

Rebuilding the educational system in post-conflict context in Kosovo - Survival of the Unmik's provisions to support the living together through primary education

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Education as a tool of peace

In the early nineties, education is identified as a factor of social and economic development, supportive to peace. In this way, education in post-conflict and reconstruction time have to play a role in conflict prevention and peace building process. Education is a main approach to disseminate and acquire values, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours that lead to a sustainable living together. Among the school teachings, history and civics are identified as the main teaching contents to let children develop such skills.

Why is education an issue between Serbs and Albanian from Kosovo?

From 1989, when Milosevic get the governmental power in Serbia, autonomy of the Kosovo Albanian is restricted, in order to create an ethnically pure territory in Kosovo. Albanian students are denied to attend school in their own language. Soon, Albanian students and teachers can't access the educational buildings anymore. To address this segregation, Kosovo Albanian self-organise in the so-called «shadow system».

This parallel education system, set up in 1992, allow the schooling of Albanian children in private locations until 1998. This parallel system collapsed due to the outbreak of war.

Education and the International community in Kosovo - Unmik

The war was ended by a Nato headed air campaign, immediately followed by the launched of an international civil mission, the Unmik. The main objectives of the Unmik in education matter is to democratise and to modernise the education system in Kosovo, in order to reflect the international guidelines on education. Unmik would also have to reunify the existing systems, serb and albanian, in one unique education system in which all students in Kosovo can attend education.

Research question: *Are the Unmik-based dispositions on primary education which aim to support the living together still existing in the independent Kosovo?*

Expected results: Existence of a distortion between International and Kosovo provisions relating to the emergence of the living together through education and the operationalisation of these provisions in the public primaries schools of Prishtina.

Methodology and material: The methodology used for this research is qualitative and in a systemic approach. The raw data collected were processed in a cross-thematic analysis. Data were collected in the public primaries schools of Prishtina from March, 23th to May, 6th 2012. 14 schools on the 17 schools in Prishtina took part in the research. 8 interviews were conducted.

Questionnaires: Built on the basis of two corpuses of normative or legal texts, both international and local, relating to the education as a tool of peace building and conflict prevention. Questionnaires were filled by the teachers in history and civics, as well as by the director of each primary school that participated to this research.

Semi-guided interviews: Guides were built on basis of the contents of the international and local corpuses and field reports.

Interviews were conducted in english or in albanian with a translator, recorded and transcribed.

Interviews were hold with Education officials, local individuals who took part of the reform process and worked under the Unmik, and independent local experts in the education field.

Results

The study of the international and local texts corpuses reveals that all the international provisions and guidelines are contained in the legislative and normative texts on education of the Republic of Kosovo.

All the provisions set up by the Unmik Department of Education along international guidelines on education as a tool for peace are operationalised in the responding primaries schools of Prishtina and still exist in 2012.

The expected distortion was not proved as significant.

In matter of democratization, parents, children and teachers take part in the decision making process through the attendance in schools committees, parents committees and students committees.

Their views can be heard by the decision making authorities. The reformed system, offering free primary schooling and extended duration of compulsory education, supports the inclusion of children from minorities as well as special provisions.

Local experts were involved in the rewriting process of primaries books in history and civics.

However they were subjected to international Unmik officers decisions until 2002, when the Provisional Institutions of the Self-Government of Kosovo (PISG) were set up. Teachings contents in history and civics reflect the international guidelines in matter of education that lead to a peaceful living together, mostly the learning of democratic national and international citizenship.

The teaching methods meet the requirements of modern teaching and learning, learner-centered and promoting active learning and interactivity.

All the 14 responding schools are of the same profile, what suggests the Unmik provisions were massively set up in the primaries schools of Prishtina. Schools have also similar profile in the challenges they face.

Education buildings are still not sufficient given the large number of pupils.

Students attend school in three shifts, reducing the quality of education and the opportunities to use modern teaching and learning methods. the lack of funding leads to the lack of school equipment.

In 2012, the Kosovo Educational system is still divided. Serbs students attend schools that follow the governmental Serb curriculum, while Albanian students attend schools leaded by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo.

Children from others minorities still face issues to be included in the education system.

To conclude

In rebuilding the Kosovo education system in accordance with the international guidelines on education, Unmik missed to take into consideration the boundaries and the specificities of the ground and relied to little on local resources and skills. The question of the adaptability of a uniform model of education, reflecting international guidelines, is raised.

The legislative and the normative framework on education in Kosovo is still developing, while the actual system cannot address the challenges it is facing.

Obstacles are growing and the threat of distortion between the decisions and the operationalisation is still existing.

These ongoing challenges and the persistence of a divided system of education don't enable the actual system to develop at its full potential. Education cannot properly play its role as a tool of peace building and conflict prevention, what contains a risk of conflicts resurgence.

References

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