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Transformation of Kosovo Education from Traditional into Modern 1999-2012

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***Abstract*—**Everyday life is and will be influenced depending on the developments that society undergoes throughout the history. Particularly, countries undergoing transition from one system to another sustain the greatest impact in trying to embrace the modern system. Kosovo society had the fortune to experience a change, which began in late 1999 to continue up to date. One of the 'developments' of the time with the evolution in Kosovo society was the transition from the traditional education system into the modern one. This transformation began immediately after the war, to continue even today. It was started by internationals, which governed and administered Kosovo society, including education. There was a great 'evolution', because almost the entire system was 'changed'. Among other things, for the first time it was enabled the opening of private schools from the lowest level up to the colleges and universities. This paper will address: how much was ready the society to embrace such a 'cultural' change in education, respectively, how much were prepared teachers for such changes; as it was actually thought to be a modern education system, how much was it according to international standards; what are the results and current situation in Kosovo education.

***Keywords*—**Education, evolution, reform, transformation.

I. Introduction

EACH person during the life needs and must change in relation to the circumstances created along the development of the society, in particular, when the society undergoes a greater social evolution. Kosovo society experienced and is still coping with such evaluation in almost all fields of life. It is understandable that these changes leave room for concern, and sometimes they are difficult to meet, if not unrealizable, or they do not match with the reality, thus, resulting in problems of different nature. Sometimes they even bring social instability. Amongst these concerns, there is the issue of education as well, which is almost one of the most sensitive areas of an advanced and integrated society. In such cases it is necessary that besides the respective institutions to engage other organizations and society itself.

The problems that arise in schools and society at large increase every day. These changes bring the unstable climate in school environment also. Children and young people lose the motivation for learning and increase the curiosity for deviated behavior, which can have serious consequences. Schools, families and society will have problems with such categories of children. This tends to suggest that the school no longer serves as a place where children are educated and developed in the right way. This is proven by numerous problems in schools, starting from the noise through classes, escape from classes, use of harmful and hazardous substances to health (smoking, alcohol and even types of psychotropic substances and various drugs), use of violence against each other, against teachers and causing great damage and serious injuries and even fatalities. It is sufficient to surf into social network sites or check the law enforcement and prosecutors files.

Immediately after the war, as in other areas, the education system was introduced reforms aiming its standardization with the European education. This was a necessity, given that Kosovo possessed a hereditary structure of the system of the former Yugoslavia and had dispersion throughout the 1990s until the end of the last war. The period of 1990 to 1999 were years when Kosovo society was forced to use private houses for the learning process, as Serbian authorities closed schools for Albanian children. The expel of Albanian children from their own school facilities occurred after the government abolished the autonomy of Kosovo and brought Serbian curricula, which was not recognized by Kosovo Albanians. So, until after the war, education in Kosovo was organized in levels 4 + 4 + 4 (4 + 4 primary and 4 secondary education) and it was provided only by public institutions. This system was replaced by the new model 5 + 4 + 3 (5 years of primary education, 4 years of lower secondary education and 3 years of upper secondary education).Referring to the new model of the education system, its characteristic is the extension of compulsory education from 8 to 9 years. The approval of education provision by private institutions brought an additional innovation too. This new culture of organization is done by adapting the education systems in most European countries.

II. A Brief Historical Overview of Cultural Anthropology of Education in Kosovo

B. Early Development of Education

The first signs of the appearance of education as a social phenomenon and as a pedagogical category are encountered even before the opening of the first school in Egypt (2500 years before our era) and later in Europe (in old Greece), in the sixth century before our era.

In the Renaissance, the development of education takes a great momentum. During this time many of schools of various types, kinds and levels of education up to the first universities opened in Europe, such as the University of Padua in Italy, in 1118. [1]

Education as a pedagogical category has to do with the process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, habits, and their

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influence in shaping the personality of the individual. Therefore, education summarizes both the wisdom and skills, but never just one of them. Thus, education means "the quality of the individual defined by his knowledge and skills". [1]

The term "school" derives from a Greek word, which in Albanian means leisure or recreation. Judging from the history, in pre-industrial society, the education was possible only for a minority who had enough time and money to attend.

