History education and peace promotion in Sri Lanka

The interplay between teacher agency and the formal curriculum

(Point Pedro, photo by Rowan Cullen, 11 – 3 – 2019)

Master thesis Anouk L. Strandstra
International Development Studies
Graduate School of Social Sciences
Abstract

The bomb attacks during the Easter celebrations on the 21st of March 2019, once again illustrated the tension between societal groups in Sri Lanka’s complex post-war society. In this context, history education can be crucial in supporting or undermining peace within the society. This research assesses the relation between history education and peace promotion, hereby looking at the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency, the latter is defined as the space of an actor to manoeuvre in relation to a structure. As such, the main research question is: How does the interplay between the formal curriculum and secondary history teachers’ agency support or undermine the peace promoting capacities of history education? Looking at this interplay allows for a comprehensive understanding of the relation between history education and peace promotion, which is unique in this field as the majority of research done thus far either focus on the formal curriculum or on teacher agency. Furthermore, in this research, peace promotion is defined according to my newly developed RUDI framework, which is an outcome of the combination of multiple existing approaches towards peace promotion. According to the RUDI framework, peace promotion incorporates: Redistribution of resources, fostering Understanding, Democratic inclusivity and Inclusive history. The research is based on semi-structured interviews with Tamil and Sinhalese history teachers, and on a content analysis of the history teachers’ guides grade six until eleven. The results show that, despite the peace promoting potential of the curriculum, the structural focus on the Sinhalese culture and religion, combined with the exclusion of other cultural and religious expressions, arguably undermine understanding and inclusive history. Additionally, as democratic inclusivity requires education on active citizenship and the development of skills such as debating, democratic inclusivity might be flawed because of the static education on politics and democracy. This results in an emphasis on memorizing facts about state arrangements such as voting and the legal system, rather than (inter)active engagement with education on this subject. Furthermore, it could be argued that teacher agency is limited by the exam oriented education system and teachers’ obligation to follow the formal curriculum, as prescribed by the teachers’ guides. Therefore, teachers experience little opportunity to adjust the curriculum in order to increase the peace promoting potential of history education. This lack of peace promotion and opportunity to employ their agency in order to promote peace, is mostly experienced by Tamil secondary history teachers. Concludingly, it can be argued that the interplay between teachers’ restricted agency and the Sinhala oriented formal curriculum undermines peace promotion.

Key words: peace promotion, teacher agency, history education, formal curriculum, Sri Lanka.
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Conducting research in Sri Lanka, gently forced me to go out of my comfort zone many times. I explored unfamiliar places, unfamiliar people, and an unfamiliar culture. I went through a vast personal development, and what started as a daunting challenge, resulted in one of the most precious and enriching experiences in my life. Therefore, I sincerely want to thank all the people that supported me during this process: the respondents that embraced my presence and did everything in their reach to help me, the local partners (anonymized due to confidentiality reasons) who helped me to expand my network, and contributed to a sense of belonging because of their hospitality and kindness, and all the friendly people on the streets who welcomed me in their beautiful country.

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In stark contrast to this grateful and joyous message, the bomb attacks in Colombo on the 21st of march 2019, had a devastating impact on many Sri Lankans. Therefore, I want to dedicate this thesis to those who are affected by this horrible act of violence.
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1. Introduction

It was two weeks after my three months stay in Sri Lanka when I woke up and walked down the white wooden staircase. On that Sunday morning, the 21st of March, I was welcomed by the delightful fragrance of banana pancakes and espresso that my boyfriend made me. 20 seconds later, the peaceful morning changed dramatically. The radio announced that Sri Lanka was hit by multiple brutal attacks. In Colombo bombs exploded in three churches and four hotels, injuring 500, and killing 257 people. As ethnic tensions between Muslims and Christians have revived after these attacks, a stable and peaceful society might be endangered. On that morning, a bitter paradox of life showed itself: the contrast between me back home, finally reunited with the love of my life, and my dearest friends and acquaintances in Sri Lanka whose lives have been brutally disrupted, could not have been starker nor more heartbreaking.

A week after the attacks, I browsed through photos taken in Sri Lanka. My attention was caught by the signboard at point Pedro (see cover photo). Contradicting the dividing message that speaks from the bomb attacks, the signboard states that Sri Lanka’s strength is its unity in diversity. However, the current societal tensions might raise the question what needs to be done to do just to these words.

As education has the potential to reduce societal tensions and promote peace, this research looks into the relation between education and peace promotion. The research focusses on Sri Lanka, since its diverse and arguably divided post-war society forms a meaningful context to study the role and influence of education on societal relations. This first chapter introduces education as field in which peace promotion can take place. The problem statement is presented, drawing on the potential peace promoting or undermining influence of education on the society. Furthermore, it is shown that contemporary research on the peace promoting potential of education could be complemented with an alternative approach to education. The chapter ends with the formulation of the main and sub-questions addressed in this thesis.

The second chapter provides an overview of Sri Lanka’s historical and political context. Chapter three explains the theoretical foundations on which the research is based.

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Chapter four discusses the methodology, and provides a quality and ethical reflection of the data and research process. The fifth chapter creates insight into the research context and explains Sri Lanka’s education system. Chapter six and seven are the empirical chapters that present the findings in the field. Finally, the eighth chapter answers the main question addressed in this thesis.

1.1 The problem

Education has both destructive and bridging capacities in relation to peace and social cohesion (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Østby & Urdal, 2010). On the one hand, education can enhance intergroup hostility by being “a weapon” in cultural repression, when cultural characteristics of marginalized groups are intentionally kept out of the classroom. Also the content of education programs can be manipulated in favour of the story that benefits the dominant group (Smith Ellison, 2014, p.187). Furthermore, Davies (cited in Smith Ellison, 2014) discusses several forms of reproduction of social and gender inequalities in education, enforcing intergroup hostility, possibly leading to conflict (cited in Smith Ellison, 2014, p.187). In this respect, education can amplify unbalanced power relations, it can perpetuate the dominance of certain groups over others, and it can perpetuate or reinforce the suppression of marginalized groups. In other words, education can create a narrative that establishes or perpetuates a culture of conflict, which raises significant barriers to peace processes (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009, p.557).

On the other hand, education can bridge societal groups, stimulate peace and social cohesion, and overcome a culture of conflict. Peace is potentially stimulated through education by creating intergroup awareness, addressing intergroup inequalities, promoting new power relations and transferring balanced and truthful stories of the past (Smith Ellison, 2014, p.187). Bush and Saltarelli (2000) also show the bridging capacity of education and illustrate how education can enhance intergroup understanding by creating a more tolerant climate that contributes to (mentally) bridge the gap between “us” and “them” (pp.16, 17).

Since education has this bridging potential – the capacity to support intergroup relations and social cohesion – it is essential to unpack what contributes to this bridging potential. As such, this research looks into the role of secondary history education in promoting peace in the post-war context of Sri Lanka. Both the formal curriculum and the space for history teachers to influence and modify the formal curriculum – referred to as
teacher agency – are studied in order to reveal how this interplay influences the peace promoting capacities of secondary history education in Sri Lanka.

1.2 Knowledge gap

The literature on the role of the formal curriculum and teacher agency respectively in peace promotion is comprehensive (Connell, 2012; Smith Ellison, 2014; Novelli, Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2015; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Horner et. al, 2015; Korostelina, 2015; Enright, Knutson, Holter, Baskin & Knutson, 2007; Keddie, 2012). However, the larger part of the literature focusses either on the structure of the formal curriculum or on teacher agency – the space of an actor to manoeuvre in relation to a structure – when looking at peace promotion through education (Lopes Cardozo, 2015, p.6). Less is written about the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency in relation to peace promoting education. As such, the interaction between the structural context and teacher agency might be somewhat overlooked in academic literature. Since this structural context partly shapes how teachers employ their agency and implement the curriculum, the interplay between the curriculum and teacher agency can be essential when looking at peace promotion through education, and needs to be studied more thoroughly (Lopes Cardozo, 2015, p.6; Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p. 427).

Moreover, most academic literature on peacebuilding and education focusses on education in general, instead of on history education (Connell, 2012; Smith Ellison, 2014; Novelli et al., 2015; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Horner et. al, 2015; Enright, Knutson, Holter, Baskin & Knutson, 2007; Keddie, 2012). As history education is essential for the creation of narratives, it partly determines intergroup relations. Since these relations might either contribute to or undermine peace, it is essential to focus on history education specifically (Korostelina, 2015; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009).

Finally, throughout the last ten years, multiple studies have been conducted in Sri Lanka within this field. However, recently the political environment has been subject to increased instability. An example is the passed motion against the appointed government of Mahinda Rajapaksa on the 14th of November 2018 (Chaudhury, 2018). Since then, unrest expanded and the political landscape has been plagued by frequent disturbances (Reuters, 2018a; PTI, 2018; AFP, 2018; Reuters, 2018b). This political instability might impact the experienced agency by history teachers since they might feel pressured to support the incumbent government or the opposition. Therefore, this research might contribute to an
updated and context specific understanding of the role of history education in peace promotion, and the interplay between the curriculum and teacher agency.

1.3 Research questions
Since this research looks into the role of history education in enhancing peace, and into the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency, the main research question is:

How does the interplay between the formal curriculum and secondary history teachers’ agency support or undermine the peace promoting capacities of history education?

As the research looks into the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency related to peace promotion, the first sub-question elaborates on the peace promoting potential of the formal curriculum:

1) How does the formal curriculum support or undermine the peace promoting capacities of history education?

The second sub-questions focusses on the concept teacher agency in order to provide insight into the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency, related to peace promotion. Therefore the second sub-questions is:

2) How does teacher agency in relation to the formal curriculum support or undermine the peace promoting capacities of history education?

The sub-questions are answered in chapter six and seven respectively. Furthermore, the main question is answered in chapter eight.
2. Sri Lanka over the past 515 years: the demographic, historical and political context

In order to elaborate on history education and peace promotion, it is essential to acquire insight into Sri Lanka’s (post-war) context. Therefore, this chapter provides an overview of the demographic, historical and political context of Sri Lanka. This leads up to a brief elaboration on the recent political and societal characteristics of Sri Lanka. Section 3.6 and chapter 5 elaborate in more detail on the characteristics of the education system, creating a comprehensive understanding of the structural context in which the research took place.

Sri Lanka faced a violent period during the civil war between 1983 and 2009 which still impacts relations between societal groups (Abeyratne, 2004; Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017). In order to acquire understanding for the conflict, it is crucial to describe the demography, historical and political transformations the country has been through during the last 515 years.

Demographically, four main ethnic diverse groups can be distinguished. The largest group are the Sinhalese, accounting for approximately 75% of the population and predominantly living in the Southern part of the country. Approximately 11% of the population consists of Sri Lankan Tamils who mostly live in the north. Another ethnic group is the Sri Lankan Moors, living throughout the country and accounting for 9% of the population. Finally, the Indian Tamils who mostly live in Colombo account for approximately 4% of the population. The majority of the Sinhala population is Buddhist, most of the Tamils are Hindu and most Moors are Muslim. Additionally Christianity is found in both Sinhala and Tamil communities throughout the country. Despite this seemingly clear divisions of ethnicity and religion, especially the latter crosses societal groups (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, p.2; Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017, p.78; Johansson, 2018, p.2; Kimutai, 2018).

Due to the limited scope of this research, the historical outline in this thesis does not just to different narratives. I selected a number of historical events that I judged to be crucial. Additionally, I tried to create ethnic and gender diversity amongst the authors. However, most, if not all authors cited enjoyed a Western education. Descriptions of any event will therefore be biased.

When looking at the Sri Lankan historical and political context, two main societal groups can be distinguished. These groups can be identified as Sinhalese and Tamil (Wickramasinghe, 2006, p.108). This historical and political overview starts from 1505 on,
when the Portuguese, Dutch and the British respectively annexed Sri Lanka. Almost until the end of the British domination in 1948, a peaceful coexistence occurred between the Tamil minority, and Sinhalese majority (DeVotta, 2005 p.142). This changed during the last years of British rule, partly because of the institutional changes that were introduced through the ‘divide and rule principle’5. Through this principle, the Tamil minority was politically, socially, economically and educationally favoured over the Sinhalese majority. This changed after the independence when the Sinhalese majority strategically positioned itself in formal state arrangements which eventually led to the (institutional) dominance of Sinhalese culture, religion and language. Moreover, other (ethnic) minorities became severely excluded (Bandarage, 2012; DeVotta; 2005; Abeyratne, 2001). It has been argued that structural violence manifested in institutional ethnic exclusion in educational arrangements, has been one of the root causes that led to the conflict that followed (DeVotta, 2005, pp.142, 143).

In 1949, the Sri Lankan Tamil State Party ITAK was established and aimed for the separation from Sri Lanka (Bandarage, 2012, p.105). From the 1970’s on, tensions between the dominant Sinhalese and excluded Tamils raised rapidly. This led to an increasingly violent confrontation and the formation of several militant groups. In 1983 an armed conflict broke out between the (Sinhalese) state and the most influential militant organization called the “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam” (LTTE, known as Tamil Tigers) (Abeyratne, 2004, pp.5,6). The conflict ended violently in May 2009, when the Sri Lankan state claimed victory and killed nearly the complete command of the LTTE. Approximately 100.000 lives were taken during the war, including a significant number of civil deaths (United Nations, cited in Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017, pp.78,79).

Ever since this “victory” of the Sri Lankan state, the government is Sinhalese dominated and oriented towards the associated Buddhist culture and religion. Moreover, it is argued that the post-colonial politics play an important role in reproducing Sinhalese nationalist sentiments (Rampton, 2011, p.254). Furthermore, politically speaking, the country has never completely stabilized after the conflict. According to Wickramasinghe (cited in Scholtens & Bavinck, 2018), the first post-war period in Sri Lanka can be characterized by an “oppressive stability” where the military controls public institutions. This would result in discomfort and suspicion towards the government, mainly in Tamil dominated areas (Cited in Scholtens & Bavinck, 2018, p.3). Therefore, the research context can, in broad lines, be

5 This principle is used to prevent the formation of disobedient alliances by selectively privilege certain group(s) over others (Dixon, Durrheim, Thomae, Tredoux, Kerr, & Quayle, 2015, p.578).
described as troubled by political and perhaps ethnic tendencies.

This chapter illustrated the demographic, historical and political developments in Sri Lanka over the last 515 years. Furthermore, a brief description of the research context was provided. Throughout the history, Sri Lanka has been characterized by a multiethnic society. Towards the end of the colonial era, tensions between the Sinhalese and Tamil population raised. These tensions remain relevant in the current society, led by a Sinhalese oriented government. The next chapter displays the theoretical framework and the most important concepts used in this thesis. A discussion about peace (promotion) is followed by an elaboration on the relation between education and peace promotion. Furthermore, multiple frameworks are presented that can be used to look at the relation between education and peace promotion.
3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Positive and negative peace

Galtung (1976) assessed the concept peace, and distinguished positive and negative peace. Negative peace includes the *absence* of direct, structural and cultural violence between states, gender, races, classes and families. Positive peace is a necessary addition to think and act upon establishing peace. Positive peace is characterized by the *presence* of economic and political equity, structural reciprocity, equal rights, benefits and dignity (Galtung & Fischer, 2013, p.173).

The distinction between positive and negative peace, can be traced back in academic debates and tendencies about the relation between education and peacebuilding. For example, varying roles are attributed to teachers (and education more general) regarding the contributions that teachers should or can make to positive peace (Horner et. al., 2015, pp.18-32). Furthermore, a positive peace perspective on education gains attention, for example by the creation and expansion of theoretical frameworks such as the 4Rs framework that illustrates how sustainable peace can be fostered through education from a social just perspective (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2017). Additionally, both in the post-war context of Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, a tendency can be recognized towards an increased positive peace promoting approach to education (McGlynn, Niens, Cairns & Hewstone, 2007, 151; Danesh, 2008).

3.2 Peacebuilding and reconciliation

The concept peacebuilding is strongly connected to the concept of positive peace, as peacebuilding is engaged with constructing a sustainable future and fostering harmony, respect, justice and inclusiveness (Fisher, 1993, p.249; Horner et al., 2015, p.10; Parker, 2013, p.6). Furthermore, peacebuilding in education aims to deepen the understanding of structural and root causes of conflict in order to enable an appropriate response to the conflict.

Peacebuilding in education should dedicate attention to differences, and acceptance within and between groups. This requires shared narratives and the elimination of narratives that foster exclusion (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, pp.23,24). Additionally, Davies (cited in Parker, 2013) states that peacebuilding in education aims to (re)build strong relationships between societal groups that respect human rights and challenge inequalities throughout the society. Moreover, critical multicultural education programs are essential to support inclusive
perspectives and reflections on social power structures (Nieto, 2002; Bickmore, 2006; Davies, cited in Parker, 2013, p.6).

Peacebuilding is frequently referred to by a range of (political) actors and institutions such as the UN (Bush, 2000, p.20; Vaux, 2011, pp.32,33; Novelli et. al., 2017, p.15). Consequently, different understandings emerged, making peacebuilding a contested concept (Novelli et. al., 2017, p.16). Therefore, I deliberately chose to not refer to this concept frequently since it might undermine a more cultural and context specific approach to peace promotion. Moreover I think that the concept “building” (implicitly) refers to the idea of a “from the outside engineered society” which does not meet the constructivist ontology that is fundamental to this thesis. Therefore, I refer to peace promotion, or the peace promoting capacities of entities, to indicate positive peace promotion.

