



A MULTICULTURAL DYSTOPIA: THE ETHNICIZATION OF EDUCATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE KOSOVOⁱ

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Abstract:

Taking the unilateral declaration of independence as an historical milestone, this essay investigates the role of education within Kosovo's current national system questioning whether education and, in particular, educational decentralization complemented by enhanced non-majority rights for the Kosovo-Serb community, has contributed to fostering a multicultural society or has, by contrast, reinforced the ethno-cultural divide between Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs. This will be done through an analysis of the gap between multicultural policies and effective practises over aspects of language, curriculum, teachers' attitude and textbooks within the Kosovo-run system. The second part of the essay will address the response of the K-Serb community through the use of education as a tool of 'resistance' in the reiteration of its political stance in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 with implications for social cohesion and the future of Kosovo. The "conceptualization" of these two parallel systems may be either indicative of future integration or conversely the expression for a call of full autonomy on the part of the K-Serbian inhabited north or, even worse, symptomatic of a return to violence.

Keywords: multiculturalism, post-independence Kosovo, education in emergencies, education and international development

1. The "Diversity Approach" in Kosovo 1244

February 2018 marks ten years since Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia almost two decades on from the end of the interethnic conflict in June 1999. While 112 countries have so far recognized its independence (Landau, 2017, p. 453),

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including the US and the majority of the EU states but not Russia, China and Serbia itself, the status question remains unresolved and the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 - which followed the ratification of the Kumanovo peace agreement between FYR Serbia, in the person of Milošević, and NATO, in the person of Finnish President Ahtisaari (NATO, 1999, June 9), is still binding. In a nutshell, UNSCR 1244 determined the creation of Kosovo as an international protectorate under the auspices of a UN Interim Administration until a final solution to the status would be reached while reinstating Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also provided extensive international presence to ensure the return of refugees and contribute to democratization efforts. While the majority of Kosovo-Albanian refugees returned to their homes in the days following the end of hostilities, UNHCR (2016, September 16) reports that some 90,000 Kosovo-Serbs are still displaced in Serbia proper, and an additional 15,000, that fled the southern part of the Province at the start of NATO's bombing campaign in 1999, have resettled to the north of Kosovo; a Serb-inhabited area stretching from the Ibar river to the administrative line with Serbia that comprises a stronghold of four municipalities (OSCE, 2015, September 23) still operating outside the Government of Kosovo (GoK)'s legal framework.

The period between the end of the conflict and the declaration of independence has thus not only come to delineate a re-territorialization of the two main ethno-cultural groups but has *de facto* produced a 'reversal' in the majority/minority power roles whereby until 1999 K-Serbs, mostly living in the main town of Prishtina, represented a political though not numerical majority *vis-à-vis* the numerically dominant K-Albanian minority; where minority is construed as a group that affirms "*the public claim to membership of an ethnocultural nation different from the numerically or politically dominant ethnocultural nation*" (Brubaker, 1995, p. 112). As Brubaker maintains, the concept of minority expresses "*a political stance,- not an ethno-demographic fact*" involving "*the assertion of certain collective, nationality-based cultural or political rights*" (p. 60) and which, depending on the intensity of minority demands *vis-à-vis* state policies (see Mikesell & Murphy, 1991 and Kymlicka, 2002, p. 26), may trigger a process of national mobilization for greater autonomy and even outright secession.

With the end of hostilities in 1999 and the absence of a final resolution to the status of Kosovo, the international peacekeeping mission, operating in an extremely volatile security environment, was thus caught up between "*two antagonistic nationalism*" (Brubaker) with Belgrade condemning NATO's unlawful intervention while reiterating its sovereignty over Kosovo and Prishtina, backed by the international community, claiming victory over Milošević's Serbia and preparing for independence as the culmination of its decades-long self-determination efforts.