In its modern form, it began to advance step by step. So, gradually the learning process began, including students within schools built specifically for this purpose. Until half a century ago, and even later, the children of the wealthy people were educated by private teachers.

Most of population did not get educated until the first decades of the XIX century, when in European countries and the United States primary school systems started to build up.

The process of industrialization and the expansion of cities led to increased demand for specialized education. Acquisition of knowledge relied more and more on the abstract learning, rather than practical transmission of specific skills. In a modern society people should be equipped with basic skills such as reading, writing, computing and knowledge about their physical, social and economic environment; it is also important that they learn how to learn, in order to be able to adopt new forms, sometimes technical, of information. [2]

Modern education system was organized for the first time in most Western societies in the early twentieth century.

It is often said that the process of educating children from backgrounds of lower classes or minorities concludes that "they do not have sufficient skills" to hope to find highly paid or a high status job in the future when they get employed. In other words, lack of academic experience makes them recognize their intellectual limitations; acknowledging the "inferiority", they tend towards professions, a career prospect of which is restricted. [2]

1) Development of Schooling and Education in Kosovo

The history of the Albanian people of Kosovo is accompanied with many different challenges in all areas of social life. They were historically challenged with the preservation of their national genesis. Facing various invaders, aiming expulsion from their lands or assimilation, which many nations could not resist and no longer exist, the Albanian people successfully managed to defy all and finally have two states. However, all this had its consequences.

Among them was the education process in Kosovo, which for centuries was under the pressures of historical developments. Whoever had the opportunity to rule in these areas, prohibited and impeded the education of this nation. For this reason, despite many commitments of our patriots and scholars, it is known that the first Albanian school opened in Korça, in 1887, on 7th March. However, Albanian education continued to be terrorized, which cost lives of many personalities who fought for it. This lasted until the end of the twentieth century. This made impossible to prove the existence of Albanian school centuries ago, and that besides the glorious history, especially our Renaissance, it was needed to wait the until the first war, respectively the Second World War, to have a better organized education system in Albanian, but with many challenges. Therefore, unfortunately, the history of our education system must begin in the period before World War II, especially after it.

The history of education in Kosovo is divided into three periods:

a. **The first period** begins with the opening of schools throughout Kosovo, before and after the World War II. The foundation of the University of Prishtina and the opening of the University Library of Kosovo represent the greatest achievement in this period.

b. **The second period** starts around 1991 and represents a reaction to the violent destruction of the educational system by Serbian repressive policy. As a result, an independent educational system rose, which was carried out by 452 primary schools, 67 secondary schools, one university with 14 faculties and 7 high schools, with around 400,000 students and 21,000 education employees. This system was funded by volunteer work and aid from the Diaspora. [5]

Following the adoption of the Constitutional Declaration and its proclamation in 1990, a part of the legislation was also regulation of the education system, where in August 1994; the Government of the Republic of Kosovo issued a decree law on temporary alignment of education. According to the decree law in question "learning in Albanian in Kosovo was organized under the new curricula issued by the Constituted Board of Education, respectively the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of the Republic of Kosovo" [5]

c. **The third period** begins in 1999 onwards. During this period it was introduced the radical reform, including all levels of education, aiming the approximation with the education levels of European countries and beyond. It was 2001 when a reform key step was undertaken in the education system of Kosovo. From this time on, this system was followed by numerous changes and great challenges all along.

C. Evolution Process of Education System in Kosovo

In all societies experiencing changes in the social system, changes and reforms are imposed in all social spheres. Immediately after the war, as in all countries in transition, among many reforms that were imposed to be made in all segments of Kosovo society was the need for reforms in the education system with the sole purpose to advance it along with the countries that have progressed in this area. Part of these reforms was the education system. This initiative was required to be done through accelerated steps and sometimes surpassing real possibilities. There was no time for proper preparation. This often created challenging circumstances for education in general. However, it is always necessary to improve and advance the education system, since the society is followed by continuous changes. Such reforms pose challenges even for developed countries; however, major challenges arise for developing countries, as it is the case with the new state of Kosovo, which is trying to build a democratic

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state with modern features.

