REWRITING HISTORY BOOKS AND PULLING DOWN LANGUAGE BARRIERS: EDUCATION AS THE KEY ELEMENT FOR RECONCILIATION IN KOSOVO

Author: Lucía López Castro

European Master's Degree student

Supervisor: Carla Marcelino Gomes

CONTENT

1. Introduction

Several months ago, I had the chance to go to a field trip to Kosovo as a student of a Human Rights' course[1] in order to analyse the situation of the new born country. During the trip, we hold meetings with all the actors there: politicians, NGO's, political activists, media, international missions, etc. During my stay, I was analysing and thinking in everything that could be a possibility to improve the situation regarding reconciliation after the conflict. Therefore, when I came back, I decided to make a research with the aim of deepening and trying to offer a small contribution.

Nevertheless, I would like to point out that what I propose is a process that would eventually have positive effects in a long term, since the conflict is still very recent.

This essay is organised in five sections: the first is a brief introduction of the concept of reconciliation. The second talks about the role of education in reconciliation. Following, the corpus of the essay is focused on two aspects of education that I consider should be improved in order to achieve reconciliation. On the one hand, I will analyse the role that history books play in the learning process of children from a post-conflict area and the risks of having one-sided versions of history. On the other hand, I offer an analysis of the importance of learning the language of the other community in order to be able to communicate as a starting point to build personal relationships. Language could be then used as a tool to achieve, in a long-term and accompanied by other activities, reconciliation in Kosovo.

Concerning methodology, the essay is based on the most updated information that I found available in English. Therefore, if there is any relevant document written in an unknown language to me it is not included. Contacts made during my experience there were also used, including NGOs and international organisations, which provided me with very helpful guidance and information.

To finish, I would like to point out that this essay is mainly focused on the reconciliation process between the communities that were confronted during the

---

[1] European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation (www.emahumanrights.org), 17-24th of January.

conflict: Albanians and Serbs. Therefore, the role of other communities is not included in this research due to time limitations.

2. What does reconciliation mean?

The first steps towards reconciliation processes took place in Latin America, with the establishment of Commission of Inquiries and Truth Commissions. The first one was in Brazil in 1979, then Argentina in 1983 and in the 90's, El Salvador, Chile, etc (United States Institute for Peace)[2]. Nevertheless, the peak moment of the concept of reconciliation was mid-1990s, when Nelson Mandela led the process of transition in South Africa from apartheid to democracy. Since then, speeches about reconciliation have increased dramatically throughout the world (Daly & Sarkin, 2007).

It is not easy to find an exact definition of what reconciliation means, since this process is different depending on the country and its situation. Nevertheless, I will choose the one offered by the well-known sociologist John Paul Lederach. He defines reconciliation in terms of praxis rather than theory, and I subscribe myself to his words. He places human relationships at the core of the reconciliation process -reconciliation as a *focus*. I completely agree since most of contemporary conflicts, as he explains, take place at an internal level. This means that groups that were or are in conflict live together in the same territory; "they have direct experience of violent trauma that they associate with their perceived enemies and that is sometimes tied to a history of grievance and enmity that has accumulated over generations" (Lederach, 2008). In some cases, they live as neighbours in a tense situation. "The conflicts are characterized by deep-rooted, intense animosity; fear; and severe stereotyping" (Lederach, 2008).

He defines reconciliation as the place where concerns about the past and the future can meet. "For this to happen, people must find the ways to encounter themselves and their enemies, their hopes and their fears" (Lederach, 2008). Reconciliation as a *locus*, is the place where truth, mercy, justice and peace meet (Lederach, 2008).

Nevertheless, some combinations of concepts are not as easy as it seems in terms to practice. Several clashes can be found in the process of reconciliation.

---

[2] http://www.usip.org

One of them is the relationship between truth and reconciliation; an extremely complicated one. It can be said that truth leads to reconciliation since "truth disinfects the wounds, has a cathartic effect and helps people to heal" (Daly &Sarkin, 2007). It could also be argued that the truth impedes reconciliation, because "it can be so terrible that attitudes harden and forgiveness and empathy are all but impossible" (Daly & Sarkin, 2007). Another complex relationship is the one between reconciliation and justice: "the link becomes critical in times of transition, particularly in societies where the past has been characterized by strife, violence, polarization and caste" (Daly & Sarkin, 2007). One argument is that reconciliation and justice are incompatible, and justice is to be favoured at the expense of reconciliation at every juncture. In other views, reconciliation can be seen as promoting justice, insofar as both aim to restore and heal troubled communities, and to redress the imbalance of the past trauma (Daly & Sarkin, 2007).

This is why Lederach places the four concepts – truth, justice, mercy and peace - at the same level, *sinequanon* reconciliation will not be possible.

Although he places the four concepts at the same level, I believe that the implementation of these concepts could be placed at two different levels, since, in my view, justice and truth are two concepts that should be implemented at the top levels; establishing courts and finding the truth is not something that can be done in the streets, by common citizens. At the other level, I envision people in the streets developing the concept of mercy and peace in a long term basis: either because they are helped by plans of reconciliation –as the one that I will propose- or because of the circumstances of their lives, such as exhaustion of poor and difficult situation and an uncertain future.