As Rossi (2014) argues, the management of peace at the end of an inter-ethnic conflict can have two solutions: that is, either territorial partition or the concession of regional autonomy to a specific area/group (p. 868). In Kosovo, the international community was keen in implementing an ethno-culturally "just" approach, to borrow Kymlicka's terminology (2002, p. 16) to guarantee overall security and, thus, opted for a decentralization strategy complemented by power-sharing arrangements to guarantee

the protection of “minorities”, as reflected in the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo (CF, 2001). The document lays emphasis on Kosovo’s diverse ethno-cultural identities by observing adherence to international frameworks that promote the respect of human rights (CF, chapter 3); ensuring that specific attention is paid to people’s right to use their own language, education in their mother-tongue with curricula reflecting a “*spirit of tolerance*” (CF, chapter 4). As Walker and Epp (2010) state, “*the vision for a post-war Kosovo called for a peaceful transition to a pluralistic democracy and a market economy (. . .) clearly education had a vital role in the transformation of Kosovo society*” (p. 105). Most importantly, the document adopts the notion of “communities” in order to avoid defining which nation, intended as an “*historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture*” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 11; Guibernau, 2007, p.47), occupies the majority/minority slot, thus arguably undermining K-Albanians’ pretence of constituting the titular nation.

Post-conflict Kosovo was therefore framed as a multicultural protectorate arising from “*national and ethnic differences*” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 18) that was meant to promote equality of treatment and opportunities and foster inter-ethnic reconciliation through shared democratic values (tolerance, respect for difference and the rule of law). As Preece (2005) argues, the concept of multiculturalism, as formulated by Kymlicka and others, entails that “*political integration should not be equated with cultural homogenization but should instead seek to recognize the cultural distinctiveness of all members of society while ensuring that they also possess equal citizenship and protection from discrimination*” (p. 160). And yet, if the challenge of multiculturalism, as Kymlicka (1995) contends, is to “*accommodate these national and ethnic differences in a stable and morally defensible way*” (p. 25), that is, through legal provisions that everyone accepts, for the UNMIK, faced with growing security concerns after a renewed escalation of inter-ethnic violence against K-Serbs during the 2004 March riots (BBC, 2004, March 20), the additional challenge was arguably that of avoiding multiculturalism becoming an opportunity for K-Serbs and K-Albanians to co-exist, albeit safely, in parallel worlds. That is, confined within their own solipsisms promoting mutually distrustful ethno-political stances, one aiming at nation-maintenance and the other entertaining its nation-building dream without “*an inclusive conversation which crosses ethnic and other divides*” (Preece, p. 162).

Ultimately, the risk in the implementation of this sort of “*protective multiculturalism*” (Goodin, in Randazzo & Bargués, 2012, p. 7) was not only that of reproducing the Yugoslav “*separate but equal*” policies, especially educational and linguistic ones, that “*fixed and crystallized ethnocultural nations [and] were deliberately constructed as belonging to particular ethnocultural nations (Brubaker, 1996, p. 65) but that of further reinforcing identitarian divisions and the formation of “violent” ethnic identities whose salience had progressively increased during Milošević’s “Serbianization” of Kosovo in the early 90’s in order to stifle K-Albanian growing mobilization for independence*” (Kostovicova, 2005, p. 111). During this period, the use of Albanian language and access to education for the K-Albanian minority was drastically reduced resulting in the establishment of a parallel system of education, including a ‘shadow’ University of Prishtina (UP), which “*allowed*

unprecedented nurturing of Albanians' sense of nationhood" (Kostovicova, p. 4) and which gradually forged its links with the Kosovo Liberation Army (Bacevic, 2014, p. 142). As Sommers and Buckland (2004) contend, *"both the parallel and the formal Serb system were promoting Serb and Albanian nationalism, which would later make it difficult for the UN to build an education system based on inclusiveness"* (p. 46). As a matter of fact, despite initial efforts on the part of the international community to build an inclusive education system, the period until the declaration of independence witnessed the re-emergence of parallel structures divided along territorial and ethnic lines albeit reversely reconfigured with K-Albanian students following education under the formal PISG-run structures and K-Serbs, mostly located in the north, studying under what Prishtina still perceives as an illegal system run by Serbia proper; though "recognized" by the UNMIK in order to guarantee access to education in Serbian language (see Bacevic, p. 150).

