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Aryn Baxter  
Aryn.Baxter@asu.edu

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Higher Education Mission and Vision in Rwanda: A Comparative and Critical Discourse  
Analysis

Aryn Baxter

Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development

University of Minnesota

[Baxte085@umn.edu](mailto:Baxte085@umn.edu)

Higher Education Mission and Vision in Rwanda: A Comparative and Critical Discourse Analysis

Abstract:

This article considers the influence of changing higher education discourses on the mission and vision statements of public and private institutions of higher education attended by Rwandan students. Applying a vertical case study approach that draws on critical discourse analysis, the study examines the degree to which the mission and vision statements of these higher education institutions are characterized by divergence or convergence with global trends. Additionally, it considers the spaces that exist for higher education initiatives to address themes that diverge from dominant higher education discourses. The findings demonstrate the potential for higher education institutions to resist the narrowness of dominant neoliberal global trends toward entrepreneurialism, while also supporting claims and reinforcing concerns that these trends are widespread. They suggest that private higher education institutions within Rwanda and international scholarship programs that allow students to study in other countries create spaces for higher education to diverge from a primarily human capital framework and respond to broader social concerns. The study highlights the significant role and responsibility of external funding partners in shaping how higher education institutions contribute to economic, political and social change.

## Introduction

The growing influence of a market-oriented discourse within higher education institutions is a phenomenon of interest and concern for scholars of higher education (Johnson & Hirt, 2011; Mohanty, 2003; Subotzky, 1999). As universities become increasingly entrepreneurial and focused on private-sector interests, there is a growing counter-concern with education's contribution to the public good. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one approach that scholars have employed to study the extent to which the values and forces of the free market have become embedded in higher education discourse (Askehave, 2007; Fairclough, 1995). This methodology provides a framework for linking institutional texts with the socio-cultural context in which they are produced, and for considering how powerful institutions legitimate and authorize particular understandings of the purpose of higher education.

Building on previous critical discourse analyses that have studied the marketization of higher education, this study focuses on the context of Rwanda and compares the discourses in public and private institutions of higher education as manifested in the institutional mission and vision statements presented on university websites. The analysis identifies themes that emerge from the language employed on these websites and considers what this language implies about institutional discourse surrounding the purposes of higher education in Rwanda. In addition to analyzing university websites, the study is framed by an overview of the changing position of higher education within the World Bank development discourse and alternative perspectives regarding the purposes of higher education that are present in the literature. By directing attention to how the predominant views of higher education are shaped by power, knowledge and struggle, critical discourse analysis provides a framework for considering and interrogating the power relationships that influence visions for higher education in Rwanda.

The purpose of this study is to situate a comparative analysis of public and private university discourses in Rwanda within the broader higher education discourses of the national government and the World Bank. At a time when the public purposes of higher education are under debate within the realms of academia and public policy, understanding how different discourses portray the role of higher education in contributing to social, political and economic change constitutes a critical issue in the field of Comparative International Development Education (CIDE). The vertical case study (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009) and CDA provide two complementary methodological approaches for exploring the existence of voices that contest the predominantly market-oriented discourse of higher education. Furthermore, these methodologies illuminate the degree to which institutional discourses are characterized by divergence or convergence with global trends.

The next section provides a brief introduction to education in the post-conflict context of Rwanda, followed by an overview of the critical framework and the discourse analysis methodology employed in the study. Three levels of discourse analysis—social practice, discursive practice, and text—are then briefly described. Focusing on an analysis of discourse as text, data drawn from a content analysis of international and national higher education policy documents and university mission and vision statements are presented. The paper concludes with an analysis of this data and a discussion of the study's implications for higher education research, policy and practice.

## Rwandan Context

As a country that has received considerable praise and criticism from the international community for its approach to addressing national challenges, Rwanda provides a unique context for the study of higher education discourse. In the years following the 1994 genocide, a tragic event that took the lives of up to one million Rwandans, international donors working in the country have increased their attention to the social and political challenges Rwanda faces. Many are engaged in explicit efforts to influence social and political dynamics in support of good governance, reconciliation and justice, making Rwanda “a major case of the emerging post-conflict agenda” (Uvin, 2001, p. 177). In addition to the current regime’s effective technocratic governance, which has made Rwanda an attractive post-conflict country for international donors to operate in, Rwanda has a history of resisting the demands of international donors and pursuing its own course. One example of its resistance is the government’s success in convincing donors committed to a democratic development agenda that democracy is too dangerous to implement in a post-genocide society (Uvin, 2001). Despite critiques of the current regime’s political leadership and human rights record by human rights organizations and the international scholarly community, Rwanda continues to receive considerable support from international donors (Ryntjens, 2011).

Furthermore, Rwanda’s experience with international donors such as the World Bank has some distinct differences in comparison with its East African neighbors. Unlike Tanzania, whose economy was significantly impacted by structural adjustment programs and other loan conditions (Vavrus & Seghers, 2010), the role of structural adjustment programs in fostering Rwanda’s economic challenges is less clear. While some argue that structural adjustment in Rwanda contributed to insecurity, desperation and violence (Chossudovsky, 1997), others argue that the economy was already in profound crisis before structural adjustment programs were adopted (Storey, 2001). In contrast to critics of structural adjustment, Storey (2001) suggests that the increase in resources provided to the Rwandan state by the World Bank in the period preceding the genocide was more detrimental to Rwanda than structural adjustment. This policy facilitated an increase in state resources and a related boost in state legitimacy, which set the stage for the events of 1994 (Storey, 2001).