Another widely used concept in the literature regarding peace promotion and education, is reconciliation. Reconciliation is considered to be an essential component of peace promotion since it is key to support a sustainable and social just society in conflict affected areas (Novelli et. al., 2017, p.15-17; Bar-Tal, Rosen, 2009, p.558). According to a body of academic literature, successful reconciliation depends on the construction of a shared narrative about what happened during a conflict (Gardner Feldman, 1999; Hayner, 1999; Lederach, 1998; Norval, 1998 cited in Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009, p.558). Furthermore, other scholars argue that reconciliation goes beyond sharing a narrative, and aims for mutual forgiveness and healing for the misdeeds on both sides (Arthur, 1999; Hayner, 1999; Lederach, 1998; Shiver, 1995; Staub, 2000 cited in Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009, p.558). Additionally, the concept reconciliation is included in the 4Rs framework by Novelli et al., (2015) that is discussed in section 3.5. As reconciliation provides an insight into the potential effects of peace promotion in a post-war context, it is an important concept within this research.

3.3 Teacher agency
Research conducted in the context of the culturally, historically, ethnically and linguistically divided Ukraine shows the potential significant role of teachers in promoting peace through the transfer of the nation’s history (Korostelina, 2015, p.224). Also in the post-war context of Northern Ireland, teachers can support peace promotion by fostering forgiveness (Enright et. al., 2007, p.15).

A way in which teachers can exercise this peace promoting role can be explained by
unpacking the concept teacher agency. The theoretical approach of agency is based on the description by Lopes Cardozo (2015) of agency as the space of an actor to manoeuvre in relation to a structure (p.6). The discussion about agency is based on the idea of a dialectic interplay between structure and agency. This interplay shows that teachers are reproducing structures as they adapt and respond to structural contexts, and also transforming these structural contexts through their actions (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.425).

Vongalis-Macrow (2007) identifies three dimensions of transformative agency: obligations, autonomy and authority (p.427). Obligations determine the playing field of teachers, and define the limits and boundaries they face in performing their profession. In a globalizing world, teachers have increased obligations towards student achievements and towards their school. This is (partly) caused by the increased marketization of education: education is increasingly perceived as a product and students as consumers. Government regulations control teachers’ obligations in order to monitor the “delivery of education” and improvement of students’ achievements. Furthermore, these obligations are translated into operational quality assurance measures. This phenomenon is referred to as the technocratic modernization of teachers, and possibly undermines agency (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.431).

Secondly, teachers’ authority is defined as the ability to steer and guide learning. Authority creates space to freely acquire knowledge, teach knowledge, decide on the curriculum, teach critical thinking and set standards and goals. Furthermore, it portrays a teacher as a knowledge specialist and therefore sustains a meaningful role for the teacher that can conduct its profession freely. Authority leads to teachers’ capacity to build and shape change. However, currently teachers are often conveying predefined messages which undermines authority and consequently teacher agency (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.433, 434).

The last dimension is teachers’ autonomy which refers to “the capacity held by teachers to determine and pursue their own interests and make effective their demands”. Autonomy creates the possibility to shape and pursue professional aspirations (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.434). Interestingly, Connell (2014) argues that in the era of neoliberal globalization, higher education is increasingly privatized and standardized, which weakens the autonomy of the workforce (p.214).

As shown by Vongalis-Macrow (2007), teacher agency can influence structures such as the formal curriculum. Therefore, teacher agency is an essential concept when looking at teachers’ ability to influence the implementation of education. Related to the previously
discussed destructive or bridging capacity of education, teacher agency can play a decisive role in influencing the peace promoting capacities of education. The formal curriculum can be influenced through teacher agency which potentially results in emphasizing on topics such as reconciliation. This will most likely enhance the peace promoting capacities of history education (Novelli et. al., 2017; Bar-Tal, Rosen, 2009; Kelman; 2010). However, teacher agency is partly dependent on structural factors that allow or limit the degree to which teachers can employ their agency. Therefore, it is not only teacher agency, but also the formal curriculum that determines the peace promoting capacities of history education. This illustrates the interplay between teacher agency and the formal curriculum.

3.4 A peace promoting school curriculum

The content of the curriculum is essential for the transfer of social values, political ideas and understanding of history. Furthermore, it can deepen social cohesion and recognition (Horner et. al., 2015; Korostelina, 2015; Keddie, 2012). A distinction can be made between the formal and informal curriculum. Leask (2009) defines the formal curriculum as “the sequenced program[me] of teaching and learning activities and experiences organized around defined content areas, topics, and resources, the objectives of which are assessed in various ways [..]. Opposing the formal curriculum, the informal curriculum comprehends all extracurricular activities and non-program based knowledge (p.207).

As part of the formal curriculum, textbooks can be crucial for promoting peace since they potentially support tolerance, peace and reconciliation in post-war context. Furthermore, textbooks, and the formal curriculum more broadly, are partly directive for how and what teachers teach. This is illustrated by the (dialectic) relationship between the formal curriculum and teacher agency as discussed before. The formal curriculum both limits and creates space for teachers to transfer knowledge within the context of the education system. Consequently, the formal curriculum partly determines the extent to which peace promotion through education occurs and which topics are addressed. As such, it is necessary to be conscious of the peace promoting, but also destructive potential of history education, especially since textbooks often fail to deal adequately with concepts that are crucial for peace promotion (UNESCO, 2017, p.220; Horner et. al., 2015, pp,9, 11).

Cunningham developed a framework that shows which characteristics of the curriculum contribute to peace promotion after a civil war (Cunningham cited in Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, p.2). The curriculum should be truth-seeking, and should promote social
cohesion and active citizenship. Truth-seeking refers to a curriculum that is open to sharply different interpretations of the causes and ending of the conflict. It studies recent history and contemporary events. Furthermore it teaches critical thinking and elaborates on different historical interpretations of the conflict (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5).

Social cohesion refers to the willingness of societal actors to cooperate and pursue the transfer of “attitudes of peace and tolerance” and other values that stimulate the creation of national solidarity. The curriculum should focus on education about religious, ethnic and linguistic groups. Furthermore, children need to learn how to cooperate and collectively solve problems. Values such as mutual dignity and respect, sympathy, religious tolerance and community trust should be stimulated (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4-6).

Finally, active citizenship refers to the translation of democratic structures and systems to actual participation. The curriculum should incorporate education on human rights, and political and legal systems at multiple levels (local, national, international). It should teach children how to discuss, debate and express themselves in a variety of ways. Additionally, it should elaborate on democratic values and respecting the rule of law (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.5-7).

Especially truth-seeking is a valuable component of a peace promoting curriculum since a critical perspective is taken into account. Dominant narratives may be contested by considering different causes and endings of the conflict. As such, critical thinking offers space for different interpretations of history that potentially contribute to the promotion of peace. However, critical thinking could also foster tensions since divergent narratives might be conflicting. Therefore, truth-seeking through education could be very complex as teachers might not be able or willing to address diverse or contradictory narratives.

3.5 4Rs framework

The 4Rs framework provides an inclusive analytical framework that shows the key transformations necessary for the promotion of sustainable peace in post-war contexts through a social justice lens (Novelli et al., 2015; Novelli et al., 2017; Cunningham & Ladd, 2018).

The 4Rs framework is an extension of the 3Rs framework by Fraser who identified representation, redistribution and recognition as the critical components that could lead to an equal and social just society. However, the need to be sensitive to peace promotion in the context of conflict affected areas, led to the introduction of the fourth R representing reconciliation (Novelli et al., 2015, pp.15-17). As mentioned before, reconciliation is
potentially essential to support sustainable peace and a social just society in conflict affected areas (Novelli et al., 2017, p.15-17; Bar-Tal, Rosen, 2009, p.558).

The first R, redistribution, refers to social injustice triggered by an unbalanced distribution of resources, exclusive economic structures and unequal opportunities (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12). In order to promote sustainable peace, education should be accessible to anyone, have an egalitarian effect on opportunities and allocate resources fairly (Novelli et al., 2017, p.29).

Secondly, recognition refers to institutional inequality that conveys a cultural hierarchy, frequently leading to limited acknowledgement of differences regarding culture, ethnicity, language, race, gender and age (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12). In order to stimulate recognition, education should promote the acknowledgement of diversity, elaborate on religious and cultural identities, be attentive to diverse languages, and talk about citizenship in the context of state-building (Novelli et al., 2017, p.29). Both social cohesion and truth-seeking relate to recognition since they all require the (formal) recognition of a diffuse society and multiple narratives (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5).

Thirdly, representation relates to equal (democratic) participation in decision-making processes (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12). Education should pay attention to, and encourage the participation in (political) decision-making (within the education system) (Novelli et al., 2017, p.29). Active citizenship is linked to representation since it also stresses the importance of education in elaborating on topics in the realm of state structures and organization (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.5-7).

Finally, reconciliation embodies the acknowledgement of past, present and future challenges to injustice, in order to prevent future conflict. Education should face and transfer truthful stories of the past and stimulate the bridging of communities (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12). Truth-seeking strongly relates to reconciliation, since it requires the acknowledgement of different interpretations of the past and critical reflection (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5).

This 4Rs framework contributes to a comprehensive assessment of the peace promoting capacities of history education. Although the 4Rs might partly overlap in some cases, the framework provides a structured insight into how the curriculum either contributes to, or undermines the peace promoting capacities of history education (Novelli et al. 2015, p.33).
3.6 A synergy: RUDI’s framework

The frameworks provided by Cunningham and Ladd (2018) and Novelli et al. (2015) adequately describe essential components of sustainable peace promoting education. However, a critical review shows that an even more comprehensive approach is possible when studying the peace promoting potential of history education. By combining the concepts and dimensions described, synergies can be created and the characteristics of the peace promoting capacities of history education could be even better understood. The combination of the frameworks resulted in ‘RUDI’s framework, consisting of the dimensions Redistribution, Understanding, Democratic inclusivity and Inclusive history. Figure 1 provides a schematic overview the RUDI framework and illustrates how this thesis approaches the peace promoting capacities of history education.6

Figure 1. RUDI’s framework: peace promoting capacities of history education

The first component, redistribution, is constructed according to the description by Novelli et al., (2015; 2017). The second component, understanding, is a combination of recognition and social cohesion. Understanding combines the more institutional focus on recognition used by Novelli et al. (2015) and the more intergroup or interpersonal focus used by Cunningham and Ladd (2018). Democratic inclusivity is constructed by combining representation and active...
citizenship, hereby recognizing the importance of being informed about the construction of the modern (democratic) state and (inter)national law, feeling represented by the government, and being able to be actively involved in democratic processes. The last component, inclusive history, is constructed by combining reconciliation and truth-seeking. Although these concepts do significantly overlap, the idea of inclusive history includes critical thinking as essential part of reconciliation. The conceptual - and operationalization scheme show the dimensions and indicators used for operationalizing the concepts (appendix 10.1 and 10.2).

3.7 Peace promotion and Sri Lanka’s education system: the current state of affairs

Studies conducted on peace promotion through education in Sri Lanka, by Bush and Saltarelli (2000, p.13) and Balasooriya et. al. (cited in Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p.25) illustrate that Sri Lanka has a history of using educative materials that convey narratives predominantly focussing on the Sinhalese majority. During the 70s and 80s, this resulted in education that undermined an open interpretation of history. Moreover, it prevented the inclusion and representation of diverse societal groups within the education system. Also in more recent years, the Sri Lankan education sector has failed to adequately represent minority societal groups (Fraser, cited in Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015, pp. 62, 63; Gaul cited in UNESCO, 2017, p. 221). As contemporary studies show, the school system can still be characterized by segregation based on ethnicity and religion (Lopes Cardozo, cited in Lopes Cardozo 2008, p.25). Furthermore, it is argued that the top-down structure of the Sri Lankan education system heavily constrains teachers’ possibilities to engage with peace promoting education (Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015, p.65).

Additionally, Cunningham and Ladd (2018) conducted a study on the relation between the school curriculum and peacebuilding. They assessed the presence of attention for truth-seeking, social cohesion and active citizenship in the formal curriculum. The results show that the formal curriculum conveys “accepted facts” which undermines truth-seeking and consequently peacebuilding. Furthermore, the information presented in the curriculum hardly transfers any knowledge about the Tamil or Hindu culture, which illustrates the exclusive character of the curriculum, and would negatively influence social cohesion (pp.16, 18). However, the focus on personal development in terms of leadership, cooperation and problem solving would enhance social cohesion which would be positive to peacebuilding (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, p.18). Finally Cunningham and Ladd found that the attention dedicated to democracy and human rights potentially strengthens students’ active citizenship
which would enhance peacebuilding. Yet, education on this subject would not be thorough which would undermine active citizenship and consequently peacebuilding (2018, pp.18, 19).

This chapter discussed the concepts that form the theoretical foundation of the research. The first two sections elaborated on the potential outcomes of peace promotion. Thereafter, the concept teacher agency was discussed. The two successive sections bridged peace promotion and teacher agency, and elaborated on a peace promoting curriculum. Furthermore, two theoretical approaches to peace promotion were combined, resulting in the new RUDI framework. The final section explained the current position of peace promotion within the Sri Lankan education system according to existing literature. The next chapter discusses the methodology and provides a reflection on the quality of the collected data. Furthermore, the chapter elaborates on ethics and positionality underlying this thesis.
4. Methodology, quality - and ethical reflection, and positionality

This chapter provides insight into the methodology, quality of the data, ethics and positionality that characterizes the research. First, the choice of research methods is explained, hereby also introducing the most important characteristics of the respondents. Thereafter, I elaborate on the sampling strategy, the unit of analysis, and the steps taken in the data analysis. The three last sections include a reflection on the quality of the data, ethical considerations and an elaboration on my positionality as researcher.

4.1 Research methods

Narratives, respondent’s interpretations, perceptions and personal experiences, form the foundation of this research. Therefore, the data collection is primarily based on semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted with secondary and tertiary history teachers. This method – partly motivated by my experience with interviewing, constructivist ontology and interpretative epistemology – allowed me to acquire insight into history teachers’ perspective and role within formal education. The interviews also enabled me to be respondent centered and elaborate on topics brought up by the respondents. Additionally, this method was most favourable when talking about sensitive topics: the dynamic during the interviews determined how and what was discussed. Moreover, the semi-structured interviews permitted flexible time management and adaptation to the respondent’s availability, in order to minimize interruptions in respondents’ time (Bryman, 2012, pp.470, 471).

Out of the total of 26 conducted interviews, 21 interviews with 26 respondents are included in the thesis. Five interviews were conducted with multiple teachers (interview 5, 9, and 15 with two respondents, interview 1 with three respondents). Interview 0*, 17*, 18*, 23* and 32* cover a wide variety of subjects and contribute to my personal understanding of the research context. However, the topics discussed fall out of the scope of the research, and are not incorporated in the data analysis.

Furthermore, the respondents are primarily classified based on ethnic identity. This results in two main groups distinguished in this thesis. The first group, the Sinhalese
The population, is mostly based in and around Colombo\(^7\) in the west, and Matara\(^8\) in the south. The second group, the Tamil population, is predominantly based in and around Jaffna\(^9\) in the north. Figure 2 provides insight into this geographical division, that might be illustrative for the way in which ethnicity relates to how identity groups are physically located throughout the country. However, these geographical regions are by no means homogenous (Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017, p.78; Rampton, 2011, p.256). Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that the ethnicity based distinction of these two groups, fails to reflect the complex cultural context in which the research took place. The highly complex social relations and subsequent (intersectional) inequalities based on identity shaping factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, religion and ethnicity, arguably influence actors’ thoughts, opinions and expressions. This, in turn, most likely affects the data derived from the interviews. Despite the acknowledgement of the influence and importance of the cultural context and (intersectional) inequality in Sri Lanka’s society, the scope of the research does not allow for a more extensive elaboration on this.

Additionally, during my time in the field, I aimed for saturation\(^10\). In practice, narratives conferred by Sinhalese and Tamil teachers appeared to deviate strongly on certain topics. As such, I tried to create a balanced ratio related to the number of Sinhalese and Tamil respondents. Regarding to both respondent groups, it was found that after approximately

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\(^7\) Colombo is the largest city in Sri Lanka, located in the Western province and inhabited by approximately 700,000 people (Kumarage, 2007, pp.2,3; Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012).

\(^8\) Matara is one of the major cities in the Southern province. The most recent numbers published by the Sri Lankan government indicate that the urban population of the Matara district is 96570 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012, p.7).

\(^9\) Jaffna is the capital of the Northern province, inhabited by approximately 60125 people (District Secretariat Jaffna, 2017, p.2-9).

\(^10\) No new insights can be distracted from additional data collection (Bryman, 2012, p.420).
seven or eight interviews, a pattern could be recognized of similar components, concepts and opinions that reoccurred in the respondents’ narratives (fieldwork notes 7-3-19 and 13-3-19). However, it must be acknowledged that the sample size can’t provide an exhaustive reflection of the general opinions and narratives recognized among Sri Lankan history teachers. Consequently, the data is biased and perhaps limited or not generalizable. Furthermore, graphs 1, 2, and 3, and the respondents table (appendix 10.3) provide more information on the number and distribution of interviewees regarding the location, ethnicity and type of education that respondents engaged with.