Taking independence as an historical milestone and given the use of education as a political tool during the '90s, this essay will first explore whether education still largely reflects K-Albanians' *"nationalizing"* (Brubaker) stance of an 'unrealized' nation-state (see Brubaker, 1995, p. 114) *vis-à-vis* the 'threat' of the K-Serb community but also, to a less degree, other smaller communities. This will be done through an analysis of the gap between multicultural policies and effective practises over aspects of language, curriculum, teachers' attitude and textbooks within the Kosovo-run system. The second part of the essay will address the response of the K-Serb community through the use of education as a tool of 'resistance' in the reiteration of its political stance in line with 1244 with implications for social cohesion and the future of Kosovo. The "conceptualization" of these two parallel systems may be either indicative of future integration or conversely the expression for a call of full autonomy on the part of the K-Serbian inhabited north or, even worse, symptomatic of a return to violence since, as Bauman (2009) claims, as long as the presence of a "voluntary apartheid" system exists, *"the danger of society's return to violence is eminent. Thus, the peace process remains fragile"* (p. 112). Findings will be incorporated in the conclusion.

2. The Making of a Nation State

As Kosovo's Parliament voted to declare independence from Serbia on 18 February 2008, Prime Minister Thaci, former guerrilla commander and Vice-rector of the parallel UP during Milošević, in an address to the newborn nation stated that: *"We, the leaders of our people (. . .) proclaim Kosovo an independent and sovereign state (. . .) Kosovo will be "a democratic, secular and multi-ethnic state" committed to the "principles of non-discrimination and equality"* (Al Jazeera, 2008, February 18).

As Landau (2017) argues, despite K-Albanians representing the majority, Kosovo was not framed *"as a nation-state of that community"* (p. 445) but rather as a *"state of communities,"* re-iterating the provisions laid out in the 2001 CF but with *"enhanced"* minority rights for K-Serbs, as reflected in the Ahtisaari Plan (2007) and, subsequently, in the Kosovo Constitution (2008). Both documents stipulate the provision of territorial

decentralization in K-Serb areas along with power-sharing arrangements, including the use of Serbian language as an official language in addition to Albanian (art. 5), extensive cultural/educational rights, the right to manage a Serb-run university in north Mitrovica, the use of Serbian textbooks and financial assistance from Serbia though not without prior consent from Pristina (Law on Education in the Municipalities, art. 12) as well as guaranteed seats in the Assembly.ⁱⁱⁱ

Clearly, the emphasis on Kosovo's multicultural identity and its commitment to the principles of equality and non-discrimination through decentralization and the protection of 'minority' rights must be conceived in the context of the internationally-led peacekeeping process from 1999 onwards. As Fontana (2016) contends, decentralization and, more specifically, educational decentralization, may be conducive to providing legitimacy to the peace process and "*foster conflict transformation by eroding inequalities and promote social mobility*" as well as allowing "*spatially concentrated minority ethnic groups' to protect their distinctive identities, cultures and resources*" (p. 859). In this regard, Landau (2017) argues that the "diversity approach" was not only implemented with the objective to generate external legitimization by the international community in the recognition of Kosovo's independence but also to address "*Serb insecurities and co-opt the Serbs into accepting an independent Kosovo*" (Kostovicova, in Landau, 541). Arguably, Kymlicka and Norman (2008) warn that since "*no State can be culturally neutral, because state institutions are implicitly tilted towards the needs, interests and identities of the majority group,*" the adoption of specific minority rights is meant to prevent institutional inequalities (p. 4). Fontana further maintains that while mother-tongue education could undermine conflict transformation by isolating communities and generating unequal opportunities due, for instance, to variations in the quality of curricular contents (p. 25), the gradual introduction of the language of the Other along with mother-tongue instruction must be regarded as a *sine qua non* condition to ensure communication and the functioning of a democratic society (p. 4). In this respect, Preece (2005) claims that the multicultural discourse dismisses as inadequate the very idea that a state must be unilingual: Multiculturalism is an "*interesting combination of the civic and ethnic linguistic traditions*" (p. 115). In the case of Kosovo, however, the attempt to combine both traditions by trying to secure national unity through, for instance, a national anthem, symbolically titled "Europe" with no words or a flag that resembles the EU one in the blue and yellow colours and six stars representing the six different communities equally portrayed above the map of the country while, at the same time, mapping the territory along ethno-cultural lines through decentralization and the empowerment of non-majority communities has, so far, not only failed to generate 'buy in' from K-Serbs who have continued to boycott Pristina-based institutions (Landau, p. 453) but have gradually contributed to a more or less *ouvert* de-legitimation of the internationally imposed "*diversity approach*" on the part of K-Albanians (Landau, p. 452). Albin Kurti, the leader of the second largest K-Albanian party (EC, 2018, p. 5),