The 2011 *Rwanda Education Country Status Report* released by the World Bank highlights the government’s decision to invest a higher share of public education expenditure in higher education than most African countries. The report proposes that a priority task for the government of Rwanda should be to redirect some of this expenditure toward basic education; whether or not the country will follow this advice remains to be seen. The country’s prioritization of higher education reflected in this report suggests that despite the abundance of international donor activity in Rwanda, the government maintains and pursues its own distinct priorities even when they do not align with those of the international community. This may be attributable to Rwanda’s mixed history with the international community. The failure of the international community to effectively intervene and prevent the escalation of conflict in the 1990s coupled with critique of the current government by international human rights organizations have cultivated distrust of external intervention in domestic affairs among many Rwandans. In response to these criticisms, the government has argued that international critics fail to grasp fully the challenges faced by the post-genocide regime. Reyntjen’s (2011) analysis of how Rwanda has maintained ‘donor darling’ status in the midst of these concerns demonstrates the complexity of Rwanda’s relationship with the international community and its development priorities.

The position of universities at the “intersection of the global and the local” (Brennan, King & Lebeau, 2004, p. 18) makes higher education mission and vision statements a potential avenue for exploring the degree to which the influence of external donors has shaped the role played by higher education in Rwanda’s national development. With funding sources that include international partners, the national government and local students and their families, changes in how universities relate with society are driven by both global and local stakeholders. Mission and vision statements provide a concise articulation of how the university-society relationship is conceptualized by higher education institutions.

Proponents of community engagement within higher education have argued that mission statements can serve as an important touchstone for institutional change (Holland, 2005). Although focusing on mission and vision statements stops short of illuminating the divergence that may occur as policies are translated into practice and appropriated by university administrators, faculty and students, analysis of mission and vision statements provides a starting point for considering convergence and divergence at the level of policy formation. To what extent is the World Bank’s vision for higher education manifested in Rwanda’s higher education policy and the mission and vision statements of higher education institutions? This question is addressed through a comparative and critical discourse analysis of international, national, and institutional higher education policies in Rwanda.

### **Framework**

In order to analyze the use of language in higher education policy texts circulating at international, national and institutional levels, this study draws on CDA and elements of both *vertical* and *horizontal* comparison (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009). These complementary approaches provide a framework for exploring the ideological effects of higher education policy on higher education institutions in Rwanda.

Constructivist and critical theoretical perspectives inform the methodologies employed in this study. Both vertical case study and CDA approaches reject an objective, static view of knowledge and instead emphasize the processes and power relations by which knowledge is socially constructed (Vavrus & Seghers, 2010). Drawing on the work of Foucault, the notion of discourse is employed to illuminate the relationship between power and knowledge, and to discern how power relationships shape and constrain what can be said and imagined (Ball, 1990; Vavrus & Seghers, 2010). Language is viewed not only as a vehicle for communication but as a “form of social practice” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 18).

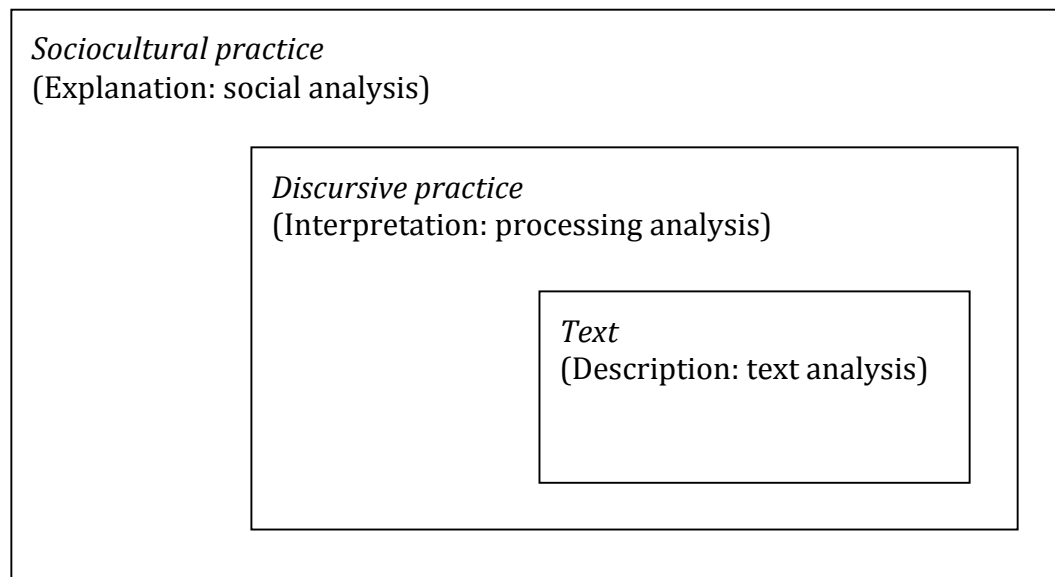
As a critical approach, CDA is concerned with the ideological nature of discourse and seeks not only to analyze but also to disrupt social and political power relationships (Gee, 2004; Rogers, 2004). This involves drawing connections between texts and the contexts in which they are created. As Vavrus and Seghers (2010) suggest, “This is an especially useful approach for policy studies because it links micro-level textual analysis and macro-level exploration of the authoritative knowledge generated by national and international policy-making institutions” (p. 78). Additionally, by drawing attention to the values embodied in certain texts and emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between language and social practice and making values explicit, CDA directs critical attention to texts that may otherwise be viewed as harmless (Askehave, 2007).

Fairclough (1989, 1995) presents a three-dimensional method of discourse analysis. This method is based on a conception of discourse as a spoken or written

language text, as discursive practice involving text production and reproduction, and as socio-cultural practice involving the relationship between discursive processes and social processes. This approach is illustrated in Figure 1. *Discourse-as-text* constitutes the most micro-level of the analysis, focusing on a linguistic description of the text. The meso-level analysis, *discourse-as-discursive practice*, addresses the production, distribution, and interpretation of texts. *Discourse-as-social-practice* is a macro-level analysis of broader social relations of power and knowledge that are reflected in and perpetuated by texts. Although this study focuses on the micro-level analysis of discourse-as-text, the analysis section briefly considers the meso- and macro-levels, suggesting directions for further research.

