Building new realities for teacher training in Kosovo[1]

Dukagjin PUPOVCI[2]

Introduction

In March 1989 using threats of military force, the Government of Serbia *de facto* abolished the autonomy of Kosovo, and subsequently imposed a number of measures implementing centralized rule from Belgrade. Continuous oppression by Belgrade against ethnic Albanians in the following decade escalated in a bloody war, which was ended in June 1999 by a NATO-led military intervention. Kosovo was placed under the protection of the United Nations, and declared independent February 2008.

In the period 1990-1999, Kosovar Albanian students and teachers were deprived of education opportunities in many ways. Perhaps the most potent symbol of this prejudice were the ethnic shifts introduced in almost all primary schools in Kosovo, often dividing school buildings by brick walls. Following the war, numerous education analyses pointed out the quality of teaching as one of the aspects requiring immediate attention. The Thematic Review of National Policies for Education in Kosovo, carried out in September 2000 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001), brought important recommendations for reforming Kosovar in-service and pre-service teacher training.

This chapter analyzes the opportunities in teacher training since 1999, both in-service and pre-service. The first experienced radical changes – moving from almost no activity pre-1999, to chaotic excess brought by the international community, and finally emerging as a relatively coordinated system. Pre-service teacher training in Kosovo has evolved from academic-based subject training programmes to those with stronger pedagogical content aimed at developing teaching skills and understanding of children.

It should be noted here that the exploration of teacher training does not deal with Serbian schools in Kosovo. These schools recognize only the authority of the Government of Serbia, refusing to participate in any education reform driven by international or Kosovo authorities. In addition, following the advice of the Government of Serbia in spring 2006, Serbian teachers massively terminated work contracts with UNMIK and continued to receive their salaries from Belgrade.

The author of this chapter was a university teacher in the period 1985-2000 and witnessed the transition from a unified to parallel education system, developments in both education systems, increasing inter-ethnic tensions which culminated in an open conflict,

and post-war reconstruction in Kosovo. In 2000, he established the Kosova Education Center (KEC), a non-governmental organization focused primarily on in-service teacher training which, in eight years, served more than 70 per cent of the Kosovo teachers. He has authored a number of research and review articles on teacher training.

Background to the conflict

Following the end to Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, Milošević's regime expelled Albanians *en masse* from state and public employment. Around 90 per cent of Albanians working in the administration and 70 per cent of those working in public and socially owned enterprises were dismissed. It shut down the University of Prishtina and nearly all high schools; closed down or muzzled Albanian-language media; exerted brutal repression against Albanian political activists; and established a generalized system of apartheid in Kosovo, where the Serb minority now ruled with the military, police, political and economic backing of Belgrade .

Following refusal of the government in Belgrade to sign the Rambouillet Accord which anticipated strong international military presence in Kosovo, the North Alliance Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign began on March 24, 1999. Right after the launch of the campaign, Serbian forces followed with "ethnic cleansing" expelling an estimated 850,000 people out of the country. Hundreds of thousands of people also fled their homes and sought refuge in other parts of Kosovo.

The war ended on 10 June 1999 with Serbian military and police forces withdrawing, and the peacekeeping force of 45,000 NATO-led troops assuming responsibility for the security under auspices of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). In three weeks, some 500,000 Albanian refugees returned to Kosovo. By November 1999, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 808,913 out of 848,100 had returned. However, an estimated 164,000 Serbs and thousands of Roma fled their homes fearing retaliation by the Albanian majority (Human Rights Watch, 1999). A part of them settled in areas with majority Serb population in Kosovo, forming isolated enclaves south of the river Ibar and a compact territory bordering Serbia north of the river, whereas the others moved to Serbia.

Impact on education

In 1990 the Kosovo education system came under so-called, "temporary measures" aiming to impose compliance with new Serbian curriculum and laws. Effectively this was implemented by appointing administrators loyal to the regime who had absolute powers with respect to school management, including employment and dismissal of personnel. This step to bring the Kosovo schools under the control of Belgrade triggered a reaction of the Albanian political movement that legitimized a kind of "parallel system". This system operated from 1991-1999 under the control of the non-recognized "Provisional Government of Kosovo" in exile.

The parallel schools, while openly conducted and therefore officially tolerated, were at the same time subject to repression. Teachers and organizers were frequently subjected to arrest, intimidation and beatings by the police, as detailed by various human rights organizations (Davies, 1999). The system was funded by voluntary contributions of the Kosovo Albanian residents, but also contributions of the Albanians in the Diaspora. Teachers in the "parallel system" were regarded as heroes who helped sustain the only centrally-

administered segment of Kosovo statehood which was tolerated by Serbian authorities.