Kosovo society and the Kosovo education system confronted such changes, which aimed increasing the efficiency in this field. H. Koliqi says "Kosovo aims to build an education system according to the parameters of the advanced countries, which have perfect system of education" [3]

The structure of the education system is organized according to the international standard classification of education (ISCED). Pre-university education in Kosovo includes children aged 6 to 18 years: Level I - (grades 1 to 5), level II - lower secondary (grades 6 to 9) and level III - higher secondary education (grades 10 to 12/13). This education system is provided by public and private institutions. [4]

1) New Structure of the Education System in Kosovo

In August of 2000, a large number of educational institutions and other representatives from national and international organizations took the decision on the new education system 5 + 4 + 3. This replaces the previous structure 4 + 4 + 4. [4]

The new structure brought a change in compulsory education, where from 8 years it became 9 years. This extension of compulsory education assumes a more advanced and modern education, conform to European standards.

a. Compulsory Education

This level of education includes primary and lower secondary levels, grades1 to 5 for primary and 6 to 9 for the lower secondary. So, the primary level includes ages 6 to 12 years, while the lower secondary ages from 12 to 15 years. This type of education is compulsory and lasts for 9 years.

Another characteristic of this system is inclusion of children at the age of 6, which previously was at age 7, and the same teacher continues in the grade 5.

b. Private Education

Aside public education, private education operates in Kosovo at all levels and it is an integral part of the education system. Private education institutions are licensed in advance by the ministry, after meeting a series of conditions. Licensing is regulated by the Law on Primary and Secondary Education and Administrative Instruction no. 5/2910. [4]

c. Education of Students with Special Needs

The term special educational needs refers to the children with mental retardation, sight and hearing impairments, speech impairments, orthopedic impairments, constantly sick children and children with behavioral disorders, who need additional professional customized assistance, respectively special educational programs. [4]

With the new structure, schools are obliged to provide programs for this category of children by providing adequate infrastructure and specialized workers in this regard. Therefore, the special education is a codified part of the education law, thus, enabling the right to education for children of this category. In addition to special schools, many schools have established classes for the category of children with special needs, obviously for the lighter nature of this category. This is in the course of creating conditions to allow education for all children.

Referring to MEST data, education statistics 2010/2011, in Kosovo, there are 7 special education schools and at least two attached classes to schools in municipalities.

2) The Course of Education System in Kosovo

It is clear now that the education system in Kosovo sustained a reform since 1999, including all its levels. Among the first steps of the radical reform according to European standards was that of 2000/2001, where compulsory pre-university education switched from 8 years to 9 years. Three major changes derived from this reform: ***First,*** primary education from 4 years became 5 years, i.e. primary teacher carries teaching for 5 years, resulting in a new practice. ***Second***, lower secondary education evolves from grade 6 to 9, where a year is added also. ***Third***, higher secondary education became 3 years (for some courses 4 years).

There were innovations too, such as age for enrolment in primary education reduced for one year, i.e., from age 7 at age 6, organization and development of education is allowed in private institutions also, harmonization of curricula according to new levels and temporary statute of Prishtina University (according to the European model of studies).

Another important step in this process was the establishment of the Kosovo Government, respectively the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, in March 2002. This was also the basis for enacting laws on education, including details of all specifications needed by the modern education system. After the declaration of the state of Kosovo and entry into force of its Constitution, the law on education in municipalities of Kosovo was drafted that resulted in decentralization of some of the competences from central to local level.

In 2003, the law on higher education was approved, adapting the European system and it was accompanied by two administrative instructions (related to accreditation agency and licensing of private institutions.

In 2006, it was introduced Matura exam and it is implemented since then, within the scope of external assessment process and achievements test at the end of the ninth and fifth grade. Matura exam is stipulated by law.