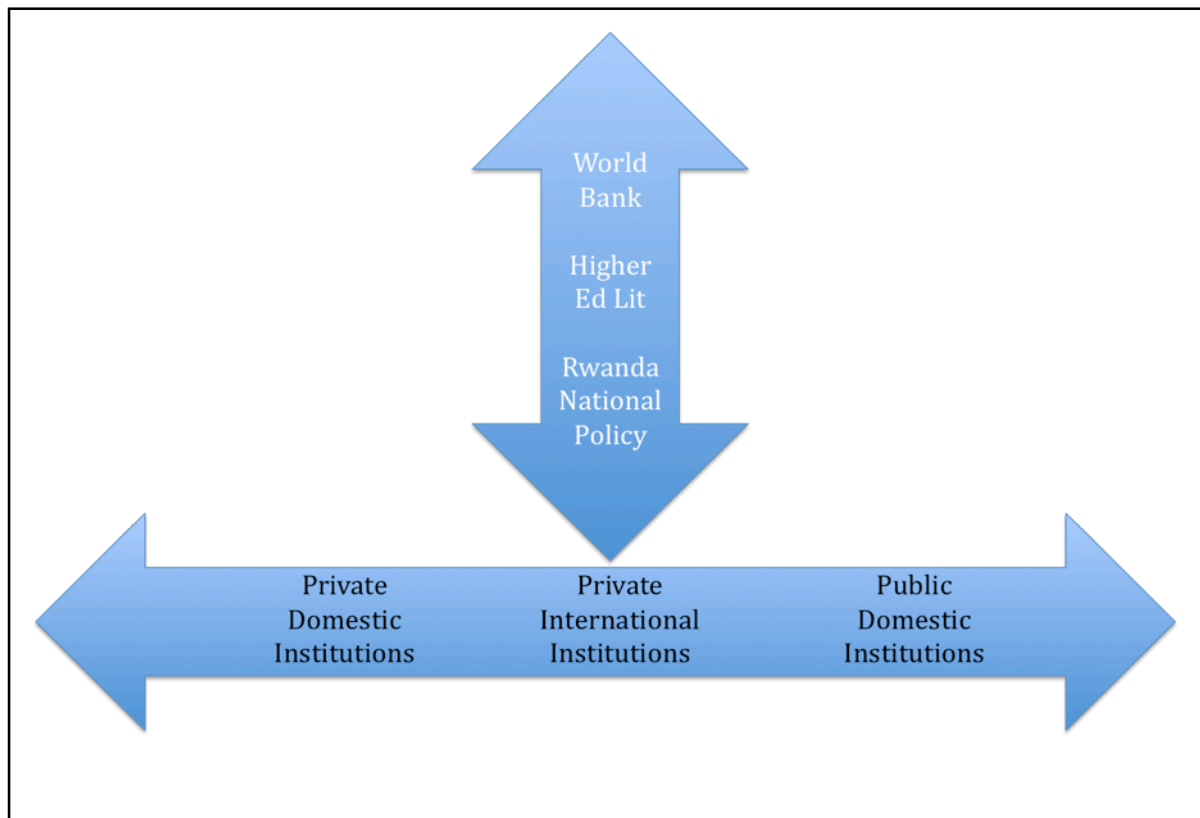
Vavrus and Seghers (2010) suggest that the field of comparative education has tended to address only the meso- and macro-level analyses, largely neglecting the micro-level textual analysis. It is the micro-level textual analysis, they argue, that has the potential to “most effectively illuminate the ideological effects of policy” (p. 81). This study sets out to explore this proposition by attending to a linguistic analysis of higher education policy documents in Rwanda.

Vertical case study (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009) provides a complementary approach to the study of higher education policy documents in Rwanda. Working across local, national, and international levels of analysis, vertical comparison attends to micro- and macro-level dynamics that shape policies, discourses, and practices. As Vavrus and Bartlett (2009) propose, generating rich comparative knowledge requires attending to how the interaction between global and local forces shapes social action in different locales.



**Figure 1: Fairclough’s three-dimensional method of discourse analysis**

(Adapted from Fairclough, 1995)



**Figure 2: Vertical & horizontal comparisons**

In this study, vertical comparison is employed through an analysis of discourses surrounding the purposes of higher education at the levels of higher education institutions in Rwanda, national higher education policy, and the World Bank higher education policy. Horizontal comparison is also employed to consider similarities and differences across three types of universities: public institutions in Rwanda, private institutions in Rwanda and private institutions in the United States that host a large number of Rwandan students participating in a Rwandan government-sponsored international scholarship initiative.<sup>1</sup> These vertical and horizontal comparisons are illustrated in Figure 2. See *Appendix A* for a list of the institutions included in the analysis and their mission and vision statements.

### Methodology

At each level of analysis, the selection of texts was constrained by both the public availability of documents and the methodological approach employed in the study. Following an overview of the texts selected at the institutional, national and international levels, analysis (CDA) is employed to explore the purposes of higher education manifested in these texts.

University mission and vision statements were selected to represent higher education discourse at the institutional level. Twelve higher education institutions were selected for the study. These universities include five public and four private



institutions in Rwanda<sup>2</sup>, as well as three institutions in the United States that Rwandan students have received government scholarships to attend.<sup>3</sup> Although distinct from public and private institutions of higher education in Rwanda, the U.S. institutions are included because of the large percentage of Rwandan students that receive government support to study abroad. The considerable role international universities continue to play in the provision of higher education to Rwandan students raises questions concerning how international and domestic scholarship programs compare in terms of their contributions to economic and social change (Mooock, 1984). Recent scholarship has given little attention to these questions.

Of the universities in Rwanda,<sup>4</sup> these nine institutions were selected because they are accredited by Rwanda's Higher Education Council. Additionally, their mission and vision statements were publicly available on institutional websites at the time this research was conducted. The private institutions include both religiously affiliated and non-religiously affiliated colleges and universities.