Additionaly, since I am convinced that language structures thoughts and influences what and how people express themselves, a critical reflection needs to be made on the language used during the interviews. As I don’t speak any local language and did not feel comfortable relying on a translator, the majority of the interviews was conducted in English. This allowed me to directly understand the answers given, rather than being dependent on a translator. However, the decision to (mostly) limit myself to English speaking respondents, considerably impacted the access to respondents. Furthermore, respondents might have felt less
comfortable expressing themselves in a language that is not their mother tongue. This could have influenced their answers. Yet, in four cases, I was given the opportunity to talk to exclusively Sinhala speaking respondents in rural areas\textsuperscript{11}, while being guided by two translators. Despite the language requirement, these respondents are included in the research in order to support saturation and the diversity throughout the sample.

Furthermore, I conducted a content analysis on the formal curriculum, complementing the results derived from the interviews. The combination of the interviews and content analysis creates a more thorough understanding of the dynamics and content of the formal curriculum. Other than the interviews, the content analysis allows for a systematic assessment of how peace promotion and teacher agency can be recognized in the formal curriculum. Furthermore, the analysis provides insight into how the formal curriculum creates or limits teachers’ freedom to employ their agency. In the first part of the content analysis, the RUDI framework is used to assess how peace promotion can be recognized throughout the curriculum. Due to the scope of the research, a selection is made regarding the inclusion of certain sections of the teachers’ guides. This selection is based on the potential relevance of the section\textsuperscript{12}. The second part of the analysis assesses how teacher agency relates to the formal curriculum. This is done by looking at how instructions and prescriptions to approach and use the teachers’ guides, relate to the concept of teacher agency as described by Vonganlis-Macrow (2007).

4.2 Sampling strategy

Due to time and resource constraints, convenience sampling was used in this research. Therefore, only respondents in my network were able to participate. Consequently, the results of this research are only relevant to the specific research context, and generalizations are not appropriate (Bryman, 2012, 418). Furthermore, previous to my departure to Sri Lanka, I established contact with schools, a university and a NGO active in the field of peace promotion and education. These contacts were all located in or around Colombo.

Additionally, I used “snowball sampling” in order to expand the number of respondents, by using the network of previous interviewed respondents and other local

\textsuperscript{11} Respondent 19, 20, 21 and 22.

\textsuperscript{12} Section 6.1 includes a more detailed elaboration on selecting the content that is analyzed.
contacts (Bryman, 2012, p.424). As such, the first key respondents in Colombo supported the expansion of a network throughout the country, allowing me to conduct research in Matara in the south and Jaffna in the north as well. A disadvantage of this sampling strategy is that the respondents are unlikely to represent the diversity of the research population as they (partly) share the same network. Consequently, the data possibly fails to capture different narratives and perceptions, and is therefore most likely biased (Bryman, 2012, p.203). Regarding the content analysis, access to the teachers’ guides was acquired easily, since the documents could be downloaded from the site of the National Institute of Education\textsuperscript{13}.

4.3 Unit of analyses

Regarding the interviews, the unit of analysis is secondary and tertiary history teachers. This choice was based on the fact that Sri Lankan students (mandatorily) receive history education during their secondary education. Therefore, secondary history teachers were considered both a relevant and accessible unit of analysis. Additionally, tertiary history teachers work with students that previously enjoyed secondary history education. Therefore, these teachers proved to have an accurate insight into the information that students received during secondary education.

Furthermore and as mentioned before, I relied on convenience sampling and snowball sampling. As such, I did not identified any requirements for teachers but to be an English speaking, Sri Lankan secondary or tertiary history teacher. Gender, ethnicity, religion, experience in education, age, or any other variable was not directive for the in- or exclusion of respondents in the research. However, considering integrity, it is beneficial to compare interviews with various respondents. Therefore, I monitored the diversity among the respondents and enhanced it when possible by interviewing diverse respondents.

Regarding the content analysis, the teachers’ guides grade six until grade eleven are included. These are all the grades in which history education is a mandatory part of the formal education. As such, a comprehensive insight into the curriculum is created, maintaining coherence and transparency. The teachers’ guides are meant to provide teachers with the necessary information to be “more productive and effective in the classroom” and base their classes on, in combination with textbooks (National Institute of Education, 2014a, 2016a,\textsuperscript{13} Hyperlinks to the documents are provided in the bibliography.)
2017a, 2017b, 2017b, 2016b, p.iii). Additionally, students in these grades are aged 11 to 16. Furthermore, the teachers’ guides are currently nationwide implemented (National Institute of Education, 2014a, 2016a, 2017a, 2017b, 2017b, 2016b). Table 10.4 provides an overview of the samples used.

4.4 Data analysis
The transcripts were coded in four phases using Atlas.ti. First, I familiarized myself with the data by reading the interviews without coding it yet. Secondly, I created open codes based on the information that derived from the interviews. This enabled me to “let the data speak” and be open to new insights. Thirdly, I created selective codes, based on the theory. As such, a connection between data and concepts is maintained (Bryman, 2012, pp.568,569).Fourthly, I compared and combined the codes, creating code groups which resulted in a comprehensive list of code groups that enabled me to identify general tendencies and new findings.
Furthermore, during the last period in the field, I discussed my preliminary findings with several respondents and local partners. This created a moment for feedback and triangulation14. The history teachers’ guides were also analyzed using Atlas.ti, hereby exclusively using selective codes derived from the theory.

4.5 Reflection on the quality: trustworthiness and authenticity
A reflection on the data quality provides insight into how valuable the outcomes of this research might be. Therefore, the quality of the data is assessed based on the concepts “trustworthiness” and “authenticity”. Trustworthiness is related to the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the findings of the research. Furthermore, the concept authenticity relates to the broader political implications and impact of the research (Bryman’s, 2012, p.390).

4.5.1 Trustworthiness; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability
The first element of trustworthiness is credibility, which relates to the accuracy of the representation of reality in the research (Bryman, 2012, p.390). In line with the constructivist nature of this research, I tried to discover teachers’ opinions and feelings during the

14 Refers to the idea of using more than one method or source of data in order to create greater confidence in the findings (Bryman, 2012, p.392).
interviews. This makes “reality” a complicated concept, as the data presents multiple individual realities. However, triangulation\textsuperscript{15} based on respondents and multiple research methods, was used to verify my interpretations. When triangulation was based on respondents, I summarized answers and checked the correctness of my understanding. As such, respondents could review my interpretations and, if necessary, correct or complement them. Triangulation was also based on multiple data collection methods. Complementary to the interviews, the content analysis enabled cross-checking and thickening the findings about the formal curriculum that derived from the interviews. Furthermore, during and towards the end of the fieldwork, I discussed preliminary findings with both a fellow student and several experts in the field. Moreover, the semi-structured interviews allowed the respondents to talk about a wide range of topics that they judged relevant. As such, the respondents could steer the content of the conversation, which kept me open to, rather than looking for confirmation of narratives. This enabled me to limit interference and avoid probing\textsuperscript{16}. Additionally, during the interviews I tried to ask open questions and never suggest answers in order to avoid prompting\textsuperscript{17}.

Regarding transferability – the possibility to transfer findings into other contexts – the contextuality and limited number of interviews might undermine this criterium (Bryman, 2012, p.392). However, certain findings such as the Sri Lankan formal curriculum that fails to adequately represent minority societal groups, or a lack of peace promotion through formal education due to the absence of concepts that elaborate on peace promotion, have been shown in other studies (Fraser, cited in Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015, pp. 62, 63; Gaul cited in UNESCO, 2017, p.221; Horner et. al., 2015, pp,9, 11). This suggests that the research might be (partly) transferable to other contexts.

In order to ensure the dependability of the data, I paid great attention to the traceability of all steps taken during the research project (Bryman, 2012, p.392). Using a research diary allowed me to keep track of reflections and thoughts that possibly influenced (decisions made in) the research. Furthermore the coding process is transparent since all the codes, groups and quotes are traceable\textsuperscript{18}. Regarding the interpretation of the data and results, I tried to remain nuanced and explicit about personal interpretations.

\textsuperscript{15} Cross-checking findings that derived from the research (Bryman, 2012, p.392).
\textsuperscript{16} Intervention by the researcher during an interview (Bryman, 2012, p.223)
\textsuperscript{17} Suggesting answers to questions asked (Bryman, 2012, p.224).
\textsuperscript{18} Due to ethical considerations, these details are not included in the thesis. Requests for data are considered and - if provided – anonymized.
The last component, confirmability, relates to the interference of personal values when conducting research (Bryman, 2012, p.392). As discussed previously, I tried to only ask open questions. This was partly done in order to remain nuanced and open to unexpected narratives. However, occasionally, the content of the interviews provoked personal emotions when sensitive topics were discussed. This resulted in sporadic personal interference. Furthermore, during the coding process, the research questions and my theoretical knowledge influenced the analysis which could enhance confirmability. However, this was countered by initially creating open codes as explained in section 4.4.

4.5.2 Authenticity; fairness and ontological -, educative -, catalytic - and tactical authenticity

Authenticity relates to the broader political implications and impact of the research. The first component, fairness, entails an accurate representation of different views articulated. In general, the biggest difference regarding opinions, was found between Sinhalese and Tamil teachers. In order to fairly reflect the findings, attention was paid to an equal distribution (of the quotes and opinions) of Tamil and Sinhalese respondents (12 and 14 respondents respectively). Additionally, the semi-structured interviews allowed for the articulation of diverse opinions and narratives. Subsequent “deviations” are – if relevant – incorporated in order to provide an inclusive overview of the findings. Moreover, it is self-evident that data is never modified or presented without a suiting context.

Ontological -, educative -, catalytic - and tactical authenticity all relate to the wider political impact of the research. These criteria have an active nature and encourage the researcher to enhance understanding of the social milieu and different societal groups among the members of a social setting. Furthermore, a research should catalyze action and empowerment (Bryman, 2012, p.393). As I intended to learn from the respondents rather than teach them, I did not aim for enhancing Tamil teacher’s understanding for the Sinhalese perspective or vice versa. Consequently, the research does not necessarily create a better understanding regarding the social context or different societal groups. Additionally, catalyzing action was by no means a purpose of the research, since I believe that my lack of nuanced understanding of the delicate local context, disqualifies me to actively engage with interference.
4.6 Ethical reflections

Throughout the research, ethics have been one of my main concerns since I believe that this shows integrity and values of the research(er). Without undermining my personal development and the quality of the work presented, previous to and in the field, I was aware of the limited significance of this master thesis. Therefore, ethically responsible behavior and respondents’ wellbeing were prioritized over the interests of the research at all times. This section elaborates on the ethics of this research, based on Bryman’s four main principles: (no) harm to participants, (lack of) informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman, 2012, p.135). I furthermore, describe ethical challenges I encountered.

According to the first principle, participants should never be harmed in any way. Since I conducted interviews that sometimes included sensitive topics, retraumatization was a potential risk. Therefore, I never probed towards potential sensitive subjects such as the civil war. Furthermore, I meticulously observed the participants’ (body)language, trying to make sure that they felt comfortable during the interview.

Secondly, I provided the respondents with as much information as possible in order for them to make an informed decision about participation in the research (Bryman, 2012, p.138). I did not use informed consent forms since I feared that respondents would not feel comfortable signing a form. However, prior to any interview, I always explained the respondents about myself (personal and academic background), the reason why I was in Sri Lanka, what the purpose of my research was, and why and how I got in touch with them. Previous to and after the interview, I asked whether the respondents had any questions and stressed that questions could always be asked prior to and throughout the interview. Furthermore, both prior to and after recording I asked the respondents if a recorder could be used. Additionally, I listed the contact details of respondents who requested to receive the results. Moreover, I always provided my contact details and explained that respondents could always ask any question and /or “resign” from the research. In case the respondents would request to resign, all the data would instantly be deleted. Resigning never occurred during or after my time in the field. Furthermore, all the respondents verbally accepted to be part of the research and to be recorded.

Thirdly, respondents’ privacy has been one of the main concerns during the fieldwork (Bryman, 2012, p.142). Prior to an interview, I explained that participation was completely

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19 Local and Dutch phone number, and email address.
When respondents agreed upon participation, I asked them if I could record the conversation, thereby explaining the purpose of it. Although no one ever objected, two respondents feared that the record would leak. However, they did not want me to stop recording or to resign from the research. In order to protect the respondents, I guaranteed that I collected and included as little information as possible about the respondents in the research. Furthermore, I chose to exclude information regarding the names of the schools visited, since this would reduce the traceability of the respondents, as several respondent explicitly asked me to be careful regarding their identity given the statements that they made. Another consequence of the deliberate promise of confidentiality and limited collected information about the respondents, is that the possibilities to get in touch with the respondents are in some cases constrained. Especially considering the recent unrest throughout Sri Lanka (as described in the introduction), this feels uncomfortable since sharing my thoughts is not possible in several instances. Furthermore, the lack of respondents’ background information possibly created a distance between the respondents and me, which might have impacted the data. Additionally, it is not possible to take into account personal background, experiences and (specific) age when analyzing the data which might undermine the thoroughness of the data analysis. However, since the respondent’s safety and privacy is prioritized, I fully support the decisions made regarding confidentiality.

Finally, deception occurs when the researcher is not honest about (the purpose of) the research(er) (Bryman, 2012, p.143). Therefore, I have always been transparent and never told anything but the truth. On multiple occasions, I experienced difficulties when respondents asked me to undertake action and improve their situation. I would always show my understanding for their requests, but also explain my limited capabilities to help them in my position as a student.

Supplementary to a careful consideration of ethical conduct, during my time in the field, I tried to give the respondents something in return for their time and information. I distributed Dutch stroopwafels after each interview, and conducted English classes when teachers asked.

4.7 Positionality

As the idea of the “constructive effect” of education suggest, this research is anchored in a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology. I believe that social phenomena and their meanings are constructed, reinforced and changed by social actors and vice versa.
Therefore, this research tries to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2012, pp.28-30). Additionally, I believe that the construction, meaning and perception of education is highly context specific. As such, the research aims to contribute to the creation of a more thorough understanding of the specific context.

Moreover, the complicated nature of the main concepts used (agency and peace), required a multidisciplinary approach. I integrated different disciplines and approaches in order to thicken the theoretical foundation of my research. However, I predominantly used a social justice perspective in order to describe the peace promoting capacities of education. Moreover, attention is dedicated to ethnic and gender diversity of authors included throughout the thesis. Yet, most, if not all authors included, enjoyed a Western education which undermines the diversity.

Conclusively, in Sri Lanka, I was aware of my identity as Western, young, female, middle class student. This influenced how and to whom I had access to, which affected my experiences, the data and consequently the results presented in the research. Furthermore, I was mindful of my appearance and dressed modestly, partly in order to avoid harassments (in public transport). This chapter elaborated on the methodology, quality of the data, ethics and positionality. The next chapter provides an overview of the structural context of Sri Lanka’s education system. The information included is mainly derived from interviews.
5. The structural context: Sri Lanka’s education system

This chapter presents the five most frequently identified elements that shape the structural context of Sri Lanka’s education system, in which history education takes place and teachers work. An understanding of this context is primarily based on information derived from respondents. Figure 3 comprehensively visualizes and summarizes the factors discussed below. Based on the analysis of the interviews, the size of the circles is adjusted to the perceived importance of the contextual factor in shaping the education system.

*Figure 3. Contextual factors*

Regarding the government, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the National Institute of Education (NIE) are the two main national institutes that shape the context of the education system. According to the MoE, their mission is to:

“Develop competent citizens keeping with the global trends through innovative and modern approaches to education leading to efficiency, equity and high quality performance ensuring stakeholder satisfaction” [sic]²⁰.

This quote suggests that the MoE is responsible for the provision of education in accordance with the demands of the current environment. Additionally, the NIE considers itself as the “prime institute [...] responsible for providing leadership for the development of general education”. As such, its primary task is to design and develop curricula and teacher education\(^\text{21}\).

The NIE as well as the MoE appear to be involved in designing and implementing education. However, the NIE can be considered the primarily executive actor, whereas the MoE can be seen as the formal educational authority (Aturupane, Dissanayake, Jayewardene, Shojo & Sonnadara, 2011, p.30). Regarding the respondents\(^\text{22}\), it was striking that these institutes were often used interchangeably or confused when referring to the government (2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14). This might illustrate the imbrication of the institutes. Figure 4 provides a schematic overview of the Sri Lankan education system and illustrates the interconnectedness between the MoE and the NIE.

**Figure 4. Schematic overview of Sri Lankan education system**

![Schematic overview of Sri Lankan education system](Pathmarajah, M. & Ethirveerasingam, N., 2017)

\(^{21}\) [http://nie.lk/geneinfo](http://nie.lk/geneinfo)

\(^{22}\) All respondents are included in this section.
A strong interference of the government (through the MoE/NIE) in the Sri Lankan education system, is an important shaping factor of the structural context in which educators work. A majority of the respondents (17) referred to this matter. As a tertiary history teacher based in Colombo stated: “But here, basically, the politicians make decisions about everything. […]. Whenever we change government, depends on the character of the education minister or the president [sic] (7:3). This illustrates that the government has a strong influence on the structural context that teachers work in.