From the conceptual framework that Lederach proposes, my paper will offer two potential changes in the curriculum of schools in Kosovo to help the process of reconciliation as a *focus,* provided by a middle level series of actors that would be the bridge between people on the ground and decisions at the top level in order to achieve in a long term two out of the four requisites for reconciliation: mercy and peace.

From the three approaches that he describes, top-level approaches, middle-range approaches and bottom-up approaches, I will focus on the second one. I

believe that reconciliation should not be imposed by the government through the enactment of laws that do not belong to the people; this is an easy and not pragmatic way of forcing things to happen. In order to achieve reconciliation, we need time and the will of the people. The formula to achieve the will through time is education. If new generations have another perspective of the past and think more about the future, it is possible that the process of reconciliation speeds up. Lederach states in his book that "envisioning a common future creates new lenses for dealing with the past" (Lederach, 2008). From the conversations that I had while in Kosovo, I could feel exhaustion of the situation and willingness to move forwards by focusing on the future. The problem is that by now, the future is not a shared one. I believe that time has not arrived yet. In fact, according to the nested paradigm of the time dimension in peace building, Lederach establishes 4 phases: Crisis intervention, preparation and training, design of social change and desired future. The last one is considered a generational vision which occurs 20 or more years after the conflict (Lederach, 2008).

Another issue to be underlined is that the process of reconciliation tends to be simplified for the sake of establishing democracy and living in stable countries, and I wonder: what about the reconciliation of the souls? Does this mean that because I can vote and nobody is going to bomb my house I like living surrounded by people who used to be enemies? Is it sustainable to tolerate each other instead of accepting and respecting each other? Is there anyone helping me to conceive things in such a way that I will be able to consider that person as a nice neighbour?

In order to offer a possible solution, I will be focusing on education as a parallel way out for reconciliation in a long term basis. Parallel in the sense that other mechanisms should be already in place to give to people the right to justice and truth.

To finish this first part, I would like to add that it is also important to remember that reconciliation in times of transition raises essential issues about the human conditions; "It exemplifies the potential for virtually limitless strength and generosity of spirit that is also immanent in human nature" (Daly & Sarkin, 2007). Therefore, even with the best models of reconciliation, the will and the hearts of people play a crucial role.

3. Education

Education, according to article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace"[3]

As defined by the Universal Declaration, education is the centerpiece for the understanding among nations. Therefore, it is important to consider its role as a long term tool to achieve reconciliation in post conflict situations, in order to build sustainable peace.

The process of learning starts before a child enters into a classroom. It begins from the earliest age and it is fostered through his/her interactions with caring human beings in secure, nurturing and stimulating environments. "Young children's experiences in the first years of life create the foundation for subsequent learning. Although early childhood is a period of great potential for human growth and development, it is also a time when children are especially fragile and vulnerable" (UNESCO, 2007).

Since the process of learning starts in the earliest years of our lives, it is very important to analyse how education can change in a long term the mind-set of new born generations in order to achieve a more solid society and to put an end to disparities between the parts of the conflict. Education can be a powerful tool to make children and young people understand what happened in the past with an objective point of view to build a more peaceful future.

Nevertheless, this perception is not shared by every actor taking part in a post-conflict situation. According to a report of UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction actions do not consider education as a priority. The report states that "in 2006, education received only 1.1 per cent of humanitarian assistance globally, despite representing at least 4.2 per cent of humanitarian needs" (Smith, 2010).

---

[3] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/)

In the same line of argument, another report from UNICEF from 2011, points out that the main priority for the majority of international actors taking part in peace building processes do not include education as their main priority. It states that they are more focused on "security" issues. The same report underlines the importance of education "as an important driver of social development that can also contribute to transformations through other sectors within post-conflict societies in terms of changing behaviours and attitudes to violence, policing and the legal system" (Novelli & Smith, 2011).

In the case of Kosovo, it is important to mention that the Albanian and Serb children go to different schools or different classes (Department, 2008). They are by no means mixed and this is why the education that they receive is completely different. One of the long term objectives that I consider necessary for reconciliation is, in the future and through a new curriculum, to establish mixed schools so that the children can play and interact with each other having the school as a place to reconcile since the early childhood. reconcile from the childhood.

I believe that a reconciliation process, wherever it takes place, has to emerge from the people, what is known as a bottom up approach. This approach should be accompanied by a strong leadership, where civil society, religious leaders as well as cultural and sporting figures also create spaces for reflexion, bringing people together in cultural activities where people from all the communities can enjoy together leaving aside their differences.

In this sense, the first thing that has to happen is a better understanding between communities. Several questions that arise are: How can these two communities understand each other and exchange their views in this space that Lederach designs for reconciliation if they have completely different views of what happened? And even more important: How can these two communities communicate if they do not speak each other's language? How to trust someone that fought against you in the past if you cannot understand what they are expressing? And...If they have contradictory versions about the same facts, would not this create a stronger opposition? Shouldn't we first put these two versions of history together in order to stop influencing future generations?

From a personal point of view, I consider that without an objective perspective of facts and a proper educational curriculum, the process of recovery from a conflict would be much longer.

4. Rewriting history books

In this section, I will firstly talk about the general conditions needed for history books to be used as a tool for reconciliation. Secondly, I will apply this theory to the particular case of Kosovo with the most updated information that I found available. To conclude I will offer my point about which could be the best practice according to the current situation.