ⁱⁱⁱ Capussela (2015) however argues that K-Serb MPs have used public office for private gain rather than advancing the rights of their constituents (p. 88).

Vetevendosje (literally 'self-determination'), has repeatedly criticized the international community and its imposed ideology of multiculturalism which seems to imply a call for "*historical amnesia*" as a way to ethnic reconciliation (Strohle, in Landau, p. 456). As Kurti himself puts it with regard to Kosovo's new symbols:

"Kosova needs and has the right to an anthem which expresses with pride its values, its history and its identity. Denying these elements denies the dignity of its citizens who have struggled precisely to have a state which reflects these elements, not a state which is empty of substance, meaning and identity." (in Mckinna, 2012, p. 18)

If the implementation of a multicultural model through decentralization and power-sharing might be beneficial in fostering short-term conflict management, the absence of a "*culture of participation*" (Fontana, p. 859) complemented by a failure to mutually understand the identity-based roots of the conflict might determine a strengthening of ethno-cultural identities and, perhaps, reiterate violence in the long-term (Randazzo & Bargués, 2012, p. 7). Pending a resolution to the status of Kosovo, the overarching question, as Fontana ultimately argues (p. 860), is therefore whether education, and educational decentralization in particular, have been employed with the aim to foster reconciliation rather than as a political tool to exacerbate differences and perpetuate ethnic nationalism.

3. Non-majority education under the Prishtina-run institutions

3.1 Language education

As many scholars argue (Landau, 2017; Calu, 2018), Kosovo's legal framework for the protection of non-majority communities is robust *vis-à-vis* a population of nearly 2 million people of which K-Albanians constitutes 93% whilst the remaining 7% is represented by K-Serbs, K-Bosniaks, K-Turkish, Gorani, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, K-Croats and K-Montenegrins (Landau, pp. 459-460).^{iv} However, as the 2018 EU report highlights, the implementation of HR legislation is weak and represents an ongoing challenge due "*inadequate financial and other resources, particularly at local level, limited political prioritisation and lack of coordination*" (EC, p. 5) which largely results in dependency on international donor intervention (p. 27). For instance, the execution of the Law on Languages (2006) which should guarantee the use of both Albanian and Serbian as official languages as well as the use of other non-majority languages (e.g., Bosnian and Turkish) as official ones at municipal level, is deemed as inadequate since the GoK has so far failed to approve a strategy to defend language rights (EU, 2018, p. 26). This is particularly the case for the Serbian language and related mother-tongue educational provision. To date, curricula in Serbian language have not been introduced under the Kosovo education system (EC, 2018, p. 45).

^{iv} These figures do not take into account the K-Serbs that live in the north.