Moreover, previous research showed that the Sinhalese oriented government influences the curriculum, hereby failing to address history inclusively and open to ethnic diversity (Balasoorriya, Lal Perera & Wijetunge; cited in Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p.25). This is reflected by 11 respondents who argued that the political identity of the government can be recognized in the curriculum because of a strong focus on Sinhalese history (3, 5a, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 24, 25). Also, the content analysis of the history teachers’ guides, mirrors a similar tendency (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b). This will be elaborated on in detail in section 6.2.

Another factor that shapes the structural context is that teachers are expected to meticulously follow the curriculum. More than half of the respondents talked about how the government strongly guides history education by providing the curriculum that needs to be followed (3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 21, 22, 24). In order to guarantee that teachers follow the curriculum, the government monitors the teachers by sending “government officials” to schools. In most cases the officials monitor the implementation of the syllabus by attending classes, checking students notes and schoolbooks used, and reading summaries of lessons conducted (1a, 1b, 2, 5a, 8, 9b, 11, 16).

Another characterizing feature of the structural context is the strong focus on exams, which was mentioned by half of the respondents (3, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15a, 20, 21, 25). Schools, parents and students expect teachers to assist students in obtaining high marks and pass exams. Many teachers highlight that this results in a static approach towards history education: since the exams strongly focus on memorizing rather than understanding, history education is reduced to learning facts. The most striking example of how the exam oriented system influences history education, was provided by a tertiary history professor interviewed.

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23 Respondent 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 9a, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15a, 16, 19, 21, 20, 22, 25.
24 References to quotes provide the respondent’s number and the number of the quotation as coded. For example: 7:3 refers to respondent 7’s third quote.
in Colombo. With her rather academic approach to history, she could not help her 11 year old son preparing for his secondary history exams because she could not merely convey facts (respondent 3).

“She [tutor] asked a question and my son had to answer the precise answer [...] and at the end of the exam he said most of the questions [discussed during tuition] were there, and I managed to answer them very well because she [the tutor] made me memorize it” (3:19).

Furthermore, this exam oriented approach has a strong relationship with the focus on the curriculum. In seven cases, the code “focus on exams” and “focus on curriculum” cooccurred (7, 8, 9, 15, 15a, 20, 21). In most of these cases teachers pointed out how the curriculum was essential to follow in order to prepare students for the exams. This suggest that the focus on exams also supports the great emphasis on the curriculum.

Moreover, a widely articulated structural contextual factor was the pressure for time. One third of the respondents articulated that they don’t have time to talk about much else but the formal curriculum (1b, 1c, 6, 9a, 11, 12, 16, 21). Most teachers explained that the curriculum is dense and that they have to use their time to discuss the topics in the curriculum and prepare the students for exams. This suggest that also time limitations are closely related to the exam oriented approach towards education, that shape the structural context of Sri Lanka’s education system.

A final shaping contextual factor relates to language. Eight respondents expressed that the language used in history education is Sinhala dominated (respondent 3, 5b, 9a, 9b, 10, 12, 16, 24, 25). This domination of the Sinhalese language was in all cases identified as a barrier for non-Sinhala speaking students. A secondary history teacher interviewed in Jaffna, illustrated the implications of the domination of Sinhalese and said:

“Even words in the books are mostly in Sinhala terms. The words are mostly long and difficult to pronounce. Even for the teachers as well” (9a:1).

This chapter provided an overview of the most frequently articulated factors that shape the structural context in which history education takes place. The national government has a strong influence on the content of history education. Furthermore teachers are expected to follow the curriculum in great detail. The exam oriented approach closely relates to the
leading role of the curriculum. Also time constrains result in an incentive for teacher to stick to the curriculum. The next chapter assess the peace promoting potential of the formal curriculum, based on the RUDI framework. Additionally, the section elaborates on if and how teacher agency is recognized throughout the teachers’ guides.
6. The formal curriculum

“A country, a society where human development is the central focus, uses learning as an instrument to do away with the unacceptable identified through the intellect, to create a better world through good practices” [sic]. (National institute of Education, 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.iv).

As the above quote shows, the formal curriculum transfers norms and values, and potentially creates “a better world”. This chapter elaborates on how the Sri Lankan formal history curriculum relates to the peace promoting capacities of history education. In order to systematically assess if and how peace promotion can be recognized in the formal curriculum, the RUDI framework is used in a content analysis on the history teachers’ guides grade six until grade eleven. Before conducting the content analysis, I provide a brief yet thorough overview of the main subjects discussed in the curriculum. The content analysis is partly based on the most frequent occurring topics in the curriculum. As such, not all topics included in the curriculum are part of the content analysis.

Although objectivity is strived for, this assessment is influenced by my interpretation of the content, which is shaped by experiences in the field and personal judgements of what can be considered as peace promoting or undermining. Therefore, the assessment and outcomes reflect a subjective reality and might deviate from other perspectives.

6.1 The content of the formal curriculum: the broad lines

Analyzing frequent occurring subjects in the history curriculum shows that “world history” is most often discussed (National institute of Education, 2014a; 2016a; 2017a; 2017b; 2014b; 2016b). World history includes topics such as general information on the development of mankind, the Renaissance in Europe, and global revolutions and wars. This shows a – perhaps unexpected – Eurocentric focus within “world history”. This Eurocentric focus is reflected in Goonatilake’s study on Eurocentrism amongst Sri Lankan professors. He found that the work of a number of anthropologists affiliated to multiple (international) universities, is characterized by a Eurocentric bias and a confined understanding for Sri Lankan history (reviewed by Bates, 2003, p.189). Most history teachers in this research could not comprehensively answer why this Eurocentric focus is implemented. Some respondents referred to the power of the curriculum and stated that this determines what is taught (2, 5a,
The second most occurring topic in the curriculum is the ancient Sri Lankan history, often reflected in education about the ancient kings of Sri Lanka (National institute of Education, 2014a; 2016a; 2017a; 2017b; 2014b). Also Sri Lanka’s colonial history, traditional culture (National institute of Education, 2017a; 2017b; 2014b; 2016b) and politics (National institute of Education, 2017b; 2014b; 2016b) are popular topics in the curriculum. Additionally, the curriculum includes explanation about “practicalities” related to the development of mankind, ancient civilizations, sources of history, monarchies in Sri Lanka, and the national political and legal system (National institute of Education, 2014a, 2017a, 2014b).

Since this thesis focuses on the Sri Lankan society, only sections related to (traditional) domestic Sri Lankan history are included in the analysis. Therefore sections about the world history and the colonial history are excluded. Furthermore, education about “practicalities” are included when it has direct relevance to the national history of Sri Lanka. Subjects such as agrarian developments and the development of mankind will therefore be excluded.

Before analyzing the curriculum, one final observation needs to be shared. The inclusion of certain topics is arguably just as significant as the exclusion of other topics. Throughout the interviews and teachers’ guides, it was striking to notice that the formal curriculum devotes no attention to Sri Lanka’s recent (civil war) history. Both the interviews and the content analysis show a time jump from the 1970’s until present day history. In doing so, the national history in between is dismissed (respondent 1b, 2, 5a, 6, 7, 10, 19, 20, 21, 22; National Institute of Education, 2014a, 2016a, 2017a, 2017b, 2014b, 2016b). Four (Sinhalese) respondents argued that this gap in history is expedient since including the recent war history potentially incites hatred and intolerance throughout society (respondent 1, 6, 20, 22). However, respondent 4, 5a and 21 expressed that excluding this history undermines a comprehensive understanding of the present society: including the recent history could create an opportunity to learn about diversity and tolerance.

6.2 The formal curriculum: the teachers’ guides

This section presents the results of the content analysis conducted on the history teachers’ guides grade six until eleven, based on the RUDI framework. Figure 5 and 6 visually
summarize how frequently, and which elements of the RUDI framework are arguably promoted (figure 5) or undermined (figure 6) in the analyzed sections of the teachers’ guides. Note that these figures numerically reflect my interpretation of the content of the teachers’ guides. As such, the information presented in the figures is based on the qualitative content analysis, rather than on statistical information. As the content analysis and figure 5 show, it could be argued that the curriculum supports peace promotion, since all the elements of the RUDI framework can be identified throughout the grades. However, a critical assessment of the teachers’ guides’ content shows that elements of the RUDI framework are arguably more often undermined than supported in the curriculum. Comparing figure 5 and 6 reflects this, and shows the relation between peace promotion and undermining per grade, and per element of RUDI’s framework.

Figure 5. Frequencies of supporting RUDI in formal curriculum

Figure 6. Frequencies of undermining RUDI in formal curriculum
Grade 6

Grade six is the first year that students receive history education. The teachers’ guide focusses on creating a fundamental understanding for history. The guide includes five distinct units. This analysis is based on unit one, four, and five \(^{25}\) (National Institute of Education, 2014a).

The first unit explains fundamental principles regarding history. It elaborates on what history is, that history conveys the story of humanity, how information about history is collected (artifacts and other sources), and how time is measured (National Institute of Education, 2014a, p.xiv). Regarding time measurement, several methods and (culturally dependent) perspectives on time measurement are included. In doing so, the guide elaborates on the Christian, Buddhist, Shaka (Hindu) and Hijra (Islamic) era (National Institute of Education, 2014a, p.4). The inclusion of different perspectives on time measurement linked to a range of cultures, acknowledges the relevance of diverse interpretations of time.

Additionally, it could be argued that the discussion of time provides a medium to introduce students to a diversity of cultures/religions, which could support solidarity among the members of different cultural/religious groups. According to Cunningham and Ladd (2018) incorporating this diversity possibly promotes social cohesion (pp.4, 5). As the element understanding of the RUDI framework is partly based on social cohesion, the promotion of social cohesion supports understanding. Furthermore, the elaboration on time acknowledges different approaches to time that existed throughout history. As Novelli et al. (2015) describe, acknowledgement of the past contributes to reconciliation (p.12). As reconciliation is part of the element inclusive history of the RUDI framework, the acknowledgement of different approaches towards history potentially supports an inclusive image of history.

The fourth unit is the first unit that elaborates on Sri Lankan history. It discusses the development and geographical distribution of early settlements (National Institute of Education, 2014a, pp.21, 22). It is repeatedly mentioned that the first settlements could be found in the Southern part of the country (National Institute of Education, 2014a, p.21). Since this is where the Sinhalese are mostly located, this might contribute to legitimize a claim regarding the right to the country that the Sinhalese would have (Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017, p.78). The legitimization of this claim, in turn, might disqualify the Tamils’ ancient history. According to Cunningham and Ladd (2018, pp.4, 5) this might degrade national solidarity, tolerance and eventually social cohesion. As social cohesion is a part of

\(^{25}\) This decision is based on the argumentation provided in the third paragraph of section 6.1.
understanding as incorporated in RUDI’s framework, it can be argued that disqualifying the Tamil history, undermines understanding. Moreover, as the Tamil history is not recognized, reconciliation – as part of inclusive history in the RUDI framework – is threatened, which might undermine RUDI’s element inclusive history (Novelli et al., 2015, p.12).

The fifth unit elaborates more extensively on the development of the Sri Lankan history, based on an overview of seven great kings (Pandukabhaya, Devanampiya Tissa, Dutugamunu, Valagamba, Vasabha, Mahasen and Dhatusena). The guide elaborates on the personal lives, the administrations and achievements of the kings. One of the learning outcomes of the unit is that it explains the “greatness” of the kings (National Institute of Education, 2014a, p.24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 37). In first instance, this overview of the kings might provide a collective experienced sense of (pride for) the shared past. However, research on the ethnic and religious background of the kings, shows that all kings included in this section can be identified as Buddhist and/or Sinhalese kings (Coningham, 1995, pp. 223, 238; Liyanarachchi, 2009, p.104; Munson, 2005, p.225;p. Wijesinghe, 2018, p.12; Santacitto & Aphakaro,2018, p.35; de Silva Wijeyeratne, 2007, p.165). Additionally, all the kings are attached to the Anuradhapura kingdom, which has been a large and long standing Sinhalese kingdom (Wagalawatta, Bebermeier, Knitter, Kohlmeyer & Schütt, 2015, p.48).

Moreover, it is striking that along the introduction of king Devanampiya, special attention is dedicated to the introduction, establishment and contributions of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The guide requires teachers to assess students on their ability to “specify and appreciate the contributions inherited by Buddhism” (National Institute for Education, 2014a, p. 28). Figure 7 strikingly illustrates this focus on Buddhism and presents the frequencies of words included in the teachers’ guides related to either Buddhism, Hinduism and the Islam. As Buddhism is strongly connected to the Sinhalese culture and to the Sri Lankan state, elaborating on Buddhism and almost exclusively incorporating Sinhalese and/or Buddhist kings in the teachers’ guides, creates a bias and inaccurately reflects the cultural diversity that characterizes Sri Lanka’s society (DeVotta, 2007, p.vii; de Silva Wijeyeratne, 2007, p.165). Yet, it must be noted that figure 7 reflects how often the words “Buddhism, Buddhist, Hinduism, Hinduist Islam and Muslim” occur throughout the analyzed teachers’ guides. As other curriculum shaping materials (like textbooks) are not included, the figure might not accurately represent the in- or exclusion of these words and related religions and cultures throughout the curriculum. Moreover, the figure only focuses on a range of words, rather than including wider religious and cultural expressions. Therefore, the figure does not provide
an exhaustive reflection of (the lack of) religious and/or cultural diversity within the curriculum.

Figure 7. Frequencies of the articulation of religion related words

As grade six is often impervious to cultural and religious diversity, it might weaken recognition as described by Novelli et al., and social cohesion as described by Cunningham and Ladd (2015, p.12; 2018, pp.4,5). As these two concepts are as embodied in RUDI’s element understanding, it could be argued that the grade – overall – undermines understanding. Additionally, the one sided story of the past that is presented, might undermine inclusive history since the curriculum does not acknowledge diverse narratives about the historical development of Sri Lanka. According to Novelli et al. (2015, p.12) and Cunningham and Ladd (2018, pp.4, 5), this would be necessary to support reconciliation and truth-seeking, the concepts that found inclusive history. These findings are reflected when comparing figure 5 and 6. This illustrates that the frequencies of “potentially undermining”, outweigh the frequencies of “potentially supporting” understanding and inclusive history.

Grade 7
Similar to grade six, grade seven includes five units. The analysis includes unit two, three and four\textsuperscript{26}. Like grade six, grade seven elaborates on the great kings of Sri Lanka that ruled during the establishment of the Anuradhapura kingdom. In unit two, the guide focusses on the Manavamma Royal Dynasty, aiming to “\textit{Demonstrate the greatness of the Manavamma

\textsuperscript{26}This decision is based on the argumentation provided in the third paragraph of section 6.1.
“kings” (National Institute of Education, 2016a, p.12). Subsequently, the guide incorporates three sections (unit two, three and four) that discuss the personal lives, personalities and achievements of king Vijayabahu the great, Parakramabahu the great, and King Nissankamalla of the Polonnaruwa kingdom (National Institute of Education, 2016a, pp.17-25).

Before focussing on king Vijayabahu, unit two, briefly illustrates how the former kings protected “the national status” and how they “approached their objectives with unfailing courage” (National Institute of Education, 2016a, p.17). These specific words carry a very positive attitude regarding the kings. Furthermore, the guide elaborates on king Vijayabahu, and explains achievements related to his war campaigns, contributions to the practice of Buddhism, and social welfare. Additionally, a list is provided with examples of actions and character traits of king Vijayabahu that students can learned from (National Institute of Education, 2016a, p.18). Unit four elaborates on the greatness of king Parakramabahu the great and Nissankamalla. Accordingly, their personal histories, qualities and contributions to the society are discussed (National Institute of Education, 2016a, pp.21-24).

The kings incorporated in grade seven are all associated to the Polonnaruwa kingdom. This kingdom can be identified as the second Sinhalese Buddhist kingdom of Sri Lanka, after the Anuradhapura kingdom (de Silva Wijeyeratne, 2007, p.172; De Silva, N., & Ranathunga, 2015, pp.2,3). Consequently, all the kings discusses in grade six and seven are kings associated with the Buddhist/Sinhalese culture (Wisumperuma, 2012, p.19; Obeyesekere, 2006, p.157). It could be argued that the combination of this Sinhalese and/or Buddhist dominated history, and the positive narrative, significantly influence students’ perception on history. Also stating that these kings protected the national status, implicitly creates a link between these Sinhalese Buddhist kings and a wider national identity. Similar to grade six, grade seven seems to create a biased narrative of history, that primarily focusses on Sinhalese Buddhists. Furthermore, the exclusive attention to the achievements of these Sinhalese/Buddhist kings, rather than for example Tamil kings, might transfer a narrative that allows little space for achievements of any other identity group. Therefore it could be argued that this section conveys a message that creates a (cultural) hierarchy between Sinhalese Buddhist and ‘the rest’. As both Novelli et al., (2015, p.12) and Cunningham and Ladd (2018, pp.4, 5) illustrate, this potentially strengthens inequality and deteriorates national solidarity and the inclusion of a divers and comprehensive review of history. Discussing these kings
therefore might undermine both RUDI’s elements understanding and inclusive history.