At the national level, numerous policy documents describe the vision for higher education in Rwanda's development. This study focuses on Rwanda's 2008 Higher Education Policy, the most recent policy document developed specifically to address education at the tertiary level. As with the higher education institutions, this analysis is limited to the section of the text that states the mission and vision for the higher education sector. While the presence of additional themes in the policy document that are not captured in the mission and vision statements is acknowledged, a comprehensive analysis of national higher education policy in Rwanda is beyond the scope of this study.

The international development discourse considered in this study is represented by the policies of the World Bank because of its policy influence. Specifically, the World Bank's 2002 publication, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, was selected as the most recent higher education-focused World Bank document produced prior to the development of Rwanda's 2008 *Higher Education Policy*. Moreover, this document reflects a significant shift from relative neglect to renewed emphasis in the institution's stance toward higher education (Samoff & Carrol, 2003).

The World Bank higher education program documents are chosen to provide a context for this analysis of higher education institutional mission and vision statements because of the significant influence the institution's policies and research have exerted on African policy makers (Samoff & Carrol, 2003). Although a variety of development partners work with the Rwandan government and the World Bank to develop and implement Rwanda's education policies, the World Bank's publications provide a widely accessible knowledge base for policymakers to draw upon, making it a particularly influential institution. Many who have witnessed the decline of African higher education in the decades following independence attribute the present distress of African universities to World Bank policies that pressured policy makers to redirect resources from tertiary to primary education (Samoff & Carrol, 2003). In Rwanda, this stance is highlighted in the recently published *Rwanda Education Country Status Report* (World Bank, 2011). This report provides an example of the way in which World Bank research informs processes of policy development and influences the state of higher education in contexts such as Rwanda. In addition to the World Bank, religiously affiliated organizations also have played a significant role in shaping higher education in Rwanda and their influence is highlighted in this study as an important area for further research.

The limited selection of texts included in this study presents certain advantages and limitations. Extensive consideration of all higher education policy documents circulating at the international, national and institutional level is beyond the scope of this paper. Restricting the institutional analysis to mission and vision statements of higher education institutions allowed for a certain level of consistency across institutions, as most universities make their mission and vision statements available on public websites. However, these statements provide only brief representations of institutional missions and values. Furthermore, little is known about the context and processes through which these texts were produced. The advantage of restricting the analysis to mission and vision statements is that it allows for a careful micro-analysis of the language present in the texts.

CDA is employed in this study to address the following questions:

- What purposes of higher education are represented in these texts?
- In what ways do the texts considered employ a market-oriented discourse?
- Do the higher education priorities emphasized at each level (institutional, national, international) indicate convergence or divergence surrounding the vision for higher education?

Starting with the macro level of discourse as social practice, the purposes of higher education are considered in light of broader social relationships and higher education literature. At the meso level, the funding relationships are discussed as they relate to the production of policies and institutional mission and vision statements. The analysis concludes with a micro level discussion of institutional, national, and international texts, attending to the ways in which language is used to promote a limited vision for the purposes of higher education.

### **Analysis**

**Discourse as social practice.** Analysis of discourse as social practice considers how higher education policies reflect broader social relations of power and knowledge. In Rwanda, the national budget depends to a large extent on financial assistance from external lending organizations. In addition to the knowledge base provided by World Bank publications, financial support is another dimension of the World Bank's influence on Rwanda's education policies. The success of the country's current leadership in targeting corruption and its strong history of collaboration between the government and development partners have made it a desirable context for donor organizations to operate (World Bank, 2011). As discussed previously, however, this influence is not entirely uncontested. The government's ability to resist external pressures and exert a degree of autonomy in its decision-making is exemplified by its decision to provide a higher level of support to the tertiary education sector than recommended by the World Bank (World Bank, 2011). See Reyntjens (2011) for further discussion of Rwanda's paradoxical ability to maintain the support of international donors through a combination of accommodation of and resistance to international opinions. While recognizing the complexity of Rwanda's relationship with the opinions and recommendations of international community, this social analysis of higher education policy focuses on how World Bank discourse and funds have shaped higher education policy and institutional mission and vision statements in Rwanda.

The central role of the World Bank in shaping education discourse and promoting neoliberal views that champion open markets and limit the role of the state has been noted by several scholars (Brock-Utne, 2003; Vavrus & Seghers, 2009; Samoff & Carrol, 2003). Samoff and Carrol (2003) trace how the World Bank's emphasis on

higher education's role in national development has changed over time. In *From Manpower Planning to the Knowledge Era: World Bank Policies on Higher Education in Africa* (2003), they highlight how human capital theory exerted influence on higher education policies throughout the 1960s and 70s, resulting in a reduction of donor assistance to the sector. As the consequences of the shift of funding from higher to basic education became apparent and the demands of the knowledge economy began to direct attention back toward higher education, the tertiary sector moved back to the center of development thinking. These scholars also note how the emphasis on knowledge production manifested in more recent World Bank publications broadens the role of higher education to include building social capital, promoting equity and enhancing the quality of basic education.

This growing emphasis on the social role of higher education finds support in the academic literature. Authors approaching the role of higher education from a modern human capital perspective increasingly recognize and seek to calculate the non-market public value of higher education (McMahon, 2009). They attend to its role in cultivating social cohesion (Heyneman, 2003), good governance, healthy civil societies, and functioning democracies (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006). Others approach the role of higher education from a broader conception of human development, emphasizing its role in the equitable distribution of capabilities and well-being (Walker, 2006), in fostering debate, critique and mobilization for political change (Lebeau, 2008), and in promoting democratization and the resolution of conflicts (Brennan, et al. 2004).

This literature suggests that while the World Bank's higher education policy has expanded to recognize the public benefits of higher education's social as well as economic role, these new emphases remain grounded in a narrow human capital development framework. The following textual analysis considers the extent to which this human capital framework prevails in higher education discourse at the national and institutional levels.