Education in post-conflict situations can be a very powerful tool. Nevertheless, it can turn into a dangerous source if we do not use it properly. Special attention has to be paid to history teaching and textbooks. Historian and moral education specialist Peter Seixas states that "it is the power of the story of the past to define who we are in the present, our relations with others, relations in civil society-nation and state, right and wrong, good and bad-and broad parameters for action in the future" (Seixas, 2000). According to the dictionary, history is "a continuous, typically chronological, record of important or public events or of a particular trend or institution" (Oxford Dictionaries). When defining history, it does not mention "chronological record of "ALL" important or public events". Therefore, "the teaching of history, like all aspects of historical study, involves choice and selection: One cannot avoid choices; one cannot simply "include more". The question then becomes on what grounds choices are made" (N. Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000)

In a report for UNESCO, Jean-Damascène Gasanabo states that "history teaching plays an important role in the development of identity. In Southeast Europe, as elsewhere, history education has commonly been used as a tool for promoting nationalistic ideologies. However, it has also gained recognition as having a key role in the process of reconciliation, democratization and long-term stability" (Gasanabo, 2006). He adds that "writing history is also a process of constructing a narrative based on collective memory through which a social group perpetuates its self-image, and in so doing constantly re-invents and asserts itself. School history

textbooks […], are official versions of that memory as interpreted through the lenses of current events and future aspirations".

According to Wolfgang Höpken, from the Institute for International Textbook Research, "whenever a conflict has been terminated, education and textbooks are usually seen as a major instrument to re-establish society, reconcile former enemies and foster peace" (Höpken). He enumerates several factors that influence the role of textbooks in post-conflict societies:

1. **The character and the outcome of the conflict**: the role of history teaching differs depending on the character of the conflict. Treating traditional wars among states is different from internal conflicts, which are, as Lederach points out, more difficult for the reconciliation process since people who were confronted live in the same territory. In the case of internal conflicts, Höpken defends that education and history textbooks have to be changed immediately after the conflict has ended, often from outside agencies or organisations. Another problem to be added is that in some occasions, the responsibility of the conflict is not clear enough and every side feels victim. A study carried out by Unicef entitled "Quality education for all in Kosovo" in 2005 points out that the communities that they visited during their research defined themselves as the greatest victim of all in Kosovo. Höpken states that in the former Yugoslavia education is still based on this self-perception, which makes the process of reconciliation and tolerance harder.

2. **The necessity of a favourable environment:** this means that, before turning the textbooks into an instrument for reconciliation, the conflict has to be ended and a relatively stable peace established. Another important factor to bear in mind is political questions such as status, sovereignty, territory, constitutional rights for ethnic minorities, etc. These issues "have to be settled before education can play a role in the process of reconciliation" (Höpken). Otherwise, he continues, "textbooks usually become a matter for political or ethnic mobilization and conflict among the competing elites, turning education into a field for political confrontation" (Höpken). According to Elizabeth A. Cole, "Changes in history textbooks and

curricula would function as a kind of secondary phase, which reflect and embody the state's commitment to institutionalizing earlier processes such as truth and historical commissions and official gestures and processes of acknowledgment, apology, and repair"(Cole, 2007).

3. **The "mental" conditions of the society:** Höpken states the importance of this precondition in order to use textbooks as a tool for peace-building, in particular in societies that suffered ethnic and civil wars. He adds, "where societies are divided about reconciliation also educational issues often become politicized". Moreover, societies in the process of nation-building, especially when the nation is a product of the conflict, or societies, "where identities are fractured as a result of a conflict or a social change, tend to make education more an instrument for promoting ethnocentric and closed concept of identity"(Höpken).

4. **Time:** for history textbooks to be a tool for reconciliation time is a crucial factor.

In the case of Kosovo, although some progress has been done, the main issue hampering the process of reviewing and changing history books is related to the lack of a favourable environment that Höpken refers as one of the conditions mentioned above. In order to understand how reconciliation could be achieved through education, it is important to analyse the role that education has played in Kosovo as well as the parallel structures throughout the history of Kosovo.

Education in Kosovo has become a symbol of resistance for both communities in the past and the present. The difference is that the roles of the communities have been switched.

The concept of parallel structures was created by Kosovo-Albanians during the 1990's, when Slobodan Milosevic carried out his policy of mass dismissal of Albanians in Kosovo from State institutions finishing with any point of contact between Serbs and Albanians (Kostovicova, 2005). Putting aside their differences throughout history, this is the real point of inflexion in which both communities separated from each other physically, creating ethnic homogeneous villages. Albanians were deprived of education, and they started creating their "home-schools". "Throughout Kosovo, Albanians learnt for the first time after the Second

World War the national content that they were free to determine themselves. […]The assertion of nationhood was most explicit and meaningful in the rewriting of school textbooks, especially those in history and geography. In them, Kosovo was celebrated as an independent state" (Kostovicova, 2005).

After this short analysis, one can easily understand how rooted the sense of identity in education is. Bringing this to the present, the parallel structures from Serbia running education in Kosovo for the Kosovo-Serbs also constitute a symbol of resistance to the declaration of independence in 2008, rejecting Kosovo's institutions.