Given the circumstances, there was little if any accountability regarding education quality. Due to the shortage of school space, the classes had often to be reduced from 45 minutes to 30 and even to 20 minutes, which inevitably promoted teacher-centered classrooms and rote learning. There was virtually no in-service training for teachers, and very little awareness on emerging learner-centered approaches.

During the NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo, catch up classes were organized in tent schools and host communities for about 150,000 refugee children in Albania, 30,000 in Macedonia and 2,000 in Montenegro (UNICEF 1999). NGO-led in-service teacher training initiatives in neighboring countries marked the first exposure of Kosovar teachers to learner-centered methodologies. Those initiatives set the stage for teacher training projects mounted in Kosovo by numerous agencies and NGOs that flooded into Kosovo in the second half of 1999.

Re-starting the education system

One of the first post-war priorities for UNMIK was to re-start the education system: the physical condition of schools represented a serious constraint to the success of this exercise. Rebuilding, refurnishing and re-equipping were the main characteristics of this emergency phase. The initial assessment of school infrastructure in the post-war Kosovo was bleak: 38.9 per cent of schools were severely damaged or completely destroyed and 24.2 per cent were damaged but still repairable. Most of the schools had undergone looting or destruction of school furniture (UNICEF, 1999). Key steps taken towards the re-establishment of education services in Kosovo were procurement of free textbooks for all children in Kosovo, heating of school buildings and payment of stipends to teachers in the absence of a salary scheme (Daxner, 2000).

The first initiative toward broader education reform was the 'Developing the new Education System in Kosovo' (DESK), initiated by UNMIK in October 1999. For six months working groups composed of Kosovar and international stakeholders produced reviews of the education system at all levels. However, DESK failed to actively produce solutions, and the process was dissolved in June 2000, officially, due to the pressure of time and lack of funding.

During this emergency phase, Kosovo was awash with international agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, wishing to promote programmes in education. As there were many different types of supporters and donors it was not always easy to identify in which capacity they acted: as sources of manpower and material, as contractors, handling agents or consultants (Daxner, 2000).

Early teacher training efforts

Since the parallel system in Kosovo reflected the need for survival of the education system rather than for its development, Kosovo was not a party to the debate concerning teacher education that was taking place in the last decade of the twentieth century. Teachers in Kosovo received no in-service training for almost a decade, nor any type of professional support leading to the improvement of teaching.

In a reverse of this scenario, following the war, numerous international agencies established a supply-driven market of professional development opportunities for practicing teachers in Kosovo. The offers varied from training programmes focused on

general teaching methodologies and creating learner-centered classrooms, to very specific types of trainings in integration of students with disabilities, in psycho-social support, and in dealing with controversial issues such as AIDS or reproductive health. The most common approach in 1999 and 2000 was to provide 1-3 day long workshops that ended with a type of certification.

At this time, much attention was paid to producing "multiplier effects" by providing training of trainers and cascading it down to schools. This often ended up with more gain in quantity than in quality. In fact, Kosovar educators complained that there was such intense competition for teachers to participate in training courses and workshops in some areas that teachers could spend more time in training than in classroom. (Sommers & Buckland, 2004). Most of those initiatives were short-lived, and unfortunately failed to strengthen the local capacity for training provision.

This fragmentation and lack of sustainability created the need for more coordination among donors and implementing partners. Hence a lead agency approach was introduced, assigning unified responsibility for ensuring both the delivery of services and the building of capacity in the identified area (Sommers and Buckland, 2004). Lead agencies were nominated for curriculum development, pre-school education, teacher training, vocational education and training, special education, and so on.

The Kosovo Educator Development Program

The Kosovo Educator Development Program (KEDP), sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), served as the lead agency for teacher education reform in Kosovo, helping to build the new Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), supporting new policies and standards for the sector, training Ministry officials in management and leadership techniques, training school directors (principals), and training teachers in learner-centered instructional methods. KEDP also supported a new Faculty of Education at the University of Pristina, including provision of scholarships for 20 of its students to study with the University of Calgary.

To engage key stakeholders in the implementation of the KEDP, a Project Steering Committee (PSC) was constituted in 2001 and met regularly throughout the life of the project. The Committee was expanded over time to include the senior representatives of the new Ministry and all relevant stakeholders in Kosovo. The PSC functioned as coordinator of the teacher education renovation process in Kosovo. In addition, KEDP organized regular coordination meetings with other donors and implementing agencies, facilitating the flow of information on teacher training.