**Discourse as discursive practice.** This section considers how higher education texts produced at the international, national, and university levels are produced and interpreted. Analysis of this dimension is limited to a discussion of each institution's position relative to sources of funding and the potential influence funding relationships may have on the creation of mission and vision statements. A more detailed exploration of the processes by which mission and vision statements are created, and even more significantly, how they are interpreted and operationalized in the practices of education institutions would enhance the analysis of discourse as discursive practice. Although such an analysis would require more extensive data than what was available for this study, it suggests an important direction for future higher education research.

As mentioned previously, higher education policy documents produced by the World Bank reflect themes from the academic literature grounded in the human capital development framework. A similar framework is likely to be found in the development discourse of the government Rwanda, due to its dependence on external funding organizations.

Similarly, public institutions of higher education in Rwanda are characterized by a strong funding link with the national government, suggesting that their discourse is also likely to reflect similar characteristics. Private institutions, in contrast, are less dependent on the government for funding. Instead, they are often affiliated with religious institutions. This is the case for two of the four private Rwandan institutions and all three of the private U.S. institutions included in this study. It is hypothesized that

the absence of financial dependence on the Rwandan government will correspond with broader conceptions of the purposes for higher education.

**Discourse as text.** The remainder of this analysis focuses on the texts themselves, exploring how certain understandings of the purposes of higher education are produced and reproduced through international, national, and institutional policy documents. It begins with a comparative content analysis of the World Bank's 2002 higher education policy document, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, and the Rwandan Ministry of Education's 2008 *Higher Education Policy*. The texts were searched for thirty-three key words drawn from across the higher education texts included in this report. These key words were selected by the author based on their frequent usage and relevance to debates surrounding the public benefits of higher education. The frequency and density of each of these key words are provided in Table 1, sorted by density of use. Density refers to the frequency of word use divided by the total word count of the document.

Content analysis of these two documents reveals a strong emphasis on the *quality* of higher education. Both *social* and *economic* development are emphasized throughout the documents. However, the World Bank policy document makes almost equal reference to both, while the Rwandan policy document mentions *economic* development twice as frequently as *social* development. Other key words densely referenced in both documents include *market*, *global*, *technology*, *private sector*, *transform*, and *labor market*.

Key words such as *knowledge-based economy*, *lifelong learning*, *local knowledge*, *holistic* and *market* are referenced with a similar level of density in both documents. References to *poverty*, *values*, *labor market*, *sustainable*, *citizenship*, *responsive*, *entrepreneurial*, *community*, *regional*, *knowledge transfer*, *transform*, *leadership*, *technology*, *social*, *economic* and *private sector* are more dense in the Rwandan policy document, whereas the World Bank policy document more densely references *equity*, *human capital*, *efficiency*, *democratic*, *competitive*, *local*, *social capital*, *civic*, *global*, *social cohesion*, *manpower* and *humanities*. An additional point of interest is that the key word *democratic* is referenced 23 times in the World Bank document; whereas, no mention of this word is made in the Rwandan document.

Table 1

*Frequency and Density of Key Words in Policy Documents*

Key Word	World Bank Text (184 pages)	Density of use	Rwanda Text (24 pages)	Density of use
quality	293	1.592	36	1.5
technology	215	1.168	44	1.833
economic	168	0.913	59	2.458
social	161	0.875	27	1.125
global	118	0.641	4	0.167
market	112	0.609	15	0.625
competitive	72	0.391	6	0.25
local	57	0.31	0	0
equity	52	0.283	3	0.125
community	50	0.272	11	0.458
efficiency	46	0.25	2	0.083
transform	45	0.245	14	0.583
labor market	42	0.228	12	0.5
human capital	41	0.223	3	0.125
private sector	35	0.19	16	0.667
regional	34	0.185	15	0.625
poverty	31	0.168	12	0.5
life long learning	24	0.13	4	0.167
democratic	23	0.125	0	0
responsive	23	0.125	7	0.292
knowledge based	15	0.082	2	0.083
economy				
social capital	13	0.071	0	0
social cohesion	13	0.071	0	0
sustainable	11	0.06	11	0.458
values	10	0.054	11	0.458
humanities	10	0.054	0	0
citizenship	9	0.049	9	0.375
holistic	8	0.043	1	0.042
entrepreneurial	6	0.033	4	0.167
leadership	4	0.022	4	0.167
civic	4	0.022	0	0
manpower	4	0.022	0	0
knowledge transfer	1	0.005	22	0.917
local knowledge	0	0	0	0

*Note.* Density refers to the frequency of word usage divided by the total word count of each document.

One of the considerations highlighted in this analysis is the degree to which human capital discourse prevails, even as the language surrounding the purposes of higher education expands beyond a narrow focus on human productivity and employment. The textual examples of the usage of the term *social* in both texts shown in Table 2 illustrate that in the World Bank document, in particular, the social benefits of

higher education are discussed not as ends in themselves, but as they relate to economic development. Approximately half of the references to social development in the Rwandan policy document are grouped together with economic development (e.g. “an engine for *social and economic* development,” p. 2).

Table 2

*Usage of key terms*

Key Word	Example of usage in text
<i>social</i>	<p>"There is growing evidence that tertiary education, through its role in empowering domestic constituencies, building institutions, and nurturing favorable regulatory frameworks and governance structures, is vital to a country's efforts to increase <b>social capital</b> and to promote <b>social cohesion</b>, which is proving to be <i>an important determinant of economic growth and development</i>." (World Bank, 2002, p. x)</p> <p>"In recognition of the essential role that higher education can play in enabling the country to overcome poverty and <b>avoid social and political crisis</b>, the building of higher education has been a priority for the post-Genocide Governments." (Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 5)</p>

Despite frequent references to social development, closer analysis of how these concepts are employed in the texts demonstrates that both of these documents reflect an emphasis on the production of human capital, feeding a market-oriented vision for higher education. The degree to which this dominant vision is reflected in the mission and vision statements of three types of higher education institutions attended by Rwandan students is considered in the following section.