Concerning the Kosovo legislation, on 15 June 2008, Kosovo promulgated the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Kosovo. "The legislation applied in Kosovo provides for comprehensive and specific educational rights for non-majority communities. […] Applied legal provisions further recognize the right of communities to set up private educational and training establishments and generate educational modules on their culture, history and traditions. Provisions in place also require that the educational curriculum cover the history, culture and other attributes of communities traditionally present in Kosovo, and foster a spirit of respect, understanding and tolerance among all communities" (OSCE, 2009).

Nevertheless, in practice, concerning the modification of the curriculum and the history books, little progress has been done. In order to evidence this progress, I analysed all the documents published in English by the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, as well as those from international agencies that supervised the improvement of the New Curriculum.

The first draft of the New Kosovo Curriculum was released in 2001. Although this document includes a section dedicated to history, it does not mention anything related to changing the content of history books: "The student's local, regional and national identity, as well as a wider sense of identity in today's increasingly interdependent world, will also be cultivated through the history subject curricula. The history subject curriculum has to support the need for dealing with the past constructively. It should foster tolerance and the mutual respect of differences.
As part of the learning objectives, the cultivation of national identity and historical traditions in democratic societies should be linked with the development of

knowledge, attitudes and skills with a view to fostering peaceful understanding among people and the ability to live together in a constructive way" (The New Kosovo Curriculum Framework, 2001).

Following the draft of this Framework, in 2005, UNICEF published a report which reviewed the Curriculum Framework above mentioned.

One of the recommendations that UNICEF makes is to "review the approach and policy on language and history in the new Kosovo National Curriculum and the Serb medium curriculum. Make social cohesion, rather than ethnic identity, a guiding principle in the selection of curriculum" (UNICEF, 2005).

In this report, UNICEF makes reference to two important concepts: multicultural, meaning "a descriptive term that implies a society where a number of different cultures live together" and intercultural, "a society that recognizes and celebrates the existence of the different cultures within and approaches difference as positive and enriching and able to extend the life and understandings of all in that society". (UNICEF, 2005). This is importantly linked with the idea of the lack of Kosovan identity. From the conclusions that I withdrew from my conversations with the people there, which obviously only represent a small percentage of the people living in Kosovo, few describe themselves as "Kosovans". The report points out that when asked about what united them, the common answer was "Yugoslavia"; "this meant a common curriculum, multi-cultural schools, a culture of learning, knowing each other and interacting with each other, opportunities to visit each others' countries, attend Higher Education together in other cities of other nations of Yugoslavia"(UNICEF, 2005).

Concerning the history program of the National Curriculum, the report states that the reported model for the future history textbook for the communities to be produced in Kosovo as 30%-40% of *"own country"* and 70%-60% from Kosovo, seems less appropriate than studying the place of Kosovo in Europe and of the specific community within Kosovo and a wider Europe (UNICEF, 2005). It adds that "a history curriculum stressing World and European history alongside the positives of the past for all Kosovans is more appropriate than a series of different histories using textbooks originating in other countries written in other languages by authors from another country about the history of another country which an ancestor of the child in the school was once associated with" (UNICEF, 2005).

In 2009, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) issued a comprehensive report regarding the "Kosovo non-majority communities within the primary and secondary educational systems". This report claims that "none of the educational systems contains curricula and textbooks specific or adequately tailored to the culture and history of the Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani, Kosovo Croat and Kosovo Montenegrin communities"(OSCE, 2009). This statement, issued in 2009, proves the little efforts done to rewrite history books in an inclusive way. It is not in line with what the Ministry of Education presented in the Curriculum Framework of 2001. Moreover, the study adds: "the Kosovo framework curriculum is divided into general subjects and community-specific "national" subjects. These subjects are language, history, art and music. National subjects for Kosovo Turks and Kosovo Bosniaks are developed by experts from the respective communities" (OSCE, 2009). Therefore, history books for Kosovan Turks and Bosniaks are completely different from the history books from Kosovan Albanians and Kosovan Serbs.

The report states that "the two educational systems have, in fact, contributed to entrench the chasm which divides communities in Kosovo. That both Kosovo Albanian and Serbian textbooks tend to present a slanted and one-sided view of history is a case in point. They do not confine themselves to present a history of Kosovo, but tend to be more geared toward presenting the history of either the Albanian or the Serb community" (OSCE, 2009).

Regarding history books from Serbia, the report states that "textbooks do not present a history of Kosovo, but rather of the Serbian nation as a whole, and stay clear of contemporary history (period from 1998 to present) or cover it only through a general presentation of facts and dates lacking analysis. Kosovo Serb students learn mainly about Albanians and their history from World War II onward. As for geography, children are taught that Kosovo is the southern province of Serbia where most of the Albanian minority lives" (OSCE, 2009).

This report shows the dissatisfaction of all minority communities since they do not feel represented in history textbooks, or because they do not like the way Serbs are represented in the history books. This disagreement on communities' representations is clearly asking for a comprehensive change in the history content. The fact that some books come from Serbia, others from Kosovo or Turkey

does not help the construction of a national identity neither of an inter-cultural society.