Unit three elaborates on the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka and explains that Sri Lanka possesses “a strong national heritage” and that Sri Lankans are “owners of a very proud past”. The guide aims for increased awareness and protection of the national heritage amongst the students (National Institute of Education, 2016a, p.26). The guide focusses on the six world heritages of Sri Lanka. These include the cities Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy, the cave temples in Dambulla, Sigiriya rock and Fort Galle (National Institute of Education, 2016a, pp.27, 28). Except for the Galle Fort (which is colonial heritage), all heritages are associated with Buddhism and/or the Sinhalese culture (Jayasena, 2006, p.114; de Silva Wijeyeratne, 2007, p.172; De Silva, N., & Ranathunga, 2015, pp.2,3; Wagalawatta, Bebermeier, Knitter, Kohlmeyer & Schütt, 2015, p.48; Obeyesekere, 2006, p.157, Katz, 2003, pp.27,28; p. Coningham, 2002, p.76). Similar to the history of the Sri Lankan kings, this focus on the Sinhalese or Buddhist culture, excludes the discussion of cultural or religious expressions that deviate from the Sinhalese/Buddhist culture. Especially when the guide talks about Sri Lankans as “owners of a very proud past”, it could be argued that the Sinhalese or Buddhist culture is imposed on Sri Lankan students. Therefore, discussing the national heritage, does not reflect Sri Lanka’s cultural diversity and rich history. This possibly diminishes social cohesion, the recognition of diversity, and reconciliation. This potentially undermines the RUDI elements understanding and inclusive history, as similarly argued by Novelli et al. (2015, p.12) and Cunningham and Ladd (2018, pp.4, 5).

The fourth unit is called “later ruling centers” and incorporates information on the development and rulers of Sri Lanka after the fall of the Polonnaruwa kingdom (National Institute of Education, 2016a, p.31). Explanations regarding the shift of ruling centers and the “activities of the great rulers” are presented. Comparable to the units previously presented, a strong focus on Buddhism and ruling centers associated with the Sinhalese culture can be identified (National Institute of Education, 2016a, pp.31-33). Elaboration on the tooth relic – which can be considered the most sacred Buddha relic – illustrates this focus (National Institute for Education, 2016a, p.32; Wijesuriya, 2000, p.99). Yet, the section also includes the development of the Jaffna kingdom when discussing later ruling centers. Although this is the only center that is stressed to be regional rather than central (which perhaps weakens the perceived significance of the kingdom), a Tamil king is included in the discussion (National Institute for Education, 2016a, p.33; Ali, 2004, p.229). Despite the information provided on a Tamil ruling center and king is limited, it does more just to acknowledging the past and
reconciliation than previous sections, which might support an inclusive history. This is in line with the argument presented by Novelli et al. (2015, p.12). Moreover, according to Cunningham and Ladd, acknowledging the past could allow for more solidarity among different identity groups which fosters social cohesion (2018, pp.4, 5). As such, the inclusion of the Tamil king, potentially also contributes to the RUDI element understanding. Both the peace promoting and undermining characteristics of this grade are illustrated by figure 5 and 6, as both “potentially supporting” and “potentially undermining” understanding and inclusive history are recognized. However, the grade more often potentially undermines both understanding and inclusive history.

Grade 8

Like grade six and seven, grade eight also consist of five units. This analysis includes unit one and two. The first unit aims for “[...] an understanding about these [cultural and technological] creative works which indicate an identity of the country”. The works discussed are categorized as religious buildings, non-religious buildings and creative artworks. Interesting is that in the category religious buildings, Bodhi ghara and Chetiya gara are explicitly mentioned as examples. In contrast to other religious buildings mentioned (such as meditation halls and alms houses) Bodhi ghara and Chetiya gara, are exclusively relevant to Buddhism (National Institute of Education, 2017a, p.8; Rashid, 2007, p.9; Wickremeratne, 2012, p.xvi).

Furthermore, an assignment provided by the teachers’ guide states that students should collect information about pieces of art that belong to the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods (Figure 8) (National Institute of Education, 2017a, pp.9, 10). As previously discussed, during these periods, Sinhalese Buddhist kings ruled. Therefore, a strong focus on Sinhalese and/or Buddhist culture can be recognized again. No specific attention is dedicated to any form of art related to any other identity group. The lack of attention to religious and cultural diversity (also identified in grade six and seven) might contribute to the creation of a hierarchy based on cultures that could enforce inequality and intolerance. Additionally, the section does not recognize the cultural and religious diversity of Sri Lanka’s past. As theory illustrates, this reduced both recognition and social cohesion, and reconciliation and truth-seeking. Therefore, and in line with Novelli et al. (2015, p.12), and Cunningham and Ladd

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27 This decision is based on the argumentation provided in the third paragraph of section 6.1.
(2018, p.4, 5), the RUDI elements understanding, and inclusive history, are arguably undermined.

Figure 8. Fragment of teachers’ guide grade eight (2016a, p.9).

The second unit elaborates on the Kandy kingdom and starts with an overview of the rise, development and fall of the kingdom under different rulers. The unit aims to teach students to “protect the national heritages and appreciate the greatness of Sri Lankan kings” (National Institute for Education, 2017a, p.11). After the general overview of the Kandy kingdom, the teachers’ guide zooms in on the rise, fall, achievements, wars, and political developments of king Vimaladharmasuriya I, Senerat, Rajasimha II, the Nayakkar Dynast and king Sri Vickrama Rajasimha (National Institute of Education, 2017a, pp.12,13). Apart from the Nayakkar Dynasty, these kings can be classified as Sinhalese kings (Ranthunga, 2016, p.201). This illustrates that the main focus in this section is on Sinhalese kings. This focus seems to be a recurrent theme through the teachers’ guides, which seemingly reinforces structural inequality based on cultural characteristics. Moreover, it does not allow for the inclusion of different perspectives on the past. Therefore the curriculum arguably fails to comprehensively reflect Sri Lanka’s history, which undermines peace promotion through understanding and inclusive history. Similarly, Novelli et al., argue that recognition (part understanding) and reconciliation (part inclusive history) are essential to peace promotion (2015, p.12). Moreover, this reflects Cunningham and Ladd’s argument who illustrate that peace promotion might be flawed by a lack of social cohesion (part of understanding) and truth-seeking (part of inclusive history) (2018, pp.4, 5).

However, this unit incorporates information about the Nayakkar Dynasty that can be characterized by a very different cultural and ethnical background compared to the Sinhalese
kings. Historically close ties and alliances between the Nayakkar Dynasty and South Indian families resulted in the introduction and adaptation of Tamil culture into the Kandy kingdom (Ranthunga, 2016, p.205). Despite the attention for this Tamil dynasty in the guide, it is striking that no individual Nayakkar king is discussed. Especially since Sinhalese kings are individually discussed. Therefore it could be argued that the inclusion of the Tamil dynasty does contribute to the acknowledgement of the cultural diversity within the Kandy kingdom. This potentially supports the notion of a shared diverse past which in turn might enhance solidarity and create a more accurate reflection of Sri Lanka’s development, and support the promotion of understanding and inclusive history (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4, 5; Novelli et al., 2015, p.12). Yet, the elaboration on Tamil dynasties in the curriculum is subordinate to elaboration on Sinhalese dynasties. Therefore, the inclusion of information about the Tamil heritage might not realize its full potential considering promoting understanding and reflecting an inclusive history.

Furthermore, the teachers’ guide elaborates on architecture, arts and religion to create an understanding of “the national identity depicted in [...] cultural information of the Kandyan Kingdom” (National Institute of Education, 2017a, p.16). Special attention is dedicated to religious buildings, and the teachers’ guide prescribes to elaborate on the Dalada Maligava (knows as the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic), Ambakke devalaya, Lankathilaka Viharaya and Hindu Devala. The Dalada Maligava and Lankathilaka Viharaya are Buddhist temples (Rahrig & Luib 2017, p.229; De Silva, 2017, p.232). However, the Ambakke deyalaya is a unique temple that combines both Hinduist and Buddhist features. Additionally, the main god worshipped in this hybrid temple is a Hindu god which makes the temple perhaps more Hinduist oriented (Senarath Gamage, 2018, p.1). Also Hindu Devala are discusses. These hybrid shrines combine both Buddhist and Hinduist elements. As such, the architecture that is included in this section discusses buildings both relevant to Buddhists and Hindus. Therefore the religious diversity of Sri Lanka is somewhat reflected in the curriculum. However, the Hinduist religious buildings included in the guide, don’t have an exclusive Hinduist nature which might bias the overview of Hindu buildings. Strikingly, other religious buildings that represent other religious expressions than Buddhism and Hinduism (such as churches and mosques) are not included. Therefore, the elaboration on religious buildings does acknowledge some diversity in the Sri Lankan society, but fails to incorporate less dominant religious expressions. This might show a lack of solidarity and tolerance in the curriculum. As such, and in accordance with the arguments presented by Cunningham and Ladd (2018, pp.4,
and Novelli et al. (2015, p.12), this section could have been more inclusive to religious (and cultural) diversity in order to adequately enhance RUDI’s elements understanding and inclusive history.

Finally, unit two elaborates on religion. In contrast to the discussion of art, Sri Lankan’s religious diversity is reflected more adequately in the guide by including a section on Buddhism, Hinduism and the Islam respectively. Yet, Christianity is not included. Also the order in which the religions are discussed might implicitly create a hierarchy and frame one religion as more important than the other (National Institute of Education, 2016a, p.16). This section potentially fosters understanding by acknowledging diversity, incorporating diverse religious groups, and supporting solidarity and tolerance (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5; Novelli et al., 2015, p.12). However, peace promotion could have been more comprehensive by including Christianity and being sensitive to an equal distribution of information about the different religions. Moreover, the above described content and dynamics, might provide insight into potential ways in which religious intolerance could be nourished. Perhaps this intolerance was shown during the recent attacks on Christian churches, and subsequent repercussions that targeted Muslims after Easter Sunday 2019. A lack of religious and cultural diversity, might undermine the recognized potential of RUDI’s elements understanding and inclusive history. This is reflected in comparing figure 5 and 6.

Grade 9

The ninth grade consist of six units. Unit three, five and six are included in the analysis (National Institute of Education, 2017b, pp.xvi-xx).

The third unit explains how Buddhist, Hindus and Muslims responded to the Christian missionary activities of the colonizers. The Christian faith is depicted as a foreign religion and it is said that missionaries practiced “propaganda activities”. Furthermore it is explained that Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims responded to these “propaganda activities [...] to preserve the indigenous culture”. The main aim of the unit is to show that indigenous culture should be protected, hereby praising the leaders who strived to do so (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.9). The unit furthermore shows strategies used by Buddhist, Hinduist and Muslim movements to protect their cultural heritage (National Institute of Education, 2017b, pp.9,10). Since this unit includes Buddhism, Hinduism and the Islam as indigenous religion to

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29 This decision is based on the argumentation provided in the third paragraph of section 6.1.
Sri Lanka, it contributes to the acknowledgement of diversity and incorporation of multiple religions into the Sri Lankan culture, which might foster recognition and reconciliation (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12). It furthermore recognizes that throughout the Sri Lankan history, multiple religions have been represented in the society, which arguably contributes to social cohesion (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5). Therefore the unit potentially supports understanding and inclusive history. However, the Christian religion is explicitly distanced, perhaps even alienated from the Sri Lankan culture (National Institute of Education, 2017b, pp.9-11). This arguably creates a hierarchy based on religion which might diminish tolerance and solidarity. Furthermore, Christianity is not reflected as an integrated part of the religious development of Sri Lanka, which undermines the acknowledgement of the relevance of the Christian tradition in Sri Lanka. Therefore both understanding and inclusive history might also be undermined in this section (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12; Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5). Additionally, the distribution of information provided about the revival of Buddhist, Hinduist and Muslim movements could be considered skewed. Respectively five, three and two bullet points are included regarding Buddhist, Hinduist and Muslim movements (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.11). This indicates a stronger emphasis on Buddhism, which could lead to the (re)enforcement of a religious hierarchy that undermines intergroup understanding and reconciliation, as similarly argued by Novelli et al. (2015, p.12).

The fifth unit elaborates on constitutional reforms and the Sri Lankan independence movement. One of the main objectives is to “safeguard the democracy of the country [...]” by examining the development of the parliamentary system (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.17). The section shows how resistance against the colonizer eventually led to increased power to the people (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.18). Furthermore, the guide elaborates on how elections, majority votes and political representation by (and of) Sri Lankans were gradually introduced (National Institute of Education, 2017b, pp.18, 19). The unit explains how a Sri Lankan constitution was formed and how the national political and legal systems function (National Institute of Education, 2017b, pp.19, 20). Enhancing students’ knowledge of national institutions, democracy, and the juridical system, arguably contributes to peace promotion through democratic inclusivity. However, the explanation presented has a passive nature. This is reflected by multiple assignments that require students to complete tables and name facts (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.20). Figure 9 provides an assignment that illustrates this passive character. Furthermore, the teachers’ guide lacks assignments that support the development of skills in the realm of active citizenship and
practicing politics such as listening an debating. Therefore, students are not taught how to (develop skills to) actively engage with concepts like the legal system, politics and democracy. Reflected in the argument by Cunningham and Ladd (2018) about active citizenship, the lack of education on these subjects might undermine the development of competencies and an active attitude towards societal engagement, which might flaw democratic inclusivity (pp.5-7). Moreover, and in line with Novelli et al. (2017) the nature of education on these subjects might diminish representation, as it could weaken students’ (future) participation in decision-making processes (p.29). This, in turn, might also undermine the element democratic inclusivity.

The sixth unit continuous with an explanation of national politics and illustrates how a parliamentary democracy was installed. It furthermore discusses the governments in power after independence, and elaborates on significant general elections. The unit’s objective is to illustrate Sri Lankans’ development since independence. It furthermore encourages participation in the national democracy (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.23). Additionally, information is provided on political and legal systems, political participation, representation and respecting the juridical system. As such, the curriculum does include education on the most fundamental principles of a democracy, and even encourages students to participate in the democracy. However – and similar to the fifth section – education on political and legal systems and principles is passive natured, and does not allow for the development of actual skills (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.23-26). Again, the nature of the information about state structures and organization – characterized by a lack of engagement, and skill development – might flaw the promotion of democratic inclusivity (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12; Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5).
Furthermore, the unit provides a list with three “significant activities” of the second government. One of these activities is “installing Sinhala as official national language” (National Institute of Education, 2017b, p.24). Framing the installation of Sinhala as national language as a significant activity, might imply a positive attitude towards this linguistic tradition. It could be argued that this undermines the acknowledgement of the significance of the diverse linguistic traditions in Sri Lanka. As Novelli et al., (2015) illustrate, this might enhance the construction of a cultural hierarchy which might undermine recognition and consequently understanding (p.12). Figure 5 and 6 visualize these findings and show that both understanding and democratic inclusivity are potentially supported, but more often potentially undermined.

Grade 10
The tenth grade is the most extensive grade and contains ten units (National Institute of Education, 2014b, p.xiv-xx). This analysis focusses on unit one, four and six. The first unit elaborates on historical sources and aims for the “development of critical thinking through the study of sources that help to build up history” (National Institute of Education, 2014b, p.1). The guide illustrates that multiple literal sources can be used to study the past of Sri Lanka.

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30 This decision is based on the argumentation provided in the third paragraph of section 6.1.
Furthermore it is stated that there are multiple reasons to write sources and that these sources “construct and build up” history (National Institute of Education, 2014b, p.1). This implies the acknowledgement of the subjectivity of historical narratives, which might open the door to different narratives of the past. In line with both Novelli et al. (2015, p.12) and Cunningham and Ladd (2018, pp.4,5), this could support reconciliation and truth-seeking and therefore enhance inclusive history. Furthermore, it is explained that studying history is relevant in order to understand the present through the past, respect other cultures, tolerate other views, build up national identity and promote critical thinking (National Institute of Education, 2014b, p.2). These statements pose great potential to enforce both understanding and inclusive history as equality, tolerance, solidarity, acknowledgement of the past, and critical thinking are promoted (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12; Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5). However, the brief and perhaps laconic way in which these terms are used, might undermine their peace promoting potential.

In unit four, the topics cultural and ethnic coexistence in ancient Sri Lanka are incorporated. Regarding religion, it is mentioned that ancient Sri Lanka was a Buddhist society. However, the teachers’ guide also expects the teachers to elaborate on religious diversity and include “other religions”. The guide does not specify which religions should be included. This illustrates both the recurrent focus on Buddhism, as well as the aim to teach about religious diversity. Therefore, this section is hard to classify, and seems to potentially both foster social cohesion as well as undermine recognition (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12; Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5). Consequently, RUDI’s element understanding, captured by recognition and social cohesion, might be supported as well as undermined.

Furthermore, linguistic diversity is reflected in the curriculum by elaborating on literature in multiple languages (Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhalese) (National Institute of Education, 2014b, p.12). According to Novelli et al. (2015, p.12) and Novelli et al., (2017, p.29) the acknowledgement of linguistic diversity supports recognition. As such, this might support understanding. Moreover, it acknowledges the historical linguistic development and diversity of Sri Lanka’s past which might supports truth-seeking and reconciliation, potentially enhancing inclusive history (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5; Novelli et al. 2015, p.12).