In this phase, KEDP was a sector-wide intervention that used "project tools" (technical assistance, an office and budget outside the Ministry, etc.) as well as programme-type methods—at the same time. The Project Steering Committee functioned, increasingly, as a sector planning and coordination body, including Ministry, University, NGO (KEC) and donor representatives (Jackson, 2006). However, coordination was carried out in a participatory manner avoiding a regulatory approach and allowing enough room for other initiatives to develop.

The first step of KEDP - the lead agency assuming responsibility for the coordination of in-service teacher training was to help establish the Teacher Training Review Board (TTRB) which played the role of key monitoring institution to watch over the quality and standards of teacher education and teaching practice in Kosovo. As such,

the TTRB had an advisory function to the Ministry and was responsible for approving pre- and in-service programmes for training, re-training and professional development of teachers. Guided by KEDP expertise, TTRB developed standards of professional practice and teacher licensing regulations, but was often constrained by the limited capacity of the Ministry to implement approved policies and regulations.

Although there was a coordination mechanism between the lead agencies, and UNMIK exercised certain supervision of their work, the executive tasks were usually carried out under the leadership of the respective agencies (Pupovci and Hyseni, 2002). One of the key challenges in exercising the coordination role was the notorious fact that not all donors and implementing agencies can be and want to be coordinated. Thus, there were agencies that did not participate at all, or, at least, not in their full capacity, in KEDP-led coordination activities.

Reforming teacher education

Transition from an emergency to more of a developmental phase was marked by actions focused on building an education system that meets reasonable modern standards. A number of donor-funded projects addressed issues such as quality of teaching, quality of textbooks, or aimed to create and empower structures to deal with various aspects of quality in education. These included both in-service and pre-service teacher training.

An education policy statement by UNMIK at the beginning of 2001 anticipated an important role for teacher training:

> "*Teacher training will play the central role and be the core of the reforms, providing much needed experts for implementing new curricula. Teachers will transplant the new mindset into schools; they will translate needs into learning processes. They will be the critics and the agents of the changing environment. These are high stakes. We are convinced that, with all respect to the accomplishments of the past, experience acquired in the old system is not a relevant criterion for being an educator or getting assigned to reform tasks*" (Daxner, 2001).

In-service teacher training

Two years after the end of the conflict it was clear that the in-service teacher training in Kosovo had shifted from emergency to developmental approach. With support from CIDA, numerous donor agencies and Kosovo-based organizations like the KEC, local capacity for delivery of training programmes were built. Teams of Kosovar trainers were trained, and training materials in local languages developed.

Dissemination was done in a more organized way, by gradually enrolling teachers in training programmes and by focusing on quality of provision rather than on "all-inclusiveness". In many cases school-based training was organized involving teachers and administrators from targeted schools as trainers. In 2004 MEST reported that 50 per cent of 23,000 practicing teachers in Kosovo had participated in at least one training programme which was a remarkable achievement.

The first impact evaluation of an in-service teacher training program called Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) took place in the spring of 2003 (Pupovci and Taylor, 2004). Findings of this evaluation illuminated the significant impact that the training had had on the classroom and overall school environments across Kosovo. They also indicated that school-based provision of training was more effective

than training based on individual enrolments

> *Students have realized that (the) teacher is not the dominant person. He is rather a coordinator for them. Students like that their life experiences are valuable for school. For social science, it's important. Students are not just learning abstract things. They can link everyday life with school.* (An interviewed teacher) (Pupovci and Taylor, 2004)

An extraordinary feature of the in-service teacher training system in Kosovo has been the high motivation of teachers to participate in training programmes despite low salaries and non-applicability of licensing regulations. Demand for in-service training programmes has increased enormously in recent years, with teachers expressing readiness to participate in covering the training costs (Zgaga, 2006). This shift from incentive-based to fee-based participation in professional development is due to the increased awareness of teachers of the importance of creating a child-friendly learning environment.

Demand for teacher training also impacted education policy-making in Kosovo. Starting with the fiscal year 2004, the MEST has a separate budget line for in-service teacher training which is used for the purchase of training services from different providers. Similarly, some municipalities provide funding for in-service training to the schools for their area of responsibility. One sound example that shows the convergence of bottom-up and top-down approaches to in-service training is the World Bank-funded project on improving education participation (World Bank, 2003). The participating schools were encouraged by the Ministry and local authorities to use the grant funding for the purpose of professional development, and many of them did so.

