prior to their interview (Appendix B), as well as a copy of the interview schedule for one of the participants (Appendix C). Although questions asked of respondents obviously varied given their role, it is hoped that Appendix C will give the reader a general idea of the structure of that my interviews took. As the interviews were semi-structured, additional questions and conversations came up as respondents shared their opinions.

Cannell and Kahn (1968) define the interview as ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him [sic] on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation’ (as quoted in Cohen & Manion, 1994: 271). Again my research project seems to fall in between categories. While what has been presented in this dissertation are largely descriptive findings, detailing the lack of explicit progress towards meeting the SLTRC’s educational recommendations, I do also, at points, provide context to the descriptive, much of which is indeed intended as
explanation. The interview questions that I used to structure my ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984) were, thus, designed to collect data to include in description but also enabled respondents’ personal reflections into possible explanations for the way that the process being studied was playing out. I, therefore, sought to find not simply the informants professional experience of and within the process being investigated, but also their opinions of it and of broader questions of educational reconstruction and transitional justice in Sierra Leone.

I was interviewing in a cross-cultural context and certainly felt the privilege of my skin colour and of the reputation of my University prior to and during the interviews. I also felt both the constraints and the benefits of my gender. The advantages and disadvantages of the ‘outsider’ as researcher have been explored and questioned (Robison, et. al, 1999) and were certainly among the things that I reflected upon during this research. I do think that my role as outsider made me privy to certain thoughts and opinions that respondents may not have shared as openly with another Sierra Leonean, I am also sure that many statements were made based on perceptions of what I may want to hear. I have dealt with these issues by relying on my intuition and by presenting data that I perceived to be as unbiased as possible, however, this strategy comes with yet another warning that the findings presented in this dissertation are certainly not to be taken as generalizations or fact about the context to which they speak.

A.5: Ethics

Using the guidance of the BERA, a Research Ethics application was submitted to CUREC for this project and was approved. Questions of respondent anonymity, risk and reward for participation, and confidentiality data of respondents, among other
considerations, were dealt with in the application. In addition to completing this research ethics review, this project has involved a considerable amount of personal reflection on research ethics, research methods and cross-cultural research. Indeed, research into post-conflict situations poses complex ethical problems (see for instance, Prunier, 2005) around past and present trauma and proper respect for the dead. Katie Dimmer was invaluable in helping me negotiate these waters, pointing to the importance of a forward looking project.

A.6: Areas for future research

My research questions investigated not only in the process of creating and implementing SLTRC educational recommendations, but also in whether these recommendations are seen as relevant, useful and meaningful. That children and youth and teachers are not among the respondents included in this study is an acknowledged weakness in assessing questions of relevance, usefulness and meaning. Since children, youth and teachers make up the groups that would be most impacted by the implementation of the recommendations, their impressions of them are of outmost importance. I had intended to conduct focus groups with groups of teachers and with groups of students in order to understand how they were using the educational tools that accompanied the SLTRC and to explore their perceptions of these tools. When I found that the tools were not in use in the schools that I visited, time constraints and feasibility prevented me from designing alternate focus groups. However, further research into this subject, that includes the perspectives of students and their teachers, would certainly be useful and interesting. Children and their teachers will have had far different experiences with conflict than the more powerful individuals that I interviewed, and some will have
participated directly in conflict (Richards, 1996), others will remember it in different ways, especially given their ages. It is towards their needs that SLTRC educational recommendations have been aimed and it is, therefore, essential to try to understand these needs and to what extent the SLTRC educational recommendations coincide with them.

I believe an ethnographic study following a TRC in process and documenting the ways in which the education sector and its actors, including students, participate in the process would be fascinating. As would the comparative, rigorous, multi-country study mentioned above.

**Conclusion**

Pring argues that ‘it is difficult, therefore, to think about education, let alone about research into it, without addressing questions about the qualities which constitute or lead to a worthwhile form of life. And that question in turn requires careful examination of what it means to be a person and to be so more fully’ (2000: 15). I believe these questions become all the more essential in post-conflict situations. Here, it is increasingly being realized (Sinclair, 2002; Davies, 2004), questions of economic returns to education, which dominate much of the discourse around educational development in the south, must take a backseat to questions of building education systems that actively contribute to building peace. The research presented in this dissertation was grounded around this realization, which certainly brings with it certain assumptions and values that I doubt have been concealed in these pages. The principle methodological challenge I faced with this project was how to investigate a process that I believe may have the potential to contribute to developing more ‘peace conscious’ education without allowing
my hopes for this potential to colour the research findings. To what degree I have been able to manage this will be determined by the reader.
WORKS CITED IN APPENDIX A


I am pleased to invite you to participate in the research project “Conflict, education and truth commissions: The case of Sierra Leone”. This is a project that I am undertaking as a part of my M.Sc degree in Comparative & International Education at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom under the supervision of Dr. Colin Brock. Dr. Brock and I can both be contacted by mail at the address above; I can be reached by email at julia.paulson@edstud.ox.ac.uk.