The hypothesis developed at the outset of this study was that the mission and vision statements of the three types of higher education institutions considered (domestic public, domestic private, and U.S. private) would differ in the degree to which they reflect this dominant discourse. It was suspected that public institutions would reflect this orientation to the greatest degree, due to their dependence on the government of Rwanda for financial support, and that domestic private and U.S. private institutions would reflect greater divergence from this dominant perspective.

Analysis of institutional mission and vision statements reveals that a market-oriented, human capital-focused discourse is indeed manifested to the greatest degree in public institutions. However, the mission and vision statements go beyond a market-oriented discourse, emphasizing the role of the university to provide community service, respond to local needs, preserve knowledge and culture, and to develop moral values. This is illustrated by the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology’s commitment to the “cultural, civic and moral training” of students to participate in the “economic and socio-cultural development of the country.” All quotations from university mission and vision statements were downloaded during March 2011 and are included in *Appendix A*.

Table 3

*Themes from institutional mission & vision statements*

Type of Institution	Themes
Domestic Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Innovation</li> <li>•National competitiveness</li> <li>•Responsiveness to national, regional and global challenges</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Community service</li> <li>•Private sector collaboration</li> <li>•Cultural, civic and moral training</li> <li>•Socio-cultural development</li> <li>•Develop managerial and leadership skills</li> <li>•Build capacity for national development</li> <li>•Provide consultancy services</li> <li>•Life long learning</li> </ul>
Domestic Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Holistic approach</li> <li>•Value diversity and raise awareness of ethical issues, gender, fairness, social responsibility</li> <li>•Support knowledge-based, technology-led economy</li> <li>•Address national, regional and international interests</li> <li>•Religious values</li> </ul>
U.S. Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Cultivate the whole person (knowledge, intellect, character, values, aesthetics)</li> <li>•Service to community and world</li> <li>•Appreciate diversity</li> <li>•Examine critically</li> <li>•Flourishing of human potential</li> <li>•Religious and moral values orientation</li> </ul>

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Furthermore, this predominant human capital discourse is not absent from the mission and vision statements of the private Rwandan institutions considered. For example, the Adventist University of Central Africa is “committed to participating actively and contributing towards making Rwanda a knowledge-based and technology-led economy.” This indicates that Rwanda’s economic development vision is recognized and supported even outside of public institutions.

In contrast, the private U.S. institutions place little emphasis on economic development, focusing instead on cultivation of whole persons, love of knowledge, service, full flourishing of the human potential, and sense of purpose. These institutions, all religiously affiliated to varying degrees, indicate a view of human development that integrates not only the economic and the social but also the spiritual and ecological.

Across all institutional types, the mission and vision statements emphasize a desire to be of high quality. Terms employed to emphasize a focus on quality include *world class, internationally renowned, highest international standards, excellence, internationally recognized and accredited, internationally known, stand out as a remarkable university, premiership position, and distinguished.*

An additional theme cutting across many of the mission and vision statements is a desire for institutions to respond to local needs and provide community service. In the case of several of the public institutions, the provision of community service was connected with national competitiveness, business and private sector collaboration, and consultancy relationships. The nature of community relationships is not specified. In the case of the private institutions, the cultivation of an ethic of service is more frequently included alongside references to community relationships. For instance, one private institution in the United States “prepares its graduates for lives of service and fulfillment in their communities and the world,” indicating that international higher

education partnerships may counter trends toward marketization that prevail within international development discourse.

Whereas public institutions (and several of the Rwandan private institutions) focus on responding to local, national and regional challenges, the mission and vision statements of the private institutions place greater emphasis on modeling social responsibility. Rwanda Tourism University College, for example, is committed “to meet[ing] the needs of Rwanda, the sub-region and the global community [...] in a conducive environment that values cultural diversity and cultivates awareness of ethical issues, gender, fairness, competitiveness and social responsibility.”

It is also notable that most of the private institutions in both Rwanda and the United States include a religious focus in their mission and vision statements. The Adventist University of Central Africa offers a “Christ-centered education,” the University Libre de Kigali “endeavours to perfectly fulfill its mission before God” and Oklahoma Christian University “transforms lives for Christian faith, scholarship, and service.” These statements indicate that the view of human development presented in these texts may be related to the theological perspectives and funding streams of the institutions.

Largely absent from all of the institutional mission and vision statements considered is any emphasis on the cultivation of civil society, democracy, and social cohesion. This is striking given the emphasis placed on these purposes for higher education in the World Bank document. While these topics may be subsumed under terms like *Rwanda current issues* or *local interests*, their absence is notable.

One possible explanation for the lack of emphasis on civil society, democracy, and social cohesion in the mission and vision statements of higher education institutions in Rwanda is that another government body, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), holds the mandate for promoting peace and reconciliation in the country. Ingando camps, education programs designed for groups of genocide survivors, prisoners, community leaders, and youth, are among the approaches employed by the NURC to build coexistence (NURC, 2011). Each year, approximately 3,000 pre-University students attend Ingando camps, where the themes of Rwanda’s history, political and socio-economic issues, rights, duties and leadership are addressed (NURC, 2011).

The government’s approach to fostering social cohesion through a pre-university orientation rather than integrating civic themes throughout higher education curricula reflects “a top-down, unequivocal approach to disseminating history” (Kearney, 2011). Critiques that the dictatorial pedagogical approach employed at Ingando camps falls short of fostering the kind of critical analysis necessary for sustainable reconciliation raise the question of if and how integrating these themes into the missions, visions and practices of higher education institutions might more effectively foster critical thinking and lasting reconciliation. Discourse analysis brings to light the disjuncture between the widespread recognition of the necessity that higher education contributes to developing a vibrant civil society, democracy and social cohesion and the approach employed by the NURC to foster national unity and reconciliation.

The proliferation of private higher education institutions in Africa is often considered in relation to the marketization of higher education. However, the findings of this study indicate that particularly in the case of private religious institutions, it is these very private higher education institutions that are promoting a broader vision for the purposes of higher education.