Notwithstanding the political and technical challenges in the recruitment of K-Serb personnel who, for example, earn up to four times the salaries of their K-Albanian counterparts under the Serbian parallel system (Bacevic, 2014, p. 151), it should be noted that a budget line under the Kosovo's Ministry of Education (MEST) is specifically allocated for the K-Serb community although it remains unutilized (Bozic, 2010, p. 286). However, as Bozic maintains, whilst similar financial provisions are absent for other minorities, the MEST has not only developed curricula in Bosnian and Turkish languages at school level (p. 286) but has continued to support teacher training education programs in these languages (Mckinna, 2012, p.13).

The implications for the absence of Serbian-language curricula are profound. Imprimis, this means that the option to receive instruction in one of the two official languages, with the exception of those municipalities where schooling in Turkish or Bosnian is available (mainly the south-west of Kosovo), is limited to Albanian; thereby forcing K-Serb students and other minorities whose mother tongue is Serbian (i.e., Gorani, Roma, Croats) to attend education under Belgrade's system (Bozic, p. 284) which, in turn, hampers their long-term opportunities to create a sustainable future for themselves in Kosovo as Prishtina does not recognize certificates and degrees issued under the Serbian Ministry of Education (OSCE, 2015, p. 20 & Visoka, 2017, p. 199). Further, it is interesting to note that while most of K-Bosniak pupils follow school education in their mother-tongue with only a handful attending the parallel system (Bozic, p. 284), the majority eventually either decide to pursue HE in Bosnia (OSCE 2015, p.19) or at the Serb-run university in Mitrovica north given the limited availability of programs in Bosnian under the MEST. The reason for this basically lies in the inability to speak Albanian (Mckinna, p. 13) due to insufficient learning provision, inappropriate textbooks as well as lack of properly trained teachers (Bozic, p. 290). According to the OSCE (2015), although the current legislation envisages the obligation for non-Albanian pupils from grade 3 onwards to learn one of the two official languages, the subject is not offered as a compulsory one but rather as an elective to be taken weekly for 2 hours (p. 8). Arguably then, even if the choice of pursuing HE in Albanian is available, this is not a viable option; further restricting the ability for the K-Bosniak community to fully participate in Kosovo's society unless, to follow through on this reasoning, parents opt to send their children to Albanian-language schools from grade 1, always with the risk of a more or less conscientious ethno-cultural assimilation. The scenario that comes out is thus not simply one of ethnocultural exclusion towards Serbian-language speaking communities, indicating a repudiation of their cultural identity (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000, pp. 10-11), but also one of social stratification along ethnic lines with regard to smaller, and politically "irrelevant," communities whereby the titular nation could arguably be seen as using the educational system to promote socio-economic privileges to their offspring through language advantages (Bush and Saltarelli, p. 9). And, although it is widely acknowledged that governments utilize the state language as a nation-building tool (Horowitz, 2000, p. 219), in the context of Kosovo, monolingualism becomes a de facto "symbol of domination," reflecting a "desire for a tangible demonstration of preeminence" (Horowitz, p. 220); undermining at its

root the very concept upon which multicultural Kosovo was founded, that is, that of the “*communitas*,” the civic idea of a community of citizens able to reach out and understand each other, equal in treatment and opportunities in the spirit of tolerance and togetherness. In this regard, it might be worth noting that not only cooperation between the two education systems (i.e. north and south) remains absent but even in those few municipalities south of the Ibar river where the same school is shared between K-Serb and K-Albanian pupils, no cross-ethnic activities are organized for them to interact (OSCE, 2015, p. 8).

3.2 Curriculum, textbooks and teachers’ attitude

As Apple (1992) contends, the school curriculum never conveys neutral knowledge as it is the expression, through the content of textbooks, of “*what a society has recognized as legitimate and truthful*” and of what a society should be like in the future (p. 5).