The second draft of Curriculum Framework was published in April, 2010. In this document, there is no specific section regarding history. It is particularly interesting that in this second draft, there is an entire section for "Identity, belonging and intercultural understanding" (Ministry of Education, 2010). This curriculum is an European model oriented. Therefore, there is an emphasis on civic education and human rights. But, is it possible to reconcile a society only through the subject of civic education while the history books that they are using are ethnocentric and not based on an inter-cultural character? Is this not jumping a step forwards in order to avoid the basic but politically controversial changes that should be done on the history books?

Following the second draft in April 2010, an Independent Commission for the Review of Serbian Language Teaching Materials was appointed. The task was to review the materials in the Serbian language and to analyse the content that is not in accordance with the Constitution of Kosovo. This document states that since the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) does not currently have available a Serbian-language curriculum or textbooks, Kosovan Serbs have the right to receive education under the Ministry of Education of Serbia. The main findings related to the history textbooks are that "major events from the history of Kosovo are left out and the history is presented in a one-sided way thus violating the Constitution of Kosovo" (MEST, 2010).

It also states that "it describes a history of the Serbian people, rather than a history of the territory of modern day Serbia and Kosovo" (MEST, 2010).

The Commission proposes that MEST develops a Serbian-language curriculum that is in line with Kosovo's Constitution and Kosovo Curriculum Framework.

Nevertheless, things are far more complicated than writing the books in the Serbian language. History textbooks from Kosovo in Albanian language show Kosovo map as independent from Serbia, while Serbian books include Kosovo as part of Serbia. Would the government of Serbia ever accept the content from the Kosovo Ministry of Education? What can be done to promote reconciliation without being hampered by the political arena? In case that there has not been an attempt of reviewing the Albanian language textbooks, would not it be unfair? I

believe that even though the issue of the map will not be solved until the status of Kosovo is decided, a common history could be written in order to go a step forwards on the reconciliation process between communities.

One of the major achievements that have been done to help the process of reconciliation is the history books published by the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in South-East Europe. These innovative alternative education materials based on multi-perspective history teaching are a good opportunity for the students to explore the difference between their history books and the ones offered by this NGO. The important point of these books is that they can be introduced as a secondary source of information to the teachers. This is a good advancement taking into account that the new Kosovo Curriculum Framework opens a door for modern teaching methods including additional sources to use in history teaching. The new Kosovo curriculum framework will be implemented in several phases, and will introduce new approaches in education, including: learner-centered teaching and competency-based approaches, while paying special attention to human rights and democratic citizenship, identity and inter-cultural understanding.

The main problem of this approach is that all the weight of using secondary material relies on the teachers; what happens if some teachers refuse to use these materials? Is it not a risk to have different levels of approaches in the same system? Would it be not a solution to use these textbooks as the main source? Would both governments agree in using these textbooks?

According to Elizabeth Cole, "at a functional level, it is worth noting that history education reform also involves many of the actors, especially those below the level of leaders or high political elites, who have been found to play important roles in other processes of reconciliation. Government institutions at the state level, particularly ministries of education, and at the state/provincial or local level, including parent-teacher-type councils or associations, are clearly key actors, as are institutions that train or retrain teachers. Civil society institutions are potentially important, as are, increasingly, outside actors" (Cole, 2007).

In the case of Kosovo and concerning history textbooks, the major progresses have been done by an external NGO, which, after years of work, has been accepted and their work has been welcomed by the institutions of Kosovo and Serbia. Up

until this point, the workbooks have been divided into four distinctive themes that expand within specific time periods. The first workbook covers the Ottoman Empire, the second covers Nations and States in Southeast Europe, the third covers the Balkan Wars, and the fourth covers World War II. They have not yet expanded to the post World War II period; therefore, none of the workbooks thus far cover recent events. This NGO is exploring the option of producing more workbooks that are to include historic events of the past five decades.[4]

Moreover, the books are accompanied by a guide with several activities that could be a model for teachers from both systems. The NGO also provided teacher training "with both local and central authorities and in these ways, it helps to empower teachers as potential agents of change and to participate in a democratic system themselves" (Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Souteast Europe). In the last years, the CDREE has organized several workshops to train teachers and historians on how to use the workbooks in their classrooms, and how to successfully adopt them into the existent curriculum. So far, this NGO has directly affected more than 100 historians via teacher training workshops, and are in the process of planning more workshops for 2012.[5]

Concerning the international community, the Council of Europe - Kosovo Office website started an EU funded project (managed by the European Commission Liaison Office) called the "Interculturalism and the Bologna Process". In May 2011, they published the "History teaching today - approaches and methods". "The manual is the outcome of a series of six seminars on history teaching held under the joint project on 'Interculturalism and the Bologna Process' with the support of the authorities in Kosovo , particularly the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology" (Interculturalism and Bologna Process).

The role of local NGO's in promoting reconciliation activities through history teaching is also very important. During my experience in Kosovo, I visited the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, which works with the facts of the war in Kosovo. They published a book with statistics of the casualties from both sides. Moreover, this NGO goes to school centers and talks about their findings. While presenting the book, they also carry out reconciliation activities. During my

---

[4] Information achieved through e-mail communication with the team of the CDRSEE (21 March 012).

[5] Idem

research, I found out that there is another NGO that does similar work called Humanitarian Law Serbia. When I sent an e-mail asking both NGO's about the relationship between each other I received no answer. This is interesting because I believe that if so-called "neutral" NGO's are politicized in Kosovo things become much more difficult when it comes to working on reconciliation. The key question is: would NGO's be able to leave apart politics in order to fight for reconciliation? Is this work only possible if done by external NGO's?