Regarding ethnic coexistence, it is explained that Sri Lanka was recognized by a plural society where various societal groups lived together. Interestingly enough, Buddhist are the only religious group that is explicitly referred to (National Institute of Education, 2014b, p.12). Again the exclusive or uneven distribution of attention devoted to Buddhism can be
identified. This possibly undermines the notion of Sri Lanka’s cultural and/or religious diverse past, which would undermine inclusive history. Moreover, in the context of “ethnic coexistence” the information provided might not create an accurate reflection of the ethnic coexistence that once used to characterize Sri Lanka’s society (DeVotta, 2005 p.142). This might undermine reconciliation and thus an inclusive history (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12).

Unit six elaborates on the relevance of historical knowledge for the present day society and relates this to state polity. In this context, the relevance of laws and the system of courts are explained. Furthermore, information is provided on the fundamental (philosophical) principles of the legal system, defined as protection and punishment (National Institute of Education, 2014b, pp.17, 18). Although this section does elaborate on information related to state structures and organization, it does so by transferring information, rather than engaging with (interactive) education on active citizenship and skills such as debating, listening and expressing oneself. Therefore, a similar tendency can be recognized to unit five and six in grade nine. As Cunningham and Ladd (2018) illustrate, the lack of skill development and engagement with active citizenship, undermines the potential for democratic inclusivity (pp.4, 5). Additionally, the rather passive approach to state structures and organizations perhaps undermines students’ (future) participation in (school based) decision-making processes which might undermine representation, and consequently democratic inclusivity (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12). Comparing figure 5 and 6 shows that grade ten, potentially promotes understanding relatively frequently throughout the units analyzed. Moreover, it is the first and only grade where potentially promoting understanding occurs more often than potentially undermining it. Yet, the figures also show that this peace promoting potential might be skewed, as an inclusive history is more frequently potentially undermined than - supported.

Grade 11
Grade eleven contains eight units. This analysis focusses on unit three and six31 (National Institute of Education, 2016b, pp. xiv-xix). Similar to grade nine, grade eleven includes a unit about the “religious revival” or “awakening” of Sri Lankan religion, as a reaction to the missionary practices. The unit aims for students’ appreciation of the “[..] leaders who protect the Sri Lanka tradition and culture” (National Institute of Education, 2016, p.16b). Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam are considered to be the traditional religion. Since 1,5 million

31 This decision is based on the argumentation provided in the third paragraph of section 6.1.
Sri Lankans (approximately 7% of the total population) consider themselves Christian, it could be argued that talking about “Sri Lanka tradition and culture” and not incorporating Christianity into this discussion, undermines the acknowledgement of diversity and significance of Christianity to the Sri Lankan society, which would undermine understanding (Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, p.2; Novelli et al., 2015, p.12).

Despite the division between Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, the guide acknowledges religious diversity as congenital to the Sri Lankan culture which could support understanding. Yet, the guide stresses “that the Buddhist revival [...] was the most reputable among these”. Additionally, an explanation follows regarding the revival of the three religions. Two full pages are dedicated to the Buddhist revival, where the Hindu and Islam revival are explained on half a page each (National Institute of Education, 2016b, pp.16-20). The differences in length are explained by the number of examples and details provided about the matters discussed. Moreover, only regarding the Buddhist movement, the guide includes information about methods to protect “indigenous sacred places”, and on the movement’s “contributions to the society”. This illustrates a strong focus on Buddhism in grade eleven, which shows unbalanced attention to Buddhism throughout the whole curriculum (National Institute of Education, 2014a, 2014b; 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b). Consequently, it can be argued that this (institutional) inequality creates a hierarchy between Buddhism an “the rest” which might negatively impact religious and cultural solidarity and tolerance. In line with the argument by Cunningham and Ladd (2018), this might undermine social cohesion, which – according to the RUDI framework – undermines understanding (pp.5-7). Moreover, the structural focus on Buddhism arguably does no justice to the religious and cultural diverse history of Sri Lanka. According to Novelli et al., this might threat reconciliation which would consequently undermine inclusive history (2015, p.12).

Unit six elaborates on the development of state polity since independence. The guide focusses on Sri Lanka’s political system and provides explanations about the establishment of the Sri Lankan government and constitutional reforms (National Institute of Education, 2016b, p.31). The unit leads up to an elaboration on the current political and legislative system (National Institute of Education, 2016b, pp.31, 32). Similar to unit five and six of grade nine, and unit six of grade ten, this unit elaborates on national political institutions and the functioning of the legislation. In doing so, the unit potentially supports democratic inclusivity. However the guide – again – provides this information in a way that does not support students to be “an active citizen” or enhance skills related to debating and expressing.
This possibly undermines active citizenship and (future) participation in decision-making processes (Novelli et al. 2015, p.12; Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.5-7). Consequently, this might undermine the element democratic inclusivity of the RUDI framework. Lastly, the section (uniquely) mentions the importance of the perpetuation of nationwide free education. This illustrates that education is – in principle – accessible to anyone, which demonstrates the redistributive capacity of education (Novelli et al., 2017, p.29). Again, the potential for peace promotion is present as highlighted by figure 5. However, figure 6 shows that understanding is more often potentially undermined than – promoted.

6.3 The formal curriculum and teacher agency

The last section provided an overview of the content of the formal curriculum based on the teachers’ guides grade six until grade eleven. It was illustrated that the guides in general elaborate more extensively on the Sinhalese and/or Buddhist perspective of history than on any other religious or cultural perspective. Furthermore, it was shown that all components of the RUDI framework are recognized throughout the curriculum. Yet, the potential for peace undermining might be arguably greater than the potential for peace promotion.

This section elaborates on how the formal curriculum relates to teacher agency. As literature describes, the formal curriculum can both limit and create space for teachers to transfer knowledge and employ their agency (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.425; UNESCO, 2017, p.220; Horner et. al., 2015, pp,9, 11). Based on fixed elements in the teachers’ guide, this section looks at how teacher agency – defined as obligations, authority and autonomy – is shaped by the structures of the formal curriculum (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.427). These fixed elements are instructions related to using the guides, competencies and learning outcomes, instructions for lesson planning, quality inputs and instructions for assessment and evaluation. Additionally, all guides start with a message by the Director General and Deputy Director General of the NIE, which is also incorporated in the following section (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b).

6.3.1 A message and Instructions

Before the teachers’ guides elaborate on the content of the curriculum, the Director General of the National Institute of Education (NIE) presents a message. This message states that the guides are redesigned in order assist teachers in planning lessons, teaching, conducting
activities and assessing students (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.iii). Depending on how “assisting” is defined, the above might illustrate that teachers face limits and boundaries in performing their profession because of government regulations that the teachers are expected to follow. This potentially undermines teachers’ freedom to guide the process of knowledge transfer, since a great part of the work teachers engage in would already be defined. Predefining teachers’ role and tasks also potentially undermines teachers’ freedom to define and pursue their personal interests which might negatively impact teachers’ autonomy. This shows that obligations incorporated in the teachers’ guide might undermine authority and autonomy, which arguably undermines teacher agency (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.431-434).

However, the message continues by stating that the new guides “provide freedom to the teachers in selecting quality inputs and additional activities to develop the competencies of the students” (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.iii). Consequently, teachers are free to adjust the curriculum and complement it with their own examples and activities (yet) in support of the competencies provided by the guides. This illustrates how the formal curriculum both shapes the conditions in which teachers can employ their authority and autonomy, and simultaneously restrains teachers by defining limits regarding adjustments (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.425; UNESCO, 2017, p.220; Horner et. al., 2015, pp,9,11). As such, it could be argued that teachers’ authority and autonomy are partly undermined, since the adjustments they make should support the guidelines in the guide.

Additionally, the guides state that the teachers should use the history textbooks in combination with the guides, in order “to be more aware of the syllabi” (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.iii). Most likely, this causes teachers to follow guidelines presented in the guides and textbooks in detail. The presence of these obligations set by the government, might illustrate the limited space to freely acquire and teach knowledge, and shape and implement information based on teachers’ personal preferences. Consequently, it could be argued that the strong focus on following the teachers’ guides and textbooks undermines authority and autonomy (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.431-434).

The teachers’ guides continue with a message from the deputy Director General of the NIE. Similar to the statements made by the Director General, it is stated that teachers have the freedom to “modify or adapt learning teaching strategies creatively to achieve learning outcomes, competencies [...] prescribed in the syllabus” (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.iv). This shows teachers’ space to adjust the
curriculum. Yet – and again – this space is provided within the framework created by the government. Therefore this illustrates how the space to freely acquire and teach knowledge, and introduce topics to the curriculum based on teacher’s preferences, is impeded by obligations which might undermine teacher agency (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.431-434).

A last message is provided by the Syllabus Committee. This messages contains instructions about how to use the teachers’ guides. These instructions state that it is recommended to prepare students for their final exams hereby using the syllabus as key guideline. Furthermore, the instructions stress the importance of teaching competencies as defined in the guides. Again teachers are invited to adjust the guides in order to support the formal curriculum. This is done by providing teachers freedom to develop and design activities that serve students’ needs. However, these “needs” are defined along the lines of the prescribed competencies (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.vi). This illustrates the complex relationship between solid structures, manifested in the form of competencies prescribed by the guides, and teachers’ freedom to modify the guides in support of the competencies. Strikingly, the message ends with requesting teachers to share their ideas and suggestions regarding competencies, which invites teachers to articulate their personal opinion, preferences and interests which supports authority and autonomy (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.vi; Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.431-434).

This section illustrated how teachers are supposed to interpret and interact with the teachers’ guides based on an introductory message and instructions to use the guides. Obligations raised by the government both shape and restrain teachers’ authority and autonomy. Furthermore, the message and instructions could be characterized by the tendency to allow for some space for teachers to adjust the curriculum, and simultaneously clearly define limits that restrict the teachers. The following section elaborates on the relation between teacher agency, competencies and learning outcomes as defined within the teachers’ guides.

6.3.2 Competencies and learning outcomes, and instructions for lesson planning
Throughout all grades, each unit in the teachers’ guides lists the competencies and learning outcomes discussed in the unit. These guidelines reflect the government’s expectations regarding the outcomes of history education. An implication of these defined competencies and outcomes is that it limits teachers’ ability to set goals and standards, or determine and
pursue their own interest. Consequently, teachers have little space to create aspirations and adjust their classes based on this. Therefore, the articulation of competencies and learning outcomes arguably raises obligations and undermines authority and autonomy (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.431-434; National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b).

After stating the competencies and learning outcomes, the guides provide instructions to plan lessons. Throughout the guides, a significant amount of sections (88) can be distinguished that elaborate on this planning. These sections contain the content that will be discussed, what needs to be explained about the content, what activities or assignments should be executed to support explanations, whether these activities/assignments are done in groups or individually, which examples should be provided during classes, which sources should be used to provide examples, the timeframe in which assignments should be completed, how the students should prepare for the class, and what students should write down in their notebooks (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b).

Furthermore, activity sheets in the guides support the content of the curriculum. The instructions included in the sheets tell teachers when and how to use these sheets. In most cases the activity sheets provide a template that enables a filling out exercise\textsuperscript{32} \textsuperscript{33}. Additionally, the sheets provide detailed information about how and what to do during an activity. Moreover, the materials or sources that should be used and the number of groups that should be made, are in some cases predetermined\textsuperscript{34}. This is illustrated by the fragment of the teachers’ guide grade seven (figure 10).

\textsuperscript{32} An example is provided in section 6.2, grade nine.
\textsuperscript{33} National Institute of Education, 2014a, pp.7, 15, 23, 28; 2016a, pp.3-6, 8, 13, 14, 25, 34; 2017a pp.15, 19, 20, 32, 33; 2017b, pp.8, 20, 25, 26, 28; 2014b, pp. 24, 29; 2016b, pp.15, 23, 33, 51.
\textsuperscript{34} National Institute of Education, 2014a, p.11, 15, 34, 35, 2016a, p.19; 2017a, pp. 9, 10, 26, 8, 32, 33, 35; 2017b, pp.6, 13, 14; 2016b, pp.36, 48.
The above shows that how and what teachers teach, is prescribed by the teachers’ guides, which in turn shows the presence of obligations. Furthermore, the fragment shows that teachers lack the possibility to freely teach and decide on the curriculum, to determine personal interests, and use these interests to complement the curriculum with. This is reflected by several contextual factors presented in section 2.2.2 that showed that the majority of the respondents expressed that they are expected to follow the curriculum in great precision, mostly in order to prepare students for exams. In combination with the experienced time pressure, teachers state that they don’t have time to talk about much else but the curriculum and consequently experienced a lack of possibilities to adjust the content of the curriculum. Furthermore, in some cases, the teachers’ guides prescribe which source to use. This convincingly undermines teachers’ ability to freely acquire knowledge. Consequently this might undermine teachers’ authority. Overall, it could be argued that instructions for lesson planning undermine teacher agency by prescribing a great deal of the content and implementation of history education which undermines authority and autonomy (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.427).

6.3.3 Quality inputs
The previous section showed how authority and autonomy – two fundamental aspects of teacher agency – are arguably constrained by the instructions for lesson planning. This section elaborates on how teacher agency is influenced by the quality inputs as discussed in the

35 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 9a, 10, 12, 14, 21, 22, 24.
36 3, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15a, 20, 21, 25.
37 1b, 1c, 6, 9a, 11, 12, 16, 21.
Throughout the teachers’ guides, the instructions for lesson planning are followed up by quality inputs. These inputs are used to provide extra context or clarification regarding the matters discussed. The content of these quality inputs is predetermined in most cases (58). These inputs vary from extra questions to elaborate on, to materials that can be used or shown, including book or film suggestions. In approximately a quarter of the cases (19), teachers themselves can determine the specific content of the quality inputs. In these cases, the guides state “get materials required to the lesson”.

Despite the possibility to determine the content, the quote shows that the quality inputs remain bound to the content of a specific lesson. Therefore, a similar dynamic can be recognized to the message of the Director General, who stated that teachers can decide upon additional activities as long as these activities support the framework of history education that is provided by the government (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b, p.iii). Similar to these additional activities, teachers are allowed to introduce materials. However, these materials should support the lessons. This again illustrates how the curriculum provides a framework in which adjustments can be done. Therefore it could be argued that teachers work in an environment characterized by obligations that steer the individual input of teachers, hereby potentially undermining authority and autonomy (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.427).

The next section discusses the last component of the teachers’ guides and assesses how obligations, authority and autonomy can be recognized in the instructions for assessment and evaluations.

6.3.4 Instructions for assessment and evaluation

Throughout the teachers’ guides, many sections (94) are dedicated to instructions for assessment and evaluation of students’ work. Figure 11 provides an example of instructions for assessment and evaluation as presented in the teachers’ guides. Analyzing these instructions shows that testing students’ ability to memorize and reproduce knowledge is
highly valued\(^{40}\). Out of 226 quotes related to assessment, almost one third of the quotes relates to memorizing. Furthermore, over one tenth of the quotes is related to time management, which makes this another important assessment criterion. Also cooperation and appreciating or admiring events, kings and (art)works, are frequently included criteria. Additionally, a lot of assessment criteria relate to students’ (active and constructive) in-class attitude. Also creativity is a recurring assessment criterion. The last criterion that occurred throughout all the teachers’ guides is obedience towards the teacher (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b).

*Figure 11. Fragment teachers’ guide grade eleven: instructions for assessment and evaluation* (2016b, p.20).

![Instructions for assessment and evaluation](image)

Furthermore, teachers could compose their personal assessment criteria approximately 10% (20 instances) of the times that students needed to be assessed. In these cases, the teachers’ guide states “*Award marks using a criteria that measures the learning outcomes relating to the lesson*” (2014a, pp.19, 20, 24, 25, 30, 32, 37; 2016a, pp.9, 16, 27, 30; 2014b, p.11, 16, 19-22, 25, 27, 32; 2016b, pp.27, 51, 53). This allows teachers to set their own goals and standards which might support teachers’ authority (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.427).

Interestingly, a substantial number of assessment criteria that occurred less frequently, can be related to peace promotion. These include students’ capability to accept both victory and defeat (three times used), to express an opinion (two times used) and to use other sources (three times used). Accepting victory and defeat, and using other sources could support students’ acceptance and acknowledgement of the past and critical thinking which arguably supports the RUDI elements understanding and inclusive history. Moreover, as Cunningham

\(^{40}\) The code ‘reproduction/memorizing’ is also used when the assessment criteria prescribed ‘explain’. This is because the time in the field showed multiple times that ‘explaining’ equals memorizing the explanations given in the curriculum.
and Ladd (2018) explain, expressing an opinion is a skill that can support active citizenship, which therefore could enhance democratic inclusivity as described in the RUDI framework (pp.4,5). However, this conclusion might be more nuanced since the criteria might lack relevance to the real life practice. As previously shown, the assignments that students engage with, are in general based on memorizing and reproduction (respondent 4, 6, 8, 9, 19, 11, 15, 16b, 16b, 21; National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b). As such, it seems hard to imagine that these assignments truly shape an environment that allows students to think critically.