Inevitably, provision of quality programming creates demand among teachers, which again builds the capacity of providers for development of new programmes. Kosovo had virtually no public institutions that were able to act as training providers, and no non-governmental groups. Some donors adopted the "institutional approach" demonstrating firm commitment to develop the training capacity in the public sector, others felt that investment in the non-governmental sector was justifiable.

An example of the latter is the KEC, a local organization that developed a major part of its programming through its own system of provision rather than through annual summer institutes organized by KEDP. As the most prominent local organization focused on teacher training, KEC received support from and participated in numerous events organized by KEDP. This culminated in transferring a part of KEDP programmes and resources to KEC in mid-2007 as the Canadian project phased out.

Initial teacher education

A key finding of the *OECD Thematic Review of National Policies for Education* carried out in Kosovo in late 2000 was that "the concept of teaching as a profession is missing from the teacher training curriculum" (OECD, 2001). Initial teacher training in Kosovo used to be mainly academic and heavily subject-based. Practice teaching represented 11 to 14 per cent of the workload in pre-service programs for pre-primary and the first cycle of primary education (grades 1-4), 2.2 to 4 per cent in programs for the second cycle of primary education (grades 5-8), and less than 1 per cent of the workload in programs for secondary teachers (Pupovci, 2002).

The Education Policy Statement 2001 makes an explicit reference to the reform of initial teacher training in Kosovo announcing plans to replace the existing fragmented

structure for teacher training with a unified Faculty of Education. This was one of the main components of the KEDP programming which helped to train the professors, develop courses and programmes, and provide resources and an effective management system.

Of all the components of KEDP, pre-service capacity-building proved to be the most difficult to implement. Like many post-Communist universities in Eastern Europe, the University of Prishtina was a base for old-guard resistance to change, hyper-politics and corruption. In spite of the fact that the Faculty of Education was supposed to be a completely new academic unit within the University of Prishtina, in reality it was created in September 2002 by merging one academic unit and four teacher training institutes based in four different towns of Kosovo.

In an attempt to accommodate most of the existing programmes and teaching staff in the new institution, the University of Prishtina created an institution which reversed a number of agreed policies, including limits on student intake to the Faculty of Education and the disbanding of earlier teacher training institutes. Disputed elections at the University of Prishtina in 2004 resulted in temporary withdrawal of the Canadian scholarship component, triggering local resentment. The situation was only stabilized in 2006 following new appointments at the University.

Exposure of Kosovar teachers and policy makers to information on learning-centered methodologies, along with the leading role of the KEDP in developing the programmes of the Faculty of Education, influenced the representation of practice teaching in curricula, which increased to 25 per cent of students' workload. In addition, courses from the field of education began to constitute 30 to 50 per cent of the workload (Zgaga, 2006).

Although the initial plan was to build capacity for provision of in-service training within the Faculty of Education, this was only partly achieved, primarily due to organizational reasons and shortage of human resources. In the academic year 2006/2007 the Faculty of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry, started to pilot a special, bachelor-level, programme for practicing teachers holding qualifications from former teacher training institutes in order to help them meet the basic licensing requirements.

Lessons learned

Although provision of in-service teacher training in Kosovo was part of the emergency response to the post-war reconstruction of Kosovo, it gained even more importance when Kosovars and international actors began to think about designing a new educational system. The lead agency approach, undoubtedly, played a significant role in reforming the teacher training system in Kosovo. However, one of the weakest points of this approach was coordination between lead agencies managed by the "owners" of the process – UNMIK authorities during the interim phase and, later, the Ministry of Education.

A couple of years after the end of the conflict, Kosovo was a huge graveyard of training programmes that had been delivered only a few times and reached very limited numbers. No matter how good the programmes were, after phasing out donor interventions, there were virtually no resources and no capacity to support further delivery or institutionalize them. It appears to be very important to establish cooperation with local organizations that are able to sustain programming and to invest in building their capacity. Most of the training programmes structured in that way managed to scale up and sustain themselves beyond the initial donor support.

The new Faculty of Education is a major departure from previous pedagogical

training at University of Prishtina in that the Faculty is developing a substantive relationship with the school system, has introduced new programmes, instituted a successful practice-teaching component, and seeks to both improve the quality of instruction by professors and the quality of students recruited to the Faculty.

In retrospect, one of the major downfalls in teacher education reform in Kosovo was that unfortunately, there were no clear links between teacher training and curriculum reform. This was partly due to different approaches of lead agencies responsible for curriculum reform (UNICEF) and teacher training (KEDP). Whereas KEDP assumed the main responsibility for implementation of teacher training programmes and for coordination of the activities in the field, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to drive the process of curriculum reform. The General Curriculum Framework was developed in 2001, but never officially approved; whereas grade curricula were approved year after year, but rarely accompanied by training targeted to facilitate their implementation.