In summary, as analysis shifts from the World Bank and Rwandan higher education policy discourse to the mission and vision statements of public, private domestic and private U.S. institutions of higher education, a narrow focus on human capital development becomes less apparent. The term *human capital* is not found in any of the institutional mission and vision statements. Both public and private institutions emphasize that the purposes of higher education institutions are to build capacity, respond to local, regional and global needs, and to promote cultural and moral values. In general, private institutions envision a broader role for higher education, and in the case of some private institutions in the United States, indicate no concern with economic development. This divergence at the institutional level shows privatization cannot be equated with marketization and that there is some resistance to the dominant higher education discourse promoted by the World Bank. While this is a hopeful finding, it also suggests the need for further research and advocacy for the participation of higher education institutions in the policy making process.

### Conclusion

The question of whether education around the world is characterized by increasing convergence or divergence is debated within the field of comparative education. Meyer and Ramirez (2003) argue that “the functionality and uniqueness of educational systems are greatly overestimated in country-specific studies” (p. 112). Others question the extent to which education has been universalized (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). This study of higher education discourse in Rwanda indicates the presence of both forces of convergence and divergence but suggests as analysis moves away from the influence of World Bank funds, there is increasing divergence from dominant higher education discourses.

This study demonstrates the potential for higher education institutions to maintain missions and visions that resist the narrowness of dominant neoliberal global trends toward entrepreneurialism, while also supporting claims and reinforcing concerns that these trends are widespread. As scholars like Subotzky (1999) and Brock-Utne (2003) argue, there is a need to promote higher education models that focus on the public good and develop national higher education policies and academic fields from African roots (Brock-Utne, 2003). Furthermore, differences in the mission and vision statements of the national and international higher education institutions where Rwandan students study suggest that international scholarship programs create spaces for higher education to contribute to a broader vision for social change.

Applying CDA methodology comparatively across international, national and institutional higher education policy documents in Rwanda illuminates how international development discourse promotes convergence while leaving some space for divergence at the institutional level. It illustrates the power of funding organizations to influence institutional priorities, and suggests several directions for social action.

In demonstrating that higher education institutions, particularly private institutions, have the potential to resist dominant visions of the purposes of higher education, this analysis encourages institutions to draw on multiple perspectives as they design mission and vision statements. It also encourages donors to increasingly recognize local priorities and to allocate funding in ways that support rather than counteract local priorities. Finally, it suggests the need for further research that attends to how mission and vision statements are created, and how they are operationalized and employed in university practices. Higher education institutions have significant potential to influence the social, political and economic contexts in which they are

situated, and external partners have a significant role and responsibility in shaping the direction of these transformations.

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Appendix 1: Institutional Mission & Vision Statements

<b>Institution &amp; Website</b>	<b>Mission &amp; Vision Statement</b>
Public Institutions	
<i>National University of Rwanda</i> <a href="http://www.nur.ac.rw/spip.php?page=mission">http://www.nur.ac.rw/spip.php?page=mission</a>	<p>Mission: To generate and disseminate high quality multi-disciplinary knowledge and promote effective research, skills training and community service for national competitiveness and sustainable socio-economic development.</p> <p>Vision: To become an innovative, world class and self-sustainable University that is responsive to national, regional and global challenges.</p>
<i>Kigali Institute of Science and Technology</i> <a href="http://www.kist.ac.rw/index.php/us">http://www.kist.ac.rw/index.php/us</a>	<p>Vision: To be an internationally renowned, regionally - engaged African University delivering programmes of academic learning to the highest international standards, engaged in world class fundamental, strategic and applied research and providing services to the community and business whilst remaining true to our commitment to be responsive to the needs of Rwanda.</p> <p>Mission: KIST's mission as laid down in its Statute is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To equip students with advanced skills with a view to increasing manpower and capacity for national development.</li><li>2. To promote research, based on the disciplines offered at KIST.</li><li>3. To disseminate the results of research through teaching, seminars, conferences, public lectures, publications and other appropriate means.</li><li>4. To provide consultancy services to government, industry, the private sector and the community at large.</li><li>5. To engage in income-generating activities with a view to creating awareness of lucrative investment.</li><li>6. To collaborate with other academic, professional, technical and research institutions in and outside Rwanda for educational and technological development.</li><li>7. To develop and promote close collaboration with the private sector and the community so as to enrich KIST's programmes.</li><li>8. To make provision for the advancement, transmission and preservation of knowledge and to sustain intellectual life in Rwanda.</li><li>9. To contribute to the cultural, civic and moral training of its students and to participate actively</li></ol>

in the economic and socio-cultural development of the country.

*Kigali Institute of Health*

<http://www.khi.ac.rw/about.html>

Vision: To be a centre of excellence in training and development of health professionals  
Mission: To train and improve the capacity of health workers

*School of Finance and Banking*

<http://www.sfb.ac.rw/node/14>

Vision: To be the premier internationally recognized and accredited African Business School

Mission:

- To develop a learning community of high quality teachers, researchers, and students;
- To provide educational and training opportunities that inspire and enable individuals to develop their academic, entrepreneurial, leadership and other capabilities to their full potential;
- To steer knowledge, skills and life-long learning in business and management;
- To equip students with advanced managerial and leadership skills with a view to increase capacity for national development;
- To inculcate an entrepreneurial spirit in the student population.

*Kigali Institute of Education*

<http://www.kie.ac.rw/spip.php?article3>

Vision: An institution of higher education, which is an internationally known centre of excellence producing professionally qualified teachers and other professionals in high quality research environment that promotes community services.

Mission:

- To train high-calibre school teachers and teacher educators to meet local needs.
- To provide professional higher education to support the development of Rwanda.
- To develop the potential of staff to provide stimulating intellectual environment within which students are facilitated to become competent, autonomous and responsible practitioners.
- To develop the potential of staff to provide stimulating intellectual environment within which students are facilitated to become competent, autonomous and responsible practitioners.
- To carry out research to meet country's need for

research-informed educational policy and practice and to contribute to international scholarship.