3) Evolving Changes in the Education System

a. Changes in Primary and Lower Secondary Education

Referring to the law on primary and secondary education in Kosovo, primary education 1-5 and secondary education 6-9 are required for all and from age of 6 years as the minimum age. Education in public institutions is free. Thus, this type of education differs from the traditional one, which constituted the first 4 years of elementary education, which was held by a teacher and 4 other years teaching elementary classroom subjects.

b. Changes in Upper Secondary Education

Even this level underwent a reform from traditional to

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modern. At this level, the education is divided into general and vocational education.

Upper secondary education is regulated by the law on primary and secondary education, no. 2002/2. "The program in upper secondary education is done on the basis of a fair selection system, administered by municipalities in selection of instructions issued by the MEST. Admission is done on the basis of a request signed by the student, provided he has completed with satisfactory results level 2, which is suitable for studies at level 3. [6]Duration of this level is 3 and 4 years.

Education in this level is not mandatory; however "Kosovo new Curriculum provides that upper secondary education is compulsory from 2019" [5]

c. Changes in the Education of Children with Special Needs

The education of children with special needs, which is foreseen as inalienable right, has been included within education reforms. So, all those who may not have access to education under ordinary conditions are allowed to compensate this through special education.

This modern approach is implemented since 2000, as previously special education was provided only by special schools. However, in September 2000 FSDEK prepared a document on special-needs inclusive education in Kosovo, with the overriding objective: the implementation of appropriate education for the children with special needs and their involvement in quality education in Kosovo. [5]Thus, this kind of education, through inclusion, took a step towards the advancement for this category of children, in philosophical and methodological aspect being empowered through Kosovo law. Preparation of teachers and their training for this category commenced, then the course for this type of education was opened within the Faculty of Philosophy (Education of children with special needs) and it was proceeded by administrative instructions and strategic plan, setting out standards for the perfection of this very sensitive social process.

d. Changes in University Education

Developments and reforms in all spheres of society brought a new reality in the post war Kosovo. This dictated the need for transformation of the university education according to European integration requirements. It is known that the University of Prishtina consisted of 22 faculties and high schools. Reform of the system allowed establishment of universities outside Pristina University, thus, opening universities in other parts of Kosovo, such as in Prizren, Peja, Mitrovica, Gjakova. This system through programs enabled the advancement of those who had only a two-year higher education.

"University of Prishtina" consists of two units: 1. Academic Units and 2. Organizational Units

In the academic units of the University of Prishtina are included faculties that operate within the institutional framework of the University, offering programs of higher education, scientific research or artistic creativity. Faculties of the University provide the following types of regular and postgraduate studies in accordance with the provisions of the University Statute: 1. Basic Studies - Bachelor, 2. Master Studies and 3. Doctoral Studies. [7]

Organizational units of the University of Prishtina include the office of foreign relations, university libraries and computer networking center of the university. In 2001, at the University of Prishtina began its work the International Summer University, with the open program to students, professors, local and foreign specialists. [5]

e. Private Education

Reforms in the education system enabled the development and provision of private education at all levels, complementing the public education and being part of the national system, although independent from the public one. Institutions providing private education, despite the level, must first be licensed by MEST, a procedure that is regulated by law.

III. Conclusion

Referring to the new circumstances in Kosovo society, a comprehensive reform of education system was necessary. It is understandable that the switch from traditional to modern education system was a requirement of the time, because of the new circumstances and trends. Until 1999, Kosovo worked under the traditional education system and the change was commenced on this basis. In order to change such a system and carry out an effective reform, detailed studies were required, analyzing precisely the benefits and disadvantages and consequently built up a reform based on it.

But the question was the study and analysis carried out prior to the reform in Kosovo education system? If we refer to the developments during the reform it shows that:

a. The reform process was initiated by international experts, who were away from the traditional system, having a negative evaluation and dropping out all values. They did not engage local professional staff, who would inform them about real and actual circumstances to be considered in order to know how further the process could be taken, particularly in the first phase. As it may be considered, it was a major mistake of the internationals.
b. The reform was immediate with all the changes and not step by step, as other countries facing transitions did or those that made themselves substantial reforms in their education system.
c. Since the beginning all the achievements so far in Kosovo education were criticized and rejected. Previous studies have shown that even small changes should take into account the past and current basis and something new should start building up based on them.
d. The reform was initiated without making any necessary preparation. Professional preparation of the teaching staff, infrastructure and logistics were not taken into account. It is known that in education system there are teachers near retirement that have a basic education not sufficient to cope with the demands deriving from the new curricula, then many schools did not even have the basic

