



SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH HISTORY CURRICULA IN POST-WAR SRI LANKA

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The concept National Reconciliation has become the main theme in articles, conferences and workshops in post war Sri Lanka. During the course of the thirty year ethno-civil war and afterwards the government of Sri Lanka is looking for a nation within the frame of multi culturalism is celebrated and respected. To ensure the nation's development in Sri Lanka the government has implemented many projects and still endeavors on it. As a long term perspective education system has to play a vital role on building social cohesion. This has been identified by the government and clarified in the official documents which were implemented during the course of war and after wards of the war in Sri Lanka (Some of the reports are; The first Report of the National Education Commission 1992, National Framework for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka, 2002, LLRC Report, 2011, Transforming Education 2020: Corporate Plan 2016- 2020 draft, 2015: National Institute of Education etc.). Nevertheless under the education system the history textbooks in secondary education in Sri Lanka are unsuccessful in addressing the competing historical consciousness of the two main ethnic groups. Historical narratives which shape and mould the historical consciousness of the Sinhala and Tamil communities poses a fundamental challenge to the process of national reconciliation. Much research done in abroad (The textbooks in Rwanda, Israel) has proved that how can history textbooks can highlight social, cultural and ethnic diversity and promote mutual respect and tolerance. Under the mechanism of education the research has examined the contribution of history textbooks on reconciliation by analyzing the historical narrations in textbooks. The aim of the research is to build up a theoretical discussion on the gap between social cohesion and history textbooks in Sri Lanka. The research methods are mainly based on qualitative data which was collected through library research. Content analysis was used in Sinhala and Tamil medium history textbooks from grade six up to grade eleven. The analysis of the textbooks in the theoretical concepts of historical significance, memorization, and racial hierarchy shows the historical narrations in textbooks are full of omissions. And also text books provide a Sinhalese centric narration which has omitted the Tamils and Muslims. The textbooks are highly ideologized or politicized and particularly portrayed the Sinhala kings as heroes defeating the Tamils. The analysis of Tamil medium history textbooks shows that it is same as the Sinhala medium version which follows in a single point of view which strength memorizing historical facts rather than expanding critical thinking of the two ethnic groups. To construct a sober dialogue among the Sinhalese and Tamils it is essential to transform the narrations based on a single point of view to an alternative approach like shared history or joint history. Likewise it has been highly

recognized through research done in worldwidethat multiple historical narratives can reinforce peaceful tendencies in post conflict societies.

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