- To carry out consultancy and mobilize the institution's expertise to support and develop Rwanda's educational services.
- To make a contribution to the community within which the institution is located.

#### Private Rwandan Institutions

*Adventist University of Central Africa*

<http://www.auca.ac.rw/>

AUCA offers Christ-centered education founded on a holistic approach that prepares people for the service in this life and in the life to come. At AUCA we are committed to participating actively and contributing towards making Rwanda a knowledge-based and technology-led economy.

*Rwanda Tourism University College*

<http://www.rtuc.rw/index.php/about-rtuc?start=2>

Vision: RTUC is committed to spearhead the advancement of education through quality teaching, learning, research, consultancy and service to the community by preparing graduates to meet the needs of Rwanda, the sub region and the global community, professional growth in a conducive environment that value cultural diversity and cultivates awareness of ethical issues, gender, fairness, competitiveness and social responsibility.

Mission: To become a centre of Excellence in the region for the quality of academic programs and to be a solution provider for the training of professionals in the areas of Hospitality, Tourism and Business Information Technology.

*Universite Libre de Kigali*

<http://www.ulk-kigali.net/index.php?page=summary>

Vision: ULK is destined to stand out as a remarkable university for excellence at the heart of Africa with highly motivated students and a highly qualified personnel endowed with elevated ethic values. ULK also takes pride in its very modern infrastructures and equipments and endeavours to perfectly fulfil its mission before God.

Mission: The fundamental mission of ULK is to provide the people with a training which may enable them to become actors and organizers of a complete development of our nation. In this respect, research work is basically focussed on topics of local, national and regional interests.



So far as research is concerned, since 2008 ULK possesses a Directorate of Research and Consultancy for fulfilling research mission. It publishes a four-monthly scientific review which releases articles related to Rwanda current issues as well as those regarding the sub-region, Africa and the world which is at its 17<sup>th</sup> issue. ULK organised also conferences for national, regional and international interests.

**Social Mission:** Despite ULK's statute of "private institution", meaning that it functions using its own means, ULK takes patience and allows gradual payments from students who don't have the capacity to pay the fees at once. Furthermore, RWIGAMBA BALINDA's FOUNDATION assists students deprived of financial capacities with a grant (a loan), without any interest at Gisenyi Campus as well as in Kigali. Since its creation in 2001 up to now, the Foundation has granted bursaries to 1807 students so as they might complete the 4 years of university studies.

*Kigali Institute of Management*

<http://kimrwanda.com/>

**Mission:** We are committed to giving our students Higher Learning Education and Training programs with special emphasis on skills and competence development.

**Vision:** To nurture, improve, and maintain the Institute's leadership/ premiership position as Rwanda's and the Region's Higher Education Institute of excellence.

Private U.S. Institutions

*Hendrix College*

<http://www.hendrix.edu/>

**The Statement of Purpose**

Hendrix College, a private, undergraduate institution of the liberal arts related to the United Methodist Church, offers distinguished academic programs in a residential, coeducational setting. As a collegiate community, Hendrix is dedicated to the cultivation of whole persons through the transmission of knowledge, the refinement of intellect, the development of character, and the encouragement of a concern for worthy values. In these ways Hendrix prepares its graduates for lives of service and fulfillment in their communities and the world. Toward the accomplishment of this purpose, the college offers curricular and co-curricular programs affording students the opportunity

- to investigate and appreciate the richly diverse cultural, intellectual, and linguistic traditions shaping the contemporary world;

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- to examine critically and understand the intellectual traditions woven into the history of Western thought;
- to develop skill and effectiveness in the use of language, the analysis of information, and the communication of knowledge;
- to explore and connect the content and methods of the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences;
- to participate in depth in a specific field of study, acquiring a body of knowledge appropriate to that discipline, putting to use its methods for the discovery of new knowledge, appreciating its historical development, and grasping its implications for the broader culture.

Hendrix thereby intends to cultivate among students:

- enduring intellectual curiosity and love of knowledge;
- aesthetic sensibilities and delight in beauty;
- powers of ethical deliberation and empathy for others;
- discernment of the social, spiritual, and ecological needs of our time;
- a sense of responsibility for leadership and service in response to those needs;
- and recreational dispositions complementing a full flourishing of the human potential.

*Oklahoma  
Christian University*

<http://www.oc.edu/about/universityprofile.aspx>  
<http://www.oc.edu/about/universityprofile.aspx>

Mission: Oklahoma Christian University is a higher learning community that transforms lives for Christian faith, scholarship, and service.

*California Baptist University*

<http://www.calbaptist.edu/about/>

California Baptist University believes each person has been created for a purpose. CBU strives to help students understand and engage this purpose by providing a Christ-centered educational experience that integrates academics with spiritual and social development opportunities. Graduates are challenged to become individuals whose skills, integrity and sense of purpose glorify God and distinguish them in the workplace and in the world.

*Note.* All mission and vision statements were downloaded during March 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, the scholarship initiative will be referred to as the Rwanda Scholarship Program. This program is a collaborative initiative between the Rwandan government and a consortium of universities in the United States that provides scholarships for Rwanda's top math and science graduates to pursue bachelor degrees in the United States. At the date of publication, over 220 students were enrolled at 19 higher education institutions in the United States as participants in this program.

<sup>2</sup> These decisions were based on the availability of mission and vision statements on institutional websites at the time the research was conducted.

<sup>3</sup> The three higher education institutions in the United States selected for the purposes of this study are the first three institutions to host students as part of the Rwanda Scholarship Initiative. With approximately 220 of Rwanda's top math and science graduates pursuing bachelor degrees through this scholarship program, these institutions are providing higher education to a sizeable group of Rwanda's future leadership.

<sup>4</sup> In 2009, Rwanda had a total of 28 institutions operating in the country: 8 public institutions, 5 colleges of nursing, 2 colleges of education, and 13 private Higher Learning Institutions (Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2010-2015).