This research project is looking into the educational recommendations included in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone. I am interested in whether or not people from various sectors of society (NGOs, government, teachers, etc.) know about and agree with the recommendations and in steps that have been taken towards their implementation. I hope that this study will contribute to dialogue around educational reconstruction in post-conflict situations.

I am hoping that you will be willing to participate in an interview with me to contribute to research for this project. You have been asked to participate in this study because of your professional position and the knowledge you have about education in Sierra Leone or about the TRC itself. Your participation will be limited to a single, semi-structured interview that I will record with your permission. This interview should take no more than 90 minutes.

The data collected in this study will only be seen by myself and by my supervisor, Dr. Colin Brock. It will be stored in my confidential records and will be destroyed when I have finished using it. I will not mention your name in any of the documents produced as a result of this study, but may quote information from you with reference to your professional role. If you would prefer that I do not do so, please advise me and I will not. Aside from kindly contributing to my project, and to debate it may raise, I do not believe there are any indirect or direct benefits to participating in this project, nor do I believe there are any risks.

This project has been reviewed by, and has received clearance from the Central University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about the research or would like any additional information please ask me and I will provide it. If at any time you would like to withdraw from participating in the study, please inform me and you can do so with no penalty.

If you agree to participate I will ask you to sign a consent form indicating that you are willing to take part in this research. Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Julia Paulson
M.Sc. candidate Comparative & International Education
University of Oxford Department of Educational Studies
Green College
CONSENT FORM – Interviewees in research project “Conflict, education and truth commissions: The case of Sierra Leone”

In signing this form I consent to participate in the study, “Conflict, education and truth commissions: The case of Sierra Leone” being undertaken by Julia Paulson, who is a M.Sc. student at the University of Oxford Department of Educational Studies. Julia can be contacted at the above address or by email at julia.paulson@edstud.ox.ac.uk.

In signing this form I agree to the following:

- I have read this form and the attached information that provides more information about the nature and purpose of this research project.
- I have had the opportunity to ask the researcher, Julia Paulson, any questions and I have received satisfactory answers. I have received any additional information that I requested.
- I understand that I may withdraw at any time from this study without any penalty, and I will inform the researcher if I wish to do so.
- I understand that this research project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
- I understand that only the researcher and her supervisor, Dr. Colin Brock, will have access to the personal data that I provide and that it will stored securely in the electronic and paper file records of the researcher. I understand that the data will be destroyed when the researcher has finished using it.
- I agree to participate in this study and will be interviewed by the researcher.

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<th>Research Participant</th>
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APPENDIX C: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Questions for Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) representatives

How long have you been working at the Ministry?

What are your current responsibilities?

Can you give me a brief history of educational development in Sierra Leone?

When do you feel that the education system was most successful?

What were its strengths at that time?

Can you describe the functioning of the education system prior to the war?

What were the biggest problems at that time?

How did the war impact education?

What has happened in the education sector since the war?

What are the greatest challenges that the education system in Sierra Leone currently faces?

What are the strategies to deal with them?

Was the Ministry involved in the Truth Commission process?

Are you aware of the educational recommendations made by the truth commission?

What are they?

Do you agree that these recommendations should be mandatory?

What steps are being taken in the Ministry to implement the recommendations?

Do you feel that the recommendations will be helpful for improving education in Sierra Leone?

Will they be helpful for improving access and provision?

Will they be helpful for improving educational quality?

Is teaching about conflict and including peace education a priority for the Ministry?
Has the SLTRC been helpful in planning for education about conflict and peace education?

Is the Ministry making use of the educational resources produced by the SLTRC?

Do you think the SLTRC process was helpful to Sierra Leone?

Was there anything that you feel the SLTRC could have done better with respect to education?

Is there anything else you’d like to say or to ask me?