If this is the case, the only way for reconciliation to be achieved through history teaching is by using the books above mentioned and providing a common training for teachers from both communities in order to achieve an objective version of the facts that can lead to a more inclusive history and to start building the feeling of being part of a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

2. Pulling down language barriers

The definition of language has several meanings, but there are two that are relevant to what I will try to reflect in this section. According to the dictionary, language is,

a) "the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

b) a system of communication used by a particular country or community" (Oxford Dictionaries).

The second sense of the word is understood as a characteristic, something intrinsic to a particular community. Therefore, if two communities prioritise the meaning of language as a distinction, undermining the need of a language conceived as a way of communication, there is a barrier being built between the two communities.

According to Adam Smith, cited by Kostovicova, there are two different models of nation; one is the Western model whose components encompass historic territory, legal political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology. By contrast, a non-Western model of nation, that is primarily to be found in Eastern Europe and Asia, relies more heavily on genealogy and presumed ethnic ties, popular mobilization and vernacular languages, as well as customs and traditions (Kostovicova, 2005).

If Kosovo is an example of the second model of nation, it would be helpful to introduce the concept of multilingualism from the beginning of the process of state-building. Obviously, this is a difficult task since language, together with education is one of the factors that united the Albanian community to achieve independence of Kosovo. However, the fact that the territory includes other communities that speak other languages is a reality, and in the process of the new born state, this aspect has to be taken into consideration.

If we focused on the second definition of language, authors like Joshua Fishman or Benedict Anderson have considered the power of language as an instrument for promoting nationalism. Cited by Carol L. Schmid, "Joshua Fishman (1989) argues that language becomes part of the secular religion, binding society together. Language is a powerful instrument for promoting internal cohesion and providing an ethnic or national identity. It contributes to values, identity, and a sense of

peoplehood. A common vernacular also establishes effective boundaries between "ingroups" and "outgroups". Furthermore, language is an important variable in power relations between dominant and subordinate groups" (Schmid, 2001).

Concerning legislation, the Law No. 02/L-37 of the Republic of Kosovo on the use of languages states in its article 1 that:

"The purpose of this law is to ensure:

i. The use of the official languages, as well as languages of communities whose mother tongue is not an official language, in Kosovo institutions and other organizations and enterprises who carry out public functions and services;

ii. The equal status of Albanian and Serbian as official languages of Kosovo and the equal rights as to their use in all Kosovo institutions;

iii. The right of all communities in Kosovo to preserve, maintain and promote their linguistic identity;

iv. The multilingual character of Kosovo society which represents its unique spiritual, intellectual, historical and cultural values."[6]

In this article, the law is making reference to both; the meaning of language as the identity of a community and in the last paragraph, to the multilingual character of Kosovo. Nevertheless, if we continue anaylising the content of the law concerning the education of the different languages in order to build a multilingual society, it is obvious that there is a substantial gap in practice.

Article 19 on the use of languages in education states:

"19.1. The languages of instruction in public education shall be in the compliance with the provisions of the Constitutional Framework and with the laws in the field of education.

19.2. Every person has the right to choose, and to choose for their children, their preferred official language of instruction.

19.3. Every person has the right to enroll, and to enroll their children, in a school where their chosen official language is the language of instruction.

19.4. In municipalities where a person's chosen official language is not used by any school as the language of instruction, special provision shall be made to ensure

---

[6] Assembly of Kosovo Law No. 02/L-37 on the Use of Languages, as promulgated by UNMIK Regulation No.2006/51.

appropriate teaching in their chosen official language. The details of implementation shall be determined by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology".[7]

The conclusion that I withdraw from this article is that, if a person is part of a community whose language is one the officials, it is not compulsory for him/her to learn the other official language and therefore, no communication will be possible between the two communities that speak just one of the two official languages unless the person decides to study it . The question that arises is: Is this appropriate for a young country like Kosovo, which has to overcome the divisions mainly between these two communities? Is this the way in which an intercultural country can be built?

A recent report on the issue of use of language in the European Union asserts that '…*most of the European nations have been built on the platform of their language of identity, the European Union can only build on a platform of linguistic diversity… A common sense of belonging based on linguistic and cultural diversity is a powerful antidote against the various types of fanaticism…'* (EU Commission, 2008).

The languages used in Kosovo are Albanian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS), Turkish, Romani and Goranski. Of these, the two official languages are Albanian and BCS; Turkish and Roma have equal status at the municipal level where relevant. Albanian is spoken daily by over 90% of the population. The standard Albanian literary language is used for most written communication, and usually on radio and television. About 7% of the population speaks BCS. These are the speakers of the Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Bosniac minorities, as well as some Roma. A substantial proportion of Kosovo Serbs can speak and understand Albanian, though many are often reluctant to do so in public. Virtually all Kosovo Albanians born before 1980, at least in cities and towns, can also understand and speak BCS, which was compulsory in schools and in the Yugoslav army. Children who did their schooling after 1990 in the parallel structures learned English and German as foreign languages rather than BCS and, as a result, the younger generation of Kosovo Albanians can no longer speak or understand BCS (Elsie, 2011).