In line with the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, Kosovo’s Law on the Rights of Communities (2008) stipulates the teaching of the history, culture and traditions of all communities in Kosovo under the so-called “national subjects.” This is in the spirit of tolerance and learning to live together. As a general remark, however, it could be argued that the existence of a parallel system that keeps the two main groups separate is *per se* a deterrent to fostering inclusion and the implementation of what Jenson (1998) aptly terms “*the practices of recognition of difference*” (p. 16) on the part of schools. Besides, as the OSCE (2015) points out, Kosovo’s textbooks do not specifically accommodate or at all cover the culture and history of Roma, Gorani, Ashkali, Egyptian, K-Croats and Montenegrins (p. 18). As to the K-Bosniaks, the textbooks in use don’t contain any reference to Kosovo’s communities nor do they cover the specific history of this community in Kosovo since texts are imported from Bosnia (OSCE, 2009, p. 21).

However, the main problem lies in the content of history books containing a politicized and biased vision of the past where the history of K-Albanians is narrated as one of oppression and struggle to break away from the Ottomans first and, subsequently, the Slavs, who are portrayed as invaders, and as murderers during the 1998-1999 period (OSCE, 2009, pp.18-19). The OSCE and other scholars (see Bozic, p. 290) also highlight the lack of students’ critical skills with a focus on rote memorization and teachers’ adherence to the national narratives of history textbooks in particular (Di Lellio, Fridman, Hercigonja, & Hoxha, 2017, p. 40). These also extensively narrate the lives of K-Albanian heroes with an emphasis on Adem Jashari, the founder of the Kosovo Liberation Army, killed by the Serbian army in 1998 (OSCE, 2009, p. 19). In this regard, as a simple Internet search reveals, the fact that all new state universities in post-independence Kosovo have been named in memory of K-Albanian commanders either murdered by Serbs or the Ottomans (i.e., “Ukshin-Hoti” Prizren; “Fehmi-Agani” Gjakova; “Haxhi-Zeka” Peja; “Kadri-Zeka” Gjilan and “Isa-Boletini” south Mitrovica) not only constitutes an element of some sort of ‘hidden’ curriculum reflecting a specific ethno-nationalist narrative but represents an obstacle in the construction of youth’s

critical civic identities that would be conducive to transcending the idea of the Other as an “enemy” of the nation.

4. Education under the Serbian national education system in Kosovo

Unsurprisingly, an ethno-nationalist rhetoric marked by persecution, dispossession and ultimately resistance against Prishtina also characterizes the Serbian “parallel” system of education in Kosovo and Metohija, as Serbs refer to the Province. The “University of Prishtina provisionally relocated in Kosovska Mitrovica (UPKM) is unquestionably the *“symbol of the Serbian statehood and territorial sovereignty”* (Bacevic, p. 153) in the same way as the University of Prishtina (UP), from its establishment in 1968 onwards through the ‘90s up until now, represented and represents a symbolic institution linked to the Albanian sense of nationhood (Bacevic, pp. 56 et passim). The UPKM was set up in 2001 by the Government of Serbia under the auspices of the UNMIK to serve K-Serb IDPs. Both the UNMIK and the OSCE have continued to provide capacity building support until recently with the aim to ensure quality provision of HE in Serbian and, in the aftermath of the conflict, to seek (to no avail) its integration under the PISG structures after a failed attempt to bring together K-Serbs and K-Albanians at the UP in Prishtina due to political resistance (Den Berg & Van der Boer, 2011, p. 73). The University operates under the Law of HE of Serbia delivering instruction exclusively in Serbian with no cooperation with Kosovo universities/MEST. Of note, while the Kosovo’s Law on Education in the Municipalities (2011, art. 14) acknowledges the institution, it does so under the name “University in Mitrovica” and, therefore, considers the actual one as some sort of ‘doppelgänger’ entity which threatens to come back as its official name suggests as well as a host to Serbian nationalism. Arguably, the name of the University not only challenges its double in Prishtina but undermines the ownership of the whole education system in Kosovo and, further, the ‘ownership’ of its territory as ‘homeland.’ The choice of the name has in fact a powerful ethno-political connotation linking chronotopic elements, that is, Prishtina as *“a place of origin’ and as a ‘point of destination”* (Kabachnik & Regulska, 2010, p. 317): The imagery of the ‘home’ is central as it constantly reiterates people’s memory and attachment to their home in the past with their personal histories of loss and displacement which, in turn, fuel resentment and anger towards the Other. The message that the name conveys is thus even more powerful precisely because it opposes deep-rooted ontological values of the past *homeland* (e.g., security, sense of belonging) to a present of uncertainty which is ultimately meant to strengthen and mobilize local ethnic identities around a common narrative and political objective as a way to survive.