Chapter six illustrated that the teachers’ guides in general provide a structure in which teachers frequently lack the ability to influence the content of the curriculum. Returning to the first sub-question “How does the formal curriculum support or undermine the peace promoting capacities of history education” it could thus be argued that the curriculum – shaped by obligations formulated by the government – in general steers the individual input of teachers, hereby potentially undermining authority and autonomy which might diminish teacher agency. However, the message by the Deputy General Director requests teachers to share their ideas and suggestions regarding competencies. This perhaps invites teachers to articulate their personal opinion and interests, which might enhance authority and autonomy, and consequently support teacher agency. The next chapter focusses on how history teachers relate to, and manoeuvre within structures provided by the formal curriculum.
7. Let the teachers speak!

“Some things are not truth. But they [teachers] have to say what is in the book. Regardless if it is truth or false” (12:23).

This chapter elaborates on how secondary history teachers perceive the curriculum and how this relates to both peace promotion and teacher agency. In line with the quote, the chapter shows that teachers can have an ambivalent relation to the formal curriculum. Furthermore, the chapter elaborates on how different components of agency relate to peace promotion, and how these different components can be recognized and are experienced by secondary Sinhalese and Tamil history teachers.

7.1 Content of the curriculum

Regarding the content, it is striking that “the ancient kings” are mentioned frequently. Although most of the quotes related to this subject derive from interviews with Sinhalese teachers, also Tamil teachers stress this subject often. In almost all the cases, the subject was brought up by the respondents after I asked what the most important taught subject was (1a, 1b, 2, 4, 5a, 6, 8, 9a, 12, 15a, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24).

When I asked why it was important to talk about the ancient kings during history education, multiple reasons were given. It was frequently explained that it is important in order to improve/build the nation (1a, 3, 4, 22), create an understanding for the development of the nation (2, 8, 21), an/or make students proud of the country and kings (6, 10, 22).

This observation is more nuanced and complex than it might appear. Explanations of the importance of elaborating on the ancient kings, were provided by ten Sinhalese teachers and only by one Tamil teacher. This might suggest that there is more value attached to the ancient kings by the Sinhalese teachers rather than by the Tamil teachers. This idea could be supported by the fact that eight Tamil, and only two Sinhalese teachers explicitly pointed out that Sinhalese kings are overrepresented in the formal curriculum compared to Tamil kings (5a, 6, 8, 9a, 14, 15a, 15b, 16, 24, 25).

Furthermore, a closer look on the perspective of Tamil teachers regarding teaching about ancient kings, shows a complete different perspective. When we talked about the most important topic in history education, ancient kings were frequently mentioned as an important subject in the curriculum. When I asked to elaborate on this, teachers often did not elaborate
on why it is important to talk about it, but why they talked about it. Respondent 9a, 12, 24, 14, 16 explained that they just have to follow the “Sri Lankan history” (9:3)\(^{41}\) that neglects the Tamil history. As a Tamil teacher illustrated:

“You know, in the grade six textbook, they give a title: Ten kings of Sri Lanka. They are giving the ten names of those kings and give some explanations. Where no any Tamil king’s name is written” (14:5).

Moreover, talking about education on the (Sinhalese) ancient history, frequently catalyzed further conversations about the perception of the content of the formal curriculum. The majority of quotes coded about the content, were related to the ancient kings. This illustrates the significance of this subject. Furthermore, over one third of these quotes stem from Tamil respondents. Both respondent groups would point out that the curriculum is focused on Sinhalese history (2, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 9b, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15a, 15b, 16, 24). Most Sinhalese teachers that mentioned the strong focus on Sinhalese history, did not question the accuracy nor the morality of this focus. They merely explained where the focus on the Sinhalese history is based on. Three Sinhalese teachers that I interviewed in Colombo explained that it is a fact that the Sinhalese history is much more extensive compared to the Tamil history, and that it is therefore logical to dedicate more attention to the Sinhalese history (respondent 5a, 5b, 6). When I asked these respondents if the curriculum should be adjusted and include more Tamil history, respondent 5a responded saying that “you can’t change the content of history right. [...] We are teaching the real history” (5a:6). However, some Sinhalese teachers interviewed in Colombo expressed a more critical opinion towards the domination of Sinhalese history in the curriculum. In doing so, respondent 2 stressed that Tamil history is equally relevant and should be equally important to the Sinhalese history within the formal curriculum. Also respondent 7 holds a critical opinion and explained that the formal curriculum reflects the interest of the Sinhalese government, and therefore transfers a narrative that would “[...] endorse that idea that the Sinhalese were the original settlers and the history of Sri

\(^{41}\) Note that “Sinhalese” is in this case interchangeably used with ‘Sri Lankan’. This was found four times throughout the research by both Sinhalese and Tamil respondents (5, 6, 8, 9). This might indicate a close association of Sinhalese and Sri Lanka, which in turn might be illustrative for the perception of a sense of belonging, or who the (self) entitiled population of Sri Lanka is.
Lanka should be the history of the Sinhalese (7:6).

Regarding the Tamil teachers, it is striking that they all extensively talked about the “focus” on the Sinhalese history (8, 9b, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15a, 15b, 16, 24). In general, most Tamil teachers expressed a very different perspective on the accuracy and morality of this focus compared to Sinhalese teachers. Respondent 9b, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16 and 24 talked about how the government excluded the Sri Lankan Tamil history in the textbooks. A compelling observation was that a Tamil teacher in Jaffna showed me a grade six history textbook and pointed at all the pages about Sinhalese history. When I asked him to show me a page about Tamil history, he browsed through the 174 pages for a couple of minutes, and eventually pointed out two lines that contain the word “Tamil”.

Not only did Tamil respondents talk about the lack of Tamil history in the formal curriculum. Respondents also elaborated on the government that would intentionally hide Tamil history in the formal curriculum (9a, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15a, 16, 24, 25). Additionally, teachers who have been teaching prior to/during and after the war, explained that how the Sri Lankan history and development is portrayed in history books has changed. Parts of the Tamil history would be concealed, which strongly shapes the construction and perception of history (2, 7, 15a, 15b, 24, 25). As a Tamil teacher told me:

“They [the government] rewrite the history and they change some part of the history” (11:6).

Even more remarkable was that more than half of the Tamil respondents stated that history in the formal curriculum is not only concealed, but even modified (8, 11, 12, 14, 15b, 19). As such, names of geographical locations, sacred places and kings would be translated from Tamil into Sinhalese language, and achievements of Tamil kings would be attributed to Sinhalese kings. This is done in order to attribute important events, places or objects to Sinhalese, rather than Tamil figures (11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 24). The modification of history was not only to be found in textbooks. Multiple respondents and people I talked to spontaneously, told me that historical sights had been destroyed by the government in order to wipe out evidence of Tamil history (8, 12, 14).

This section presented the most frequently articulated and striking opinions regarding the content of the formal history curriculum. It was shown how the ancient kings form a cornerstone of the formal curriculum. Opinions regarding this focus on the ancient kings were often segregated along the lines of ethnicity. Most Sinhalese teachers elaborated on the importance of this history, where most Tamil teachers seized this moment to express their
discontent regarding the strong focus on Sinhalese history in the formal curriculum.

7.2 Consequences of the content: promoting or undermining peace...?

The most frequently articulated consequence of the formal curriculum is that it does not allow for critical thinking. Eight respondents expressed that a competitive environment, a strong focus on memorizing facts, and the strong emphasis on exams leads to the transfer of one dominant narrative that does not allow for creativity or critical reflection (3, 5a, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15a, 15b, 25). Additionally, the strong emphasis on exams causes students to only focus on and remember information that will be tested (3, 7, 10, 14). Furthermore, teachers are bound to time constraints and need the time they have to elaborate on the formal curriculum since this is what will be tested during exams (3, 7, 9a). This prevents teachers from going beyond the framework shaped by the formal curriculum. Since the curriculum used to, and still fails to depict an exhaustive reflection of history, the lack of critical thinking arguably undermines inclusive history and understanding (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000, p.13; Balasooriya et. al. cited in Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p.25; Fraser, cited in Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015, pp. 62, 63; Gaul cited in UNESCO, 2017, p.221; Cunningham & Ladd, 2018, pp.4,5; Novelli et al., 2015, p.12).

Another frequently articulated consequence of the formal curriculum, is that the focus on the Sinhalese history and culture, excludes other (perspectives on) history and cultures. This causes both Sinhalese and Tamil students and teachers to lack an understanding of Tamil history (8, 9b, 10, 11, 12, 15a, 15b, 16, 24). During one of the interviews, a Tamil teacher in Colombo even said:

“If there is nothing to say about the others, what are you are going to say. [...] We cannot create history. It is not fiction, it is real” (8:43).

This focus on Sinhala history and the quote illustrate how the curriculum falls short in acknowledging or promoting diversity which arguably undermines understanding among different societal groups, as similarly argued by Novelli et al. (2015, p.12) and Cunningham and Ladd (2018, pp.4, 5). Tamil respondent 14 even expressed that he thought that the lack of diversity in the curriculum fosters racism in the society.

Furthermore, Tamil students experience difficulty in understanding formal history education since they cannot associate with the history conveyed. According to respondent 6a, 6b, 10a, 11 and 21, language barriers created by the quantity of Sinhalese words in the formal
curriculum, reinforce this lack of understanding. Additionally, five respondents mentioned that this lack of understanding undermines Tamil students’ interest in formal history education (5a, 8, 11, 16, 20).

A last consequence repeatedly mentioned, is that students internalize the idea that Sinhalese people contributed more to the development of Sri Lanka than any other ethnic group. This can be explained by the disproportionate attention on societal contributions made by Sinhalese “protagonists” throughout history, hereby excluding the contribution made by others. This would cause (Tamil) minority students to feel insecure regarding their competencies (2, 10, 12, 13). This might undermine inclusive history since the formal curriculum would convey an exclusive narrative about Sri Lanka’s development, which undermines different stories and interpretations of the past (Novelli et al., 2015, p.12).

This section illustrated that the formal curriculum arguably lacks an inclusive approach and undermines critical thinking. The exclusive character of history education mostly affects Tamil students, who would experience difficulties in understanding the curriculum, which results in a reflection of history that most Tamil students don’t identify with and lose interest in. The next section elaborates on how teachers relate to the curriculum by looking at the interplay between teachers’ autonomy, obligations and authority, and the formal curriculum.

7.3 Agency and the interplay with the formal curriculum
This section discusses the relation between teachers’ agency and the formal curriculum. The section is structured along the components of the definition of teachers agency (obligations, authority, autonomy) used in this thesis.

7.3.1 Obligations and the formal curriculum
As the context chapter and literature showed, the Sri Lankan government strongly interferes with the education system (Balasoorriya, Lal Perera & Wijetunge; cited in Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p.25). This government influences relates strongly to obligations that history teachers have to adhere to. Over two thirds of the history teachers referred to matters related to rules and regulations prescribed by the government. A widely mentioned example, is that the

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42 Respondent 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 9a, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15a, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25
government decides on the curriculum and monitors its implementation. Consequently, all teachers are expected to follow the curriculum in great precision, and are supervised by state officials. Moreover, teachers are held accountable for the students’ success, which is reflected in their grades. Consequently, history teachers strongly focus on exams, conveying information relevant to the exams. The following fragment, derived from a conversation with two teachers working at the teacher training center in Jaffna, powerfully reflects the above described dynamics.

15a: “Whatever what is presented in the syllabus that have to teach [sic].

A: What do you think about that?

15b: Actually the thing about the Sri Lankan education system, here it is very exam oriented people. The exams, the students want to pass it. So the teachers have to follow the syllabus. That [added is] is why all the teachers stick to that syllabus, the main purpose is passing the exams” (15a & 15b:2).

Relating this practice to the previous discussed theory by Vongalis-Macrow (2007), a push towards marketization and technocratic modernization of education can be recognized within the Sri Lankan education system. As over one third of the secondary teachers express to mainly teach in order to prepare students for exams, it could be argued that education has become a product that is consumed by students. Additionally it can be argued that a regulatory party (the Sri Lankan government) makes sure that the education is “delivered” and beneficial to students’ results. Moreover, the focus on exams and grades within the Sri Lankan education system, indicates the presence of quality assurance measures. This marketization and technocratic modernization of teachers and education possibly undermines teacher agency (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.431). Therefore it could be argued that the presence of obligations within the Sri Lankan education system – at least partly – undermines teacher agency.

However, a comparison between Sinhalese and Tamil teachers regarding their interpretation and perception of the obligations (and thus their agency) creates a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency. In general, Tamil teachers are inclined to express dissatisfaction regarding the obligations that

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43 Respondent 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 9a, 10, 12, 14, 21, 22, 24.
44 Respondent 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 20, 21
result from the education system more often than Sinhalese teachers. As such, Tamil respondents desire to deviate from the obligations formulated by the government more frequently than Sinhalese teachers do. This is illustrated in five interviews where Tamil teachers (aspired to) complement the curriculum with information, knowing that this would not be in line with regulations and expectations, nor beneficial to students’ results (9a, 9b, 11, 12, 16). The tension between the desire to influence the curriculum on the one hand, and the possibilities on the other hand, is illustrated by the conversation between two Tamil teachers who said:

9a: “It is illegal.
9b: Although Tamil history is not included in the book, during the history classes we explain about Tamil history as well. We verbally say it. Although it is not useful for the exams or tests, we use to say it” (9a & 9b:14).

Contrasting the majority of Tamil teachers, only two Sinhalese teachers expressed the wish to include other topics in the curriculum. In these cases, the desire seemed to have a more “advisory” nature, rather than reflecting a deep-rooted sense of necessity (2, 20). In general, Sinhalese teachers could be characterized by a tendency to embrace the content of the curriculum and feel less restricted by the obligations set up by the government (1a, 5b, 6, 8, 22). This suggest that Sinhalese teachers experience obligations differently form Tamil teachers.

This additional information creates a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between the obligations within the curriculum and teachers’ agency. The interviews reflected that Sinhalese teachers in general might feel less restricted by obligations set by the government. Sinhalese teachers, in general, comply to the curriculum and feel less inclined to make adjustments. Contrasting this, Tamil teachers feel more restricted by the government’s obligations. According to Vongalis-Macrow (2007), this possibly undermines their agency, (p.431).

Additionally, relating the findings to the definition of teacher agency by Lopes Cardozo – the space of an actor to manoeuvre in relation to a structure – shows a difference in Tamil and Sinhalese teachers’ agency (2015, p.6). As Tamil teachers experience a more ambivalence relationship to the formal curriculum compared to Sinhalese, it could be argued that Tamil teachers thus experience less space to manoeuvre within the structures of the Sri Lankan education system. Therefore, the interplay between the obligations as defined in the
formal curriculum and teachers’ agency, might increasingly undermine Tamil teachers’ agency compared to Sinhalese teachers’. This finding illustrates the importance of the identity of the agent when talking about agency.

This section showed that obligations play a defining role in structuring the education system. Furthermore, it could be argued that Tamil teachers feel more restricted by these obligations compared to Sinhalese teachers. This might be explained by the Sinhalese oriented content of the curriculum. The next section elaborates on how authority can be recognized and is employed by Tamil and Sinhalese teachers.

7.3.2 Authority and peace promotion

As previously discussed, the strong influence of the government in Sri Lanka’s education system partly results in prescribing teachers what to teach (respondent 1a, 2, 5a, 8, 11, 12, 15b, 19, 20, 22). In line with this, twelve respondents explained that they acquire their information using the government’s syllabi and teachers’ guides (1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 6, 8, 9a 11, 12, 16, 19, 21). Furthermore eight respondents used internet as an additional source. Mostly, internet is used to deepen knowledge on information already presented in the curriculum. Consequently, internet is mostly used as a deepening, rather than widening medium. Moreover, when I asked what teachers would do when information found online contradicts the curriculum, most teachers would follow the curriculum (1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 6, 8, 9a, 12).

Additionally, two Tamil teachers told me about a history book that was used before and during the war. This book would include a Tamil perspective on history (11, 16). Respondent 16 expressed that he experienced tension regarding his personal desire to use the book, and the possibilities he had to do so. When I asked him how he acquires information to teach, he said:

X: *Once upon a time our Tamil people release the history book. I have it.*
A: *And are you allowed to bring that book into the school?*
X: *No. Because you know, it has some legal problems* (16:23).

Furthermore, almost all secondary history teachers confirmed that the state decides upon the content of the curriculum (1a, 2, 6, 8, 11, 14, 15b, 19, 20, 22). Five respondents elaborated on the procedures related to curriculum development and the implementation of change (2, 6, 11, 12, 16). They talked about the NIE board that supervises the content. In case of content related changes, the board would organize seminars to announce these changes. When talking
about the dynamics of this seemingly one way communication, a Sinhalese teacher explained that the seminars would primarily announce changes, but would “listen sometimes if everyone comes with the same issue, [...]” (2:33). This implies that widely carried requests might be picked up by the government. This would support teachers’ authority as they would (till some extent) be acknowledged as knowledge specialists by the government, which would enable teachers to steer education and influence the curriculum (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.433, 434).