---

[7] Assembly of Kosovo Law No. 02/L-37 on the Use of Languages, as promulgated by UNMIK Regulation No.2006/51.

I believe that there has to be a change at the educational level to ensure that the communities which are in an ongoing process of what is called the pendulum theory –refusing everything from the other community after an interethnic conflict as the one that took place in Kosovo-would be able to communicate, at least in a few generations time.

Article 58 of the Constitution on the responsibilities of the State indicates that "The Republic of Kosovo shall promote a spirit of tolerance, dialogue and support reconciliation among communities and respect the standards set forth in the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages".[8]

Therefore, if the obligation of the state is to promote tolerance, dialogue and to achieve reconciliation it is crucial to enable communication between all inhabitants of the country through a reform of the education curriculum concerning languages.

From what I have read, the issue of the languages in Kosovo is commonly treated as a question of ensuring minority's rights, which is crucial; but… why is the issue of languages not treated as the way of communication between communities in a divided society? Is it not dangerous to continue labeling rights as "minority rights" knowing that it can be perceived as a power relation?

According to a report of the OSCE from 2010, the interaction between pupils from the two communities is still weak, and it adds that "the absence of opportunities to study both official languages in Kosovo is a serious contributing factor in hampering such interaction" (OSCE, 2010).

Another report of the same organization about the "Implementation of the law on the Use of Languages by Kosovo Municipalities" states that "Kosovo remains a society divided along linguistic lines. For nearly twenty years children of the Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities have not received education in both official languages. In most cases, they continue to receive separate education. […]As a result, these new generations know and speak only one of the official languages and cannot communicate with each other" (Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages by Kosovo Municipalities, 2008).

---

[8] Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo

In the same line of argument, a recent statement of the Committee of Ministers from the Council of Europe has pointed out in a resolution on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Kosovo that "interethnic relations, in particular between persons belonging to the Serbian and the Albanian communities, remain tense and marked by mutual distrust and divisions along ethnic lines". It adds that the existence of two separate education system does not help to the process of reconciliation and that pupils belonging to the majority community have limited opportunities to learn the other official language as well as minority languages at school.[9]

In the report that reviews the first Kosovo Curriculum framework from 2001, UNICEF states that "The new Kosovo Curriculum framework talks about "mother-tongue as an important element of developing identity" and "mother-tongue as compulsory in every primary and secondary grade". [...] Albanian language "for other communities living in Kosovo is optional starting in Grade 3" English is the first foreign language and compulsory from Year 3 and optional earlier in years 1 and 2" (UNICEF, 2005). It continues "No teaching of Serb or another Kosovo community language appeared to be on the curriculum. [...] Similarly, in those schools attended by the Serb speaking community there are a variety of other languages taught such as English, French and/or German. No teaching of Albanian or another Kosovo language appeared to be on the curriculum". It concludes saying that "it should be mandatory for both the Serb speaking and Albanian speaking communities to learn the other community's language, as well as English". (UNICEF, 2005).

The second draft of the Kosovo Curriculum framework from 2010 establishes that "The Kosovo Curriculum Framework envisions the following format for languages to be used in Kosovo's curriculum system:

1. There will be four languages of instruction in Kosovo's compulsory education system: Albanian, Serbian, Turkish and Bosniak.

2. English will be taught from Grade 1 to all students.

3. Students whose language of instruction is not one of the official languages (Albanian and Serbian) will learn Albanian or Serbian from Grade 3.

---

[9] Resolution CM/ResCMN(2011)14 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minoritiesin Kosovo.

4. Roma students will learn mother tongue from Grade 2.

5. All students will learn a second international or neighbouring language (German, French, Italian, Spanish etc), from Grade 6 depending on students' preferences and availability of teachers and capacity of municipalities to provide qualified teachers for the selected language" (Ministry of Education, 2010).

This new Curriculum, although it was elaborated after the above mentioned reports and their comments on the language learning, it contemplates neither the teaching of Serbian language for the Albanian community nor the Albanian language teaching for the Serbian community.

Languages are also included in the section of "communication and expression" of the new Curriculum from 2010. The section includes the learning of the mother tongue, English and in the paragraph of "other languages" it states "Starting in KS2, students other from Albanian or Serb communities will learn one of the official languages, i.e. Albanian or Serbian. Starting in KS3 (Grades 6-9) learners can choose to study another international other than English or neighbouring language (i.e. German, Italian, Spanish, French, etc.); and, in upper secondary education, a classic language, if appropriate (i.e. Latin, Greek). The language chosen by learners should ideally be studied continuously from KS3 to KS6. The study of a second language should contribute to enhancing intercultural understanding; preparing learners for working and living together in increasingly diverse and interdependent contexts; and preparing them for further studies". (Ministry of Education, 2010)

This leaves the door open to the study of Serbian or Albanian for the other community. Nevertheless, for this to happen in practice it has to become compulsory, otherwise, communities may not be interested in learning the other community's language.

In the same line of arguments, the OSCE, in the recommendation section of its report, claims to Kosovo institutions "to ensure that the Kosovo education system does not reinforce linguistic separation and provides full instruction in either of the chosen official languages with compulsory classes in the other, and provide regular civil servant trainings to ensure learning of both official languages" (Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages by Kosovo Municipalities, 2008).