A deeply politicized history of the UPKM as the ‘legitimate’ UP appears in the Serbian version of its website where K-Albanians are represented as usurpers following *“NATO’s brutal aggression on our country”* (UPKM, n.d., para. 5 & 6). UPKM clearly reflects Belgrade’s official rhetoric over Kosovo. It should be noted however that, in response to the political climate, UPKM has consistently varied its strategy towards the international community from being more open at the end of the conflict with the

appointment of its first Rector in the person of Gojko Savic, a non-political figure, to assuming a clearly hardline approach with the nomination of Radivoje Papovic, former UP Rector during Milosevic's Serbianization strategy in the aftermath of the 2004 anti-Serb riots (Bacevic, p. 140), to the appointment of Zdravko Vitosevic, a loyal interpreter of Belgrade's position after 2008 (The Times of HE, 2006, June 30). Unsurprisingly, the post-independence period has been characterized by a pronounced nationalistic tone with the University being at its forefront as reflected in a speech delivered in 2010 by the former Minister of Education, Zarko Obradovic, to the students of the Faculty of Education:

"The strongest weapon of every state is education, and you are academic citizens, members of the University of Prishtina, you are the ones who will be teaching others and who, together with us, will defend Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija." (in Bacevic, 2014, pp. 152-153)

If nationalism, as the expression of one particular nation, is to survive is not only thanks to the state as its "protector" but also teachers who, in Gellner (2006)'s metaphor, represent the very "keepers" of its culture (p. 50) by passing it on to future generations. While identifying the University, and with it the whole Serbian education system in Kosovo, as the symbol of Serbia's interests, Obradovic's message simultaneously gives voice to local teachers' pride and fear (of the Other) providing a shared sentiment of 'essential' belonging rooted in the national history and the traditions of Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija as *one* homeland; which is further reinforced by locals' experience of living in exile and under "occupation." According to a recent research (Di Lellio et al., 2017), this is precisely the feeling shared by K-Serbs history teachers who confess: *"It is quite difficult to properly teach, not just history but other fields, or work in any other profession (. . .) We have a specific situation here, since we are living under occupation"* (p. 31). Di Lellio's report also points out teachers' widespread use in the classroom of the derogatory term "Šiptar" in reference to Albanians (p. 32). Similar to their ethnic counterparts, K-Serbs teachers strictly adhere to the skewed narratives contained in the history textbooks (p. 26). Further, as previously noted, while some smaller Kosovo communities (predominantly Roma and Gorani but also K-Bosniaks) attend the Serbian system, the school curriculum, just like the Albanian one, falls short in promoting the history and culture of these groups (OSCE, 2009, p. 20). In this regard, it is worth noting that K-Bosniaks, a Muslim community, have repeatedly criticized school directors of the fact they are being obliged to attend religion education (i.e., Orthodox) which had been re-introduced in the Serbian curriculum in June 2001 after 50 years (OSCE, 2009, p. 20). This is significant as religion not only represents a symbol of 'inherited' cultural identity and it is, therefore, linked to its preservation but its enforcement onto other communities clearly indicates an attempt to assimilate them. Besides, the Serbian Orthodox Church has consistently been linked with radical Serbian nationalist leaders during the '90s (Bacevic, p. 95 *et passim*). Its reintroduction, as Bacevic maintains, could

then conclusively been construed as a decision not to break with the legacy of the past (p. 97).