In addition to creating a critical mass of change agents among teachers it is equally important for donor agencies to work with local authorities in formulating and instituting new policies and systems for implementation. One outstanding example is the Teacher Training Review Board, which was begun by KEDP and has been run successfully by the Ministry for several years.

Through this progress and its limitations, it is apparent that genuine reform of teacher training in a post-conflict society requires some basic pre-conditions:

1. Peace must be established and durable

Although some training of Kosovar teachers was carried out in refugee camps, sustainable reform of teacher training is not possible amidst an open conflict. Inter-ethnic tensions typical of a post-conflict society may however easily lead to exclusion of certain ethnic groups from the reform process.

2. Intervention must be long-term and with substantial funding

Short-term interventions in Kosovo raised awareness of educators on learner-centered methodologies and managed to create some demand for professional development. However, most of those training programs were not sustained beyond the donor support. Long-term interventions with substantial funding can promote change at multiple levels and reach substantial numbers of critical agents of change – teachers, administrators, parents, schools, etc.

3. Cooperation should be built with local partners

It is of utmost importance for implementing agencies to build local partnerships thus contributing to capacity building and sustaining the results of the intervention. Depending on the context those partners may be public or private institutions, but they need to be committed to the reform process.

4. Coordination and alignment with other initiatives

Typically, multiple initiatives targeting the education sector may concurrently be in place, and in order to optimize the results, some coordination among them is needed. Ideally, the government would assume this responsibility, which, if carried out successfully and combined with demand-driven technical assistance, may set the stage for the Sector Wide

Approach (SWAp) in the education sector. Nevertheless, in many cases the government needs help in exercising the coordination role, so the donor partners should be ready to provide this type of assistance by setting up and supporting appropriate mechanisms.

In post-conflict settings that are stable, and in cultures that value learning, the strengthening of education systems, practices and human resources can yield long-term benefits for the society as a whole. Schools can teach democratic values, not only through curriculum content, but also in the way teachers teach. Teachers who are skilled and secure can, and often do, create learning environments which create some of the features of democracy. Students who experience such "educational democracy" come to expect similar practices from their civic and political leaders. Therefore, teacher training in a post-conflict society can have a very high democratic return of investment. It is hoped this will be the case moving forward in an independent Kosovo.

References

- Davies, L. (1999). Education in Kosova - Report to the British Council.
- Daxner, M. (2000). *Education in Kosovo: From Crisis to Recovery and Transformation*. UNMIK.
- Daxner, M. (2001). *Education Policy Statement 2001*. Prishtina: UNMIK.
- Human Rights Watch. (1999). Abuses against Serb and Roma in the new Kosovo. , *Volume 11*(10 (D)). Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/kosov2/#_1_9
- Jackson, E. (2006). Ten Thousand Agents of Change: Education for Nation-Building in Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro (Performance Review of the Educator Development Program)
- OECD. (2001). Thematic Review of National Policies for Education - Kosovo. Retrieved from http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/thematic-review-kosovo-yug-kos-enl-t05.htm
- Pupovci, D. (2002). Teacher Education System in Kosovo. *Metodika*, *3*(5), 125-145.
- Retrieved from www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/teacher_education_in_kos-enl-t05.pdf
- Pupovci, D., & Hyseni, H. (2002). Policy on Education for Democratic Citizenship and the Management of Diversity in Southeast Europe – Stocktaking Research Project, Country Report: Kosovo.
- Pupovci, D., & Taylor, A. (2004). Crtical Thinking in Kosovo - A Framework for Change. *Metodika*, *5*(8), 7-22.
- Sommers, M., & Buckland, P. (2004). *Parallel worlds: rebuilding the education system in Kosovo*. Paris: UNESCO IIEP. Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001361/136152e.pdf
- UNICEF. (1999). *Education Situation Report No. 1 - Bringing children back to school in Kosovo*. Prishtina: UNICEF. Retrieved from http://www.seerecon.org/kosovo/documents/education_sitrep1.pdf
- World Bank. (2003). *Education Participation Improvement Project- PAD*. Washington DC: World Bank. Retrieved from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSServlet?pcont=details&eid=000094946_03042604002460
- Zgaga, P. (Ed.). (2006). *The Prospects of Teacher Education in South East Europe*. Ljubljana: Faculty of Education.