However, Tamil respondent 11, 12 and 16 portrayed a different dynamic. They explained that the government and seminars would undermine teachers’ ability to steer and guide learning as teachers would be silenced and forced to sit in the back during seminars. As such, it can be argued that the government disqualifies the experience and expertise of (Tamil) teachers, which would undermine their ability to decide upon the curriculum, and not recognize teachers as knowledge specialist (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.433, 434). Moreover, three Tamil teachers illustrated an ethnicity related hierarchy that would determine teachers’ ability to influence the curriculum (11, 12, 16). As respondent 12 stated:

“But finally, those who are in the higher post, they are Sinhalese, so they changed something and they have taken the final decisions. But we [Tamil] don't have the rights to raise the questions” (12:9).

Furthermore, the majority of respondents expressed that it would be unlikely, or even impossible for them to (informally) change the curriculum (1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 6, 9a, 9b, 11, 12, 15a, 16). In doing so, five Tamil respondents expressed that it is not allowed to adjust the curriculum (9, 11, 12, 15a, 16). Moreover, three respondents even stated that changing the curriculum is unimaginable because evidence of deviating narratives has been destroyed by the government (11, 12, 16).

The above suggests that teachers lack the freedom to freely acquire knowledge and design the content of the formal curriculum, since the government determines how and what is taught. According to Vongalis-Macrow (2007) a predefined curriculum undermines teachers’ capacity to build and shape education. Striking is that these undermining practices were experienced most severely and frequently by Tamil teachers.

Yet (and perhaps unexpectedly), students open the door to elaborate on topics beyond the reach of the formal curriculum by asking (critical) questions, often inspired by information found online. In general, teachers encourage students to ask questions, using this
momentum to incite a discussion. This potentially supports critical thinking, when students ask critical questions and compare information provided in the curriculum and information found online (1b, 1c, 2, 6, 11, 12). Furthermore, teachers use students’ questions as an opportunity to complement the curriculum by making verbal additions (2, 5a, 6, 8, 9b, 11, 16). Seven respondents explained that these verbal additions are used as “invisible” adjustments to the curriculum, that would not be noticed by the government officials who monitor the implementation of education as previous explained (section 2.2.2). Respondent 5a illustrates this dynamic and stated:

“They [government officials] come and they take. And we have to stick to the curriculum yes. But you can have discussion with a student right! You can’t stop that (5a:31).

Despite the extensive limitations, these verbal adjustments show that teachers can complement the curriculum in between the lines, which enables them to guide and steer learning. According to Vongalis-Macrow, this supports autonomy (2007, pp.433, 434). Moreover, engaging in these verbal adjustments was mostly done by Tamil teachers: five Tamil versus three Sinhalese teachers talked about engaging in verbal additions to the curriculum. This might show that Tamil teachers experienced a stronger need to employ their authority and complement the curriculum with their own knowledge.

Regarding setting goals and standards, the structures of the formal curriculum strongly limit teachers’ ability to freely decide on goals and standards. As previously explained, the curriculum clearly defines the competencies and learning outcomes that should be the result of history education (National Institute of Education, 2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b). As Vongalis-Macrow (2017) illustrates, this undermines teachers to formulate their own goals (pp.433, 434). The lack of possibilities to formulate personal goals, was reflected by Sinhalese respondent 5a and 6, and Tamil respondent 21. They expressed that they wish to implement different teaching methods and set different goals such as learning how to conduct research (respondent 5a, 6) and improving student’s critical thinking processes (respondent 21). Strikingly, the respondents did not refer to the restraining character of the competencies and learning outcomes, but to a lack of time and (the interplay with) the exam oriented approach of the education system that prevented them from setting their own goals and standards.

Critical thinking is the last element that defines authority. Critical thinking was not a

45 1a, 1b, 2, 5a, 8, 9b, 11, 16
frequent discussed topic among the secondary history teachers. Only one Tamil teacher stated that the focus on memorizing information heavily obstructs the space for critical thinking (15a). However, the frequent references made by numerous respondents about following the curriculum and conveying a Sinhala dominated version of history, implies that teachers are constrained to teach a predefined message which would undermine teachers’ possibility to engage with critical thinking, which would undermine autonomy (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.433, 434).

This section showed that the omnipresence of the government strongly shapes the implementation and practice of education. Consequently, a lack of authority is recognized which potentially undermines teacher agency (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, pp.433, 434). In general, Tamil teachers are more vocal in expressing a sense of deprivation regarding their autonomy. This might imply that Tamil teachers experience undermining of their authority more frequently and/or severely than Sinhalese teachers.

7.3.3 Autonomy and formal curriculum

This section looks at the relation between the formal curriculum and teachers’ autonomy. In order to provide insight into if and how teachers experience autonomy, teachers were asked questions about their freedom to determine and pursue their personal interest related to history education. The most frequently articulated personal interest to teach history was to promote peace. Striking is that only three of the fourteen respondents who articulated this, can be identified as Tamil teachers (1a, 1b, 1c, 3, 4, 5a, 9a, 9b, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22). In following up this question, teachers were asked if the formal curriculum allowed for the incorporation of their personal preferences, motives and aspirations. Nine respondents stated that they were able to promote peace through the formal curriculum by talking about religious and cultural diversity (1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 4, 9a, 11, 12, 16). Furthermore respondent 16, 20, 22 explained that the focus on unity in the curriculum promotes peace. This is reflected by the quote of a secondary history teacher living in Matara who stated:

“Although the different ethnic groups, we have to think about we have only one nation like Sri Lankans. That is the message in the formal curriculum [...] [sic]” (20:10).

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46 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 9a, 10, 12, 14, 21, 22, 24
47 3, 5a, 7, 9a, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 25, 25
This shows that when “promoting peace” is defined as personal interest, this often matched with the content of the curriculum. However, it must be noted that this applies primarily to Sinhalese teachers. These findings might suggest that these Sinhalese teachers did not experience obstructions regarding defining and pursuing their personal interests to a large extent. However, the Tamil teachers that identified peace as the most important goal of history education, stated that the strong focus on the Sinhalese and Buddhist culture undermines this objective (11, 12, 16). Moreover, teachers’ obligation to stick to the curriculum, obstructed the possibility to transform history education in a way that would be beneficial to pursue their interests. This shows that Tamil teachers seemed to experience little freedom to pursue peace promotion which would undermine their authority (Connell, 2014, p.214, Vongalis-Macrow, 2007, p.434).

Furthermore, other frequently expressed objectives of history education were understanding the present and/or learning from the past (2, 4, 5a, 5b, 8, 16, 20, 21) creating historical awareness (2, 4, 6, 8, 9a), making students proud of, and appreciate the nation (1a, 2, 4, 5a, 5b, 8, 9a, 16, 20, 21, 22), and creating cultural awareness (2, 12, 16). When respondent 1a, 2, 4, 6, 8, 20 and 21 expressed their personal interests, this was not their initial expression of what would be important to include, but rather an explanation of why they included certain topics. Therefore in these cases, the vocalized “personal” interests might not reflect teachers’ personal interests but rather an elaboration on the importance of subjects incorporated in the curriculum. This raises the question whether teachers’ “personal interests” stem from individual ideas, or are shaped according to the possibilities offered by the curriculum. Rather frequently, the respondents gave the impression that the latter was the case. This might illustrate the dominance of the curriculum, which in turn shapes teachers’ “personal” interests.

Additionally, both Sinhalese and Tamil respondents identified their personal interest regarding history education, but explained that these interest could not be pursued (5a, 5b, 9a, 12, 16). As Sinhalese respondent 5b stated about her interest to teach history in order to learn from the civil war:

“It is a lesson. It is a learning opportunity and whenever something is or went wrong, we can predict what is going to happen” (5b:25).

However, she also explained that since no information about the war is included in the curriculum, she was denied the opportunity to pursue her wish to use history education to learn
from the past. Also respondent 5a, 9a, 12 and 16 referred to the curriculum that did not allow for elaboration on their personal interests.

Interestingly, the impossibility to pursue personal interest is more often experienced by Tamil teachers (three respondents) rather than Sinhalese teachers (two respondents). A similar tendency was recognized in the previous section about authority, when Tamil teachers expressed the desire and experienced constraints to adjust the curriculum more often than Sinhalese teachers did. This might indicate the relation between authority, obligations and autonomy. When teachers lack authority (freely acquire and teach knowledge, decide on the curriculum and set standards and goals) because they are restricted to the obligations presented in the formal curriculum, it appears to be unlikely that teachers’ can freely engage with their autonomy and pursue interests that deviate from the formal curriculum.

Additionally, visiting the teacher training center in Jaffna showed that teachers are told what and how to teach in the very first stages of their career. As such, involving personal reflections, opinions and deviations might be quelled in the early stages of a teacher’s career, which might undermine the very notion of personal aspirations and interest (15a, 15b). This finding is reflected in a study conducted on the influence of teacher training on agency, and it’s relation to social cohesion. In line with my findings, this study illustrates that trainee teachers are “obliged” to accommodate to the structure of the education system that is shaped by the government, which undermines their autonomy since they cannot freely pursue their personal interests (Graham De Silva, 2016, p.61).

This section illustrated that when teachers desired to pursue personal interests that deviate from the curriculum, constraints regarding their autonomy are experienced. A lack of autonomy seems to be experienced more frequently by Tamil teachers than Sinhalese teachers. This tendency can be recognized throughout the chapter. The structure of the national education system influences teachers’ agency differently throughout different context and seems to be related to ethnicity. As such, Tamil teachers more frequently expressed to feel restrained by obligations than Sinhalese teachers. Moreover, Tamil teachers expressed more frequently than Sinhalese teachers that their authority and autonomy is undermined by the education system. The next – and final – chapter summarizes the main findings, answers the research question, points out the value of this research and formulates recommendations for future research. As reflections and discussion upon literature and findings have been integrated throughout the thesis, this is not included in the conclusion.
8. Conclusion

The end of my time in Sri Lanka was nearing. A buzzing old fan (60s type, brown-beige colored) gently stirred around the thick, lukewarm air in the room. As I laid down on a rather old and firm matrass, trying to cool down, I reflected on the conversation with a Tamil teacher I had earlier that day. He shared his concerns about the government’s influence on education, and the structures in which he has to practice his profession. I realized how much this opinion contrasts attitudes of other (Sinhalese) teachers I met, who frequently seemed to praise the government and its policy concerning education. Just before the fans’ buzzing noise and the sticky heat would guide me to an afternoon nap, I realized that both these (contradictory) opinions might equally accurately represent reality, and capture the – perhaps obvious – lesson that four years of higher education taught me: it might all be a matter of perspective.

While keeping this lesson in mind, this research aimed to identify the influence of the interplay between teacher agency and the formal curriculum on peace promotion. As such the main question that guided this research is: How does the interplay between the formal curriculum and secondary history teachers’ agency support or undermine the peace promoting capacities of history education? In order to answer the question, semi-structured interviews and a content analysis were conducted, that looked into the relation between the formal curriculum and peace promotion, and into how teacher agency in relation to the formal curriculum relates to peace promoting capacities of history education.

A synergy of multiple theoretical approaches towards peace promotion resulted in the creation of the RUDI framework, which guided the assessment of peace promotion. Based on a content analysis of the formal curriculum, it was found that the formal curriculum has a peace promoting potential. Sections that – potentially – promote understanding, democratic inclusivity and/or inclusive history can be found in all grades. Furthermore, the national education system is free of charge and therefore (theoretically) accessible to anyone, which illustrates the potential for redistribution through education. However, the structural focus on the Sinhalese/Buddhist culture, and lack of elaboration and inclusion of other cultural and religious expressions, arguably undermines understanding and inclusive history. Moreover, the promotion of democratic inclusivity might be flawed because of the lack of engagement with, and (interactive) education on active citizenship and skills such as debating.

Furthermore, both interviews and the content analysis showed that teacher agency is influenced by teachers’ requirement to follow the textbooks, and prepare students for exams. This suggest that these requirements strongly shape the structures of the education system,
and possibly limit teacher agency as it is constrained by rules and regulations prescribed by the formal curriculum. This dynamic raises questions regarding the interplay between the curriculum and teachers. The strong focus on the curriculum and exams seem to shape a top down structure that conveys a narrative created by the government into the classroom, without much possibilities for teachers to manoeuvre within this structure and influence the curriculum. This could be illustrative for limited interplay between teacher agency and the formal curriculum.

Additionally, it was found that limitations imposed by the curriculum that potentially undermine teacher agency, were more frequently and strongly experienced by Tamil teachers rather than Sinhalese teachers. This suggests that agency is influenced along the lines of ethnicity and religion, which illustrates the importance of the identity of the agent when discussing agency. Yet, interplay between the curriculum and teacher agency can be recognized through verbal additions to the curriculum made by teachers. Often, these additions were responses to students’ questions, and manifested as discussions and sometimes even supported critical thinking when comparing different narratives and sources of information. This arguably supports peace promotion.

Returning to the main question, it can be argued that despite occasional peace promotion potential, the formal curriculum has an exclusive character and predominantly focusses on a Sinhalese/Buddhists oriented narrative of history. Therefore, the formal curriculum might undermine peace promotion. As teachers can only limitedly manoeuvre within the structures of the curriculum, both the formal curriculum and the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency, do not, or very limitedly enhance the peace promoting potential of history education. Therefore, the interplay between teacher agency and the formal curriculum does arguably undermine peace promotion.

Despite the limited generalizability and contextuality of the results, this research contributes to an essential and comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the formal curriculum and teacher agency regarding peace promotion through history education. This study is unique, since the majority of research conducted so far, mostly focusses on the formal curriculum or on teacher agency when discussing peace promotion through education. Furthermore, the findings confirm the theory on the destructive potential of the formal curriculum, caused by inadequate inclusion of, and elaboration on concepts crucial for peace promotion. Related to this, the research confirms previous findings derived from other researches in Sri Lanka, that show the presence of peace promoting potential through the
formal curriculum, but the absence of peace promoting in practice. Simultaneously, this research might challenge theory about the presumed transformative agency of teachers, since it was illustrated that teacher agency is constrained by rules and regulations that teachers are expected to obey. This might significantly reduce teachers’ space to manoeuvre within the education system. Moreover, this raises the question if and how teacher agency can be academically approached, and practically employed in a structure that does not or limitedly allow for it.

In order to elaborate on the above question, future research should focus on students’ perspective and agency. As shown, students might be one of the key actors creating opportunity for teachers to employ their agency within the structures of the education system. In doing so, students arguably both contribute to teacher agency, and partly realize the peace promoting potential of history education. Therefore, it should be assessed how student agency relates to both teacher agency and the peace promoting capacity of the formal history curriculum. Moreover, in order to create an understanding for the consequences of (the lack of) peace promotion through history education, future research should focus on how students experience history education, and how this affects students’ understanding, and perception of democratic inclusivity and inclusive history.

Despite the peace promoting potential of education on paper, in practice, violence and hatred have recently been pervasive in Sri Lanka as shown in the introduction. The absence of physical violence is fragile, and ethnic tensions seem to rise. Attention to the development of positive and sustainable peace is necessary in order to overcome ethnic divide. Let’s hope that Sri Lanka’s near future will honor its own words, presented on the cover photo of this thesis: “Unity in diversity is the strength of Sri Lanka”.
9. Bibliography


Senarath Gamage, L. (2018). \textit{The Dwelling of the War God: the Art and Architecture of Embekke Devāle in Medieval and Early Modern Sri Lanka} (Doctoral dissertation, University of California). Retrieved from https://cloudfront.escholarship.org/dist/prd/content/qt54p6g0mm/qt54p6g0mm.pdf?t=pjsl6h


10. Appendix

10.1 Conceptual scheme

Sri Lanka’s education system

History teaching

Teacher agency

Obligations

Authority

Formal curriculum

Peace promoting capacities of history education

Concepts

Teacher agency

Dimensions

Obligations

Indicators

- Obligations set by government regulations.
- Controlling teacher’s responsibilities by the government.
- Accountability towards school.

Authority

- Freely acquire knowledge.
- Freely teach knowledge.
- Freely decide on the curriculum.

10.2 Operationalization scheme

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<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<td>Teacher agency</td>
<td>Obligations</td>
<td>- Obligations set by government regulations.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>- Freely acquire knowledge.</td>
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<td>Peace-promoting capacities of history education (RUDI’s framework)</td>
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| Autonomy | - Determine and pursue own interest.  
- Drive and shape professional aspirations. |
| Redistribution | - Accessible education to anyone. |
| Understanding (recognition + social cohesion) | - Acknowledgement and promotion of diversity and equality.  
- Incorporating religious, cultural, linguistic identities/groups.  
- Stimulating dignity, respect, sympathy, religious tolerance and solidarity. |
| Democratic inclusivity (Representation + active citizenship) | - Explanation of political and legal systems at multiple levels.  
- (Stimulating) participation in political/educational decision-making processes.  
- Teaching “democratic skills” such as debating, discussing and listening.  
- Democratic values and respecting the rule of law. |
| Inclusive history (Reconciliation + truth-seeking) | - Acknowledgement of the past/transfer different stories of the past.  
- Critical thinking.  
- Stimulate the bridging of communities.  
- Different interpretations of the (conflict) history.  
- Acknowledging recent history and contemporary events. |
10.3 Respondent table

This table is omitted due to privacy - and confidentiality concerns. Requests for data clarification are considered and – if provided – anonymized. Request can be addressed to: anoukstrandstra@gmail.com.

10.4 Teachers’ guides

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