5. Conclusion

This paper has sought to explore whether education and, in particular, educational decentralization complemented by enhanced non-majority rights in post-independence Kosovo, has contributed to fostering a multicultural society or has, by contrast, reinforced the ethno-cultural divide. Clearly, the idea of providing an institutional framework that would allow the recognition of diversity through territorial power-sharing arrangements as a way to ethnic rapprochement has failed. In the same way it has failed in Bosnia, FYR Macedonia, Lebanon and other post-conflict contexts as Fontana and others argue. Is this perhaps because, as Monteoux claims, the international community has used decentralization as a “one size fits all” device in order “to ‘freeze’ ethnic conflict and escape its responsibility for dealing with the reasons behind these conflicts” (Randazzo & Bargués, 2012, p. 26)? Would then be safe to say that the international community has operated without really tackling the reality on the ground, that is, the legacy of the conflict especially in relation to its human dimension (personal histories of loss, resentment, hatred for the other, distrust) by complementing human rights legislation with mechanisms to promote interethnic communication and mutual understanding through, for instance, bottom-up participatory educational activities (see Sinclair, 2002, pp. 26-31) and efforts to “disarm” curricula (Saltarelli & Bush, p. 33)? In effect, while the OSCE and UNICEF have been at the forefront in fostering programmes addressing youth across all communities to develop critical thinking skills (OSCE & UNICEF, 2018, April 5), interfaith dialogue (OSCE, 2017, December 29) and cross-ethnic communication through sports and culture (OSCE, 2017, August 1), activities are being organized without consistent financial support from official authorities which undermines the sustainability of peace-building efforts and, ultimately, questions the political commitment of officials on both sides.

Beside, notwithstanding the importance of minority rights in conflict-torn societies especially, one could also legitimately ask whether minority rights are, even assuming their technical enforcement by Kosovo authorities, the solution to the ‘issue’ of diversity. Arguably, would the hypothetical introduction of Serbian-language curricula together with adequate teaching of the language of the Other within the Kosovo education system help promote social cohesion? This is because a ‘limited’ implementation of a right-oriented policy, one that foresees schooling in ethnic mother-tongues without cross-ethnic dialogue, would again be tilting towards separation unless there is a strong political commitment to avoid that. As Robeyns (2006) contends, governments are often “*part of the problem, rather than part of the solution*” (p. 77) in the implementation of right-oriented laws. And, to follow through on this reasoning, would then a formal recognition of the Serbian parallel system by Prishtina contribute to generate trust on the part of K-Serbs while preventing them from growing further apart

or would its legitimization, on the contrary, cause internal political upheaval and/or, as Rossi (2014) argues, “*greatly diffuse future threats of secessionism*” (p. 879)?

At the time of writing this paper, no progress has been reported in the normalization of relations between Serbia proper and Kosovo 1244 as reflected in the further stalling of the so-called Brussels Agreement which was initiated in 2013 under the auspices of the EU (Balkan Insight, 2018, July 18). This envisages the creation of an Association of Serb municipalities granting full autonomy over K-Serbs’ “*economic development, healthcare and education*” with direct financial support from Serbia in exchange to its commitment to integrate into the Kosovo’s legal framework (GoK, 2013, April 19). While the agreement had been perceived as a success by Serbia as this does not only exclude a mandatory recognition of Kosovo’s independence (EU Western Balkans, 2018, March 9) but would substantially strengthen its position on the ground through the ‘legalization’ of its parallel system, it has led to political havoc within Kosovo resulting in the 2017 ‘snap’ elections which saw the victory of the “*war wing coalition*” (Balkan Insight, 2018, June 12), marking the resurgence of ultranationalism. Amid growing corruption, unemployment and a faltering economy (EC, 2018, pp. 18-19; pp. 38-39), the question of the Other is certainly a political one benefitting no one but politicians in their efforts to propagate their populist agendas. However, considering the re-emergence of populism and the ‘problematization’ of diversity across the world, the ultimate question is really how can very idea of multiculturalism, an idea that was considered critical in the legitimization of Kosovo, still appeal as a solution in post-conflict settings given that it has *de facto* lost traction even within those countries and regions, that is, the EU and the US, that have promoted and sustained it as a vision for the newborn State?

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