It is clear that most international agencies and organizations agree on the fact that language teaching is crucial to make communication possible between the two communities. In order to reconciliate, both communities need to build trust on each other, and without speaking a common language this task becomes very difficult if not impossible. Children will continue going to separate schools and the ideal place of reconciliation will not exist until this problem is not solved.

3. Conclusion

One of the main challenges in Kosovo as we have seen is the role of the political situation hampering the process of reconciliation. Therefore, I believe that other possibilities have to be explored. In the case of the history books, the work of the CDRSEE is remarkable and it is helping students to have another perspective of facts. As I stated before, this NGO is exploring the possibility of writing books including the history of the past five decades. This is where things can become more complex, but we hope that they can become part of the analysis offered to the students and that the governments would accept the books as they have done with the other published ones.

An important issue concerning history teaching is the role of the teachers as promoters of a more neutral speech, helping students to become closer and closer with the time to the other community. A substantial element is the role of workshops and training for the teachers to ensure that teachers in both educational systems are teaching in the same line.

The concept of interculturality that UNICEF mentions in its report is a very important one, since it means not only to tolerate the other community but also to celebrate the other community's culture in a country made by different traditions, which makes it richer than others.

Concerning languages, the learning of the other official language is something that the government should include in the curriculum. It should be compulsory, making both communities bilingual and able to communicate with each other. If the State does not take such measures from the beginning, it will be much more difficult to do it later. Changes have to start now, because the country is not even 3 years old and this richness of cultures and languages could be considered as a characteristic of the new nation thus contributing to the process of state-building.

Bilingualism is the centrepiece for communicating with each other, sharing experiences and developing trust. Without communication there is no understanding and therefore, no reconciliation. This could be the starting point to build new and renewed relationships, with the aim of, in the future, make schools bilingual and interethnic.

To finish, the role of international organisations is very important in post-conflict situations. Therefore, education should be taken into consideration from the beginning, because, as we have seen, later is much more difficult to be modified. Political actors can use education as an instrument of manipulation, hampering the process of reconciliation. I believe that in most cases of post-conflict situations, the solution is more in the hands of international organisations and NGOs, but always making sure that their aim is reconciliation, beyond their political views.

4. Bibliography

Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Souteast Europe. (s.f.). Consulted on 15 February 2012, at http://www.cdsee.org/jhp/index.html

Cole, E. A. (2007). *Teaching the violent past: history education and reconciliation.* Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Daly, E., & Sarkin, J. (2007). *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding a Common Ground.* Philadelphia: University of Pennnsylvania Press.

Department, O. M. (2008). *Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages by Kosovo Municipalities.* OSCE.

Doli, D., Cabiri, K., & Korenica, F. (2010). Equalizing the Use of Language: A View to Kosovo Law's Guarantees. *The Open Law Journal* , 6-14.

Elsie, R. (2011). *Historical Dictionary of Kosovo.* Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Gasanabo, J.-D. (2006). *Fostering Peaceful Co-existence Through Analysis and Revision of History Curricula and Textbooks in South East Europe.* UNESCO.

Höpken, W. History- Textbooks and Reconciliation- Preconditions and Experiences in a Comparative Perspective. En W. Bank (Ed.), *World- Bank meeting.* Washington.

(2008). *Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages by Kosovo Municipalities.* OSCE.

Interculturalism and Bologna Process. (s.f.). Consulted on 15 March 2012, at http://www.ibp-kosovo.org/?cid=2,21,152

Kostovicova, D. (2005). *Kosovo: The politics of identity and space.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Lederach, J. P. (2008). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.

MEST. (2010). *Independent Commission for the Review of Serbian Language Teaching Materials.* Pristina.

Ministry of Education, S. a. (2010). *Curriculum Framework for pre-school, primary, secondary and post-secondary education.* Pristina: MEST.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (s.f.). Consulted on 6 March 2012, at http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/documents/New%20Kosova%20Curriculum%20Framework.pdf

N. Stearns, P., Seixas, P., & Wineburg, S. (2000). *Knowing Teaching & Learning History: National and International perspectives.* New York and London: New York University Press.

Novelli, M., & Smith, A. (2011). *THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PEACEBUILDING: A synthesis report of findings from Lebanon, Nepal and Sierra Leone.* New York.

OSCE. (2010). *Communities Rights Assessment Report .* OSCE.

OSCE, D. o. (2009). *Kosovo non-majority communities within the primary and secondary educational systems.* OSCE.

Oxford Dictionaries. (s.f.). Consulted on 26 February 2012, at http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/history?q=history

Sarkin, E. D. (2007). *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schmid, C. L. (2001). *The politics of language: Conflict, Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in comparative perspective.* New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Seixas, P. (2000). Schweigen! die Kinder! or, Does Postmodern History have a Place in the Schools? En P. N. Steams, P. Seixas, & S. Wineburg, *Knowing, teaching and learning history: national and international perspectives.* New York and London: New York University Press.

Smith, A. (2010). *Children, education and reconciliation.* UNICEF Innocenti Research Center.

(2001). *The New Kosovo Curriculum Framework.* Pristina: Department of Education and Science.

UNESCO. (2007). *Education For All.*

UNICEF. (2005). *Quality Education for all in Kosovo.*

United States Institute for Peace. (s.f.). Consulted on 1 Marcha 2012, at http://www.usip.org