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infrastructure, without cabinets and labs, without field gyms for sports activities and finally there was a lack of textbooks under new curricula. When talking about concretization tools, there was a lack of chalks and blackboard was the only tool that most of the schools possessed at that time. There are cases when 45 students attend a class.

e. Socio-economic situation caused movement of population, especially movement to the cities, overwhelming the schools there and leaving other schools with a small number of students. The same movement affected teaching staff leaving many schools in rural areas with unqualified staff.

Consequently, the education system in Kosovo, since 2000 onwards, passed through several stages of changes. Although initially everything was centralized at the high level, later on things changed and some competences were passed to local level. All reforms are expected to change something from the past, especially the comprehensive reforms that the education system in Kosovo went through that brought real changes.

However, not all of them were productive. Sometimes they even presented great challenges, starting from the teachers' uncertainty about their jobs and reluctance to accept these changes. Then, a challenge was the enrolment of 6-year children in primary education, for which there was no curriculum, and there was a shortage of textbooks. Challenging were the fifth and ninth grades, where for the first time the same teacher continued up to fifth grade and there was no curriculum or textbooks. The ninth grade caused even bigger troubles, as there were no textbooks, no curricula and no necessary preparation either.

The University of Prishtina also faced challenges, especially due to the lack of enrolment criteria and opening of private universities.

Referring to the above, it is considered that undertaking such reforms was a hasty step and not considered sufficiently and that in many cases it damaged the education system in Kosovo. Therefore, even though it was a real reform of the education system in Kosovo, this process is undertaken without studying at all specifications and values that were created over a long period, without analyzing the circumstances that the education went through over the time and without assessing existing needs of the society. So, reckless steps were taken and instead of bringing positive results, the education was completely devalued. This is best proven by the level of education that we currently have. Simply said, to complete a level of education, it is enough the physical presence of the pupil or the student. This is unfortunate, but it is evident at all levels, whether in public or private institutions. The question is: does Kosovo need all these universities and colleges; can all of them be covered by scientific degrees and qualified professors. Nevertheless, the time will show it.

The planning does not include the estimations of labour market needs, so that after studies the employment is provided. Thus, currently we have a large number of graduates who are unemployed.

The appointment of school principals is done by parties and without analyzing the performance and achievements. To those that hold this position for a certain period, the working place is not reserved, so in most cases they do not apply for this position, allowing having unprofessional principals, only for a salary or militants of the ruling party. So, today the schools are run by inadequate people.

Based on this, we think that in order to increase the quality in education it is essential to do a planning in conformity to the conditions of the actual circumstances. A good planning will certainly be the motive and incentive for the students and their orientation in the future. This will be the key to the success of the society.

IV. Recommendations

To proceed with further cultural evolution in the education system, going step by step and with experts of this field, analyzing the practices of the most successful countries in this regard.

To develop strategic plans for accreditation and licensing policies of all levels, whether for curricula or other conditions, taking into account the circumstances of the society and social and economic development conditions

To provide sufficient teaching staff and psychologists in all schools, particularly at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels.

To amend the instruction on the positions of school principals, assessing their performance and achievements for extension of mandates, preserve their positions and not be dictated by politics.

To study and analyze the professional preparation of teachers related to the subjects they teach, because in some cases the staff does not possess proper preparation.

To make the verification of scientific degrees and academic titles of professors and lecturers.

To establish an inspection team that would monitor the work of lecturers and professors at all levels, particularly in higher education.

Family should retrieve its role in proper education of youth and avoid circumstances that incite deviated behavior.

It is required to reduce the number of students in classrooms, i.e., conform to European standards 20-25 students

Our institutions, currently all of them local ones, should analyze as soon as possible the existing circumstances in the education system and take additional reforms to convert the education to the right track and conform to European standards.

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