

**Reading, Writing and Reconciliation:
Educational Reform
in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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Abstract

The post-war reconstruction and state-building process in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has been complex, with priorities changing as the country gradually normalizes and donor interests evolve. In mid-2002 the international community in BiH began a significant effort to modernize and reform BiH's education system to better prepare the country's youth to play productive social, economic and political roles in the future. Although educational reform gained significant attention in 2002, reforms efforts have been occurring at a variety of levels since 1996.

This paper will provide an overall review of the state of education and educational reform in BiH. In the first part of the paper, a conceptual framework is developed to provide a basis for understanding the role of education and educational reform in societies undergoing a period of transition. Next, the state of education in BiH is reviewed, with a focus on needed reforms. BiH's post-war social, political and legal environments are reviewed to clarify the challenges facing reformers. In order to provide a case study of reform in a post-conflict country, the second half of the paper reviews various reform efforts that have been proposed and implemented since 1996, with an emphasis on the reform process and the role of the international community. Special attention is given to efforts organized by the Office of the High Representative, the European Commission and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In addition, the unique experience of the Brčko district is reviewed to determine whether it might serve as a model for reform across BiH. Throughout this review there is an emphasis on both process and outcome, because understanding these complex processes is crucial to understanding how and why reforms did or did not occur at various points in time. Several lessons learned for future reform in BiH and other societies in transition are offered in the hope that future reform processes might be more effective and efficient based on BiH's experience. Finally, suggestions for future research are proposed as education and educational reform in BiH and other post-conflict, transition societies, are complex yet necessary efforts to ensure long-term peace and stability.

* * *

Research for this paper proceeded throughout 2002 and 2003, with initial versions prepared in March and May 2003, and final revisions made in early September. There have been many developments from March through September 2003, which has made keeping this document current a challenge. The author regrets any failures to adequately update all sections to reflect the rapidly changing environment. The author may be contacted directly with questions, suggestions or comments at valeryperry@yahoo.com.

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Acronym List

| | |
|-----------|--|
| BiH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| CHB | Curriculum Harmonization Board |
| COE | Council of Europe |
| DPA | Dayton Peace Agreement |
| EC-TAER | European Commission – Technical Assistance to Education Reform |
| EU | European Union |
| FBiH | Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| GFAP | General Framework Agreement for Peace |
| HR | High Representative |
| IC | International Community |
| IFOR | Implementation Force (NATO) |
| IO | International Organization |
| IPTF | International Police Task Force |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OHR | Office of the High Representative |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| OSCE MBiH | OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| PDHR | Principal Deputy High Representative |
| PIC | Peace Implementation Council |
| RS | Republika Srpska |
| SFOR | Stabilization Force (NATO) |
| SMS | Shared Modernization Strategy |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children’s Education Fund |

I. Introduction

A country's educational system is perhaps its single most important social, economic and political resource. Schools educate youth for future employment, socialize children to ensure integration and active involvement in their communities, prepare them for productive participation as a citizen of their country and transmit those values and beliefs deemed to be important by their society. The far-reaching impact of an educational system explains its centrality in the domestic politics of many nations – democratic or otherwise. It also illustrates the difficulties inherent in rebuilding or reforming an educational system in the aftermath of violent conflict, whether by actors who were themselves party to the conflict, or by outside third-party actors who become involved in educational work as a part of a greater post-conflict development effort.

As part of the post-war reconstruction process initiated by the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA, or General Framework Agreement for Peace, GFAP) in December 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is undergoing a period of educational reform and modernization at all levels: primary and secondary; university and vocational; compulsory and elective. While reform efforts began with initial inflows of money and assistance in early 1996, coordinated and targeted programmes did not begin until later, culminating in a full-scale effort organized through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in mid-2002. In the years immediately following the signing of the DPA, educational reform was not a priority of the international community (IC) or BiH authorities. The primary focus was initially on reforms and basic services that were vitally needed in the shattered country, such as reconstruction, separation of the military forces in BiH, refugee return, and basic infrastructure development. There was also an emphasis on elections, which the IC viewed as a critical part of an early exit strategy. Although briefly mentioned in Annex 6,¹ the IC's mandate primarily focused on implementation of the peace agreement, in which education is not a top priority. This is evidenced by the fact that no organization, international or domestic, was given a clear mandate to ensure educational reform. Therefore, issues such as military stabilization (Annex 1A), refugee

¹ Annex 6 provides for the "Agreement on Human Rights", and Article I (Fundamental Rights and Freedoms) point 12 notes "the right to education".

return (Annex 7), elections (Annex 3), and police force restructuring (Annex 11) took the majority of attention (and resources) of the IC, as these were perceived to be the elements of reform most necessary to enable exit of the IC from its pseudo-occupation.

While the architects of the DPA may not have recognized or acknowledged the importance of education in BiH, it is difficult to underestimate the impact that a comprehensive, modern and fair education system can have in developing a democratic state. In January 2002, at a conference on educational reform sponsored by the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the chief civilian peace implementation body in BiH, Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays acknowledged the failure of both the IC and domestic authorities to respond to this issue soon enough: “We are late in tackling this issue, one that should have been viewed as a core issue for BiH post-war recovery and an issue that will definitely influence the success or failure of all our efforts to create a free, democratic and stable BiH.”² Few development, conflict resolution, democratization or human rights experts would doubt the central role that education can play in promoting these processes. This was reluctantly acknowledged by the US occupation force in post-World War II Germany as they tried to rebuild and reform the German education system: “To institute a democracy in Germany required more than the outward forms of popular governance. Free elections, democratic constitutions, independent political parties, and local self-government were simply institutional features; they required an inner spirit to give them meaning.”³ The same statement can be applied to BiH.

The story of educational reform efforts in this multiethnic, post-conflict, post-Cold War transitional society provides an interesting picture of an important aspect of democratization and state-building, and of the various roles that can, and possibly should, be played by internal and external actors. By asking (and attempting to answer) the question, “What has been happening in terms of education in BiH in the past

² “PDHR Hays calls for urgent education reform.” *OHR Press Release*, 22 January 2002, at <http://www.ohr.int>.

³ James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. (Chicago, 1982), 1.

seven years since the end of the war?” this study will explore a variety of related issues, including:

- the challenges facing education in BiH
- the state of educational reform in BiH
- the roles and activities of BiH and IC authorities
- the role of education in peace-building, minority-majority relations and inter-communal reconciliation
- potential lessons to be learned and best practices for other post-conflict or transitional states
- the role of education in democratization and state-building strategies

As the US administration has begun to take steps to reform the education system in post-war Iraq, it is clear that there is a need for lessons learned from reform processes in other post-conflict and transition countries such as BiH.⁴

There have been numerous agency reports, media stories and surveys of the education system in BiH. This study is intended to target those readers interested in several related angles, including a concise overview of educational activities in BiH from 1996 to 2002, a case study of the role of the IC in state-building in BiH and a review of the negotiations and compromises that drive development and reform processes in general in post-Dayton BiH. Although education and educational reform encompass a range of activities, from pre-school to university education to ongoing adult education programmes, this review will focus on efforts to reform the compulsory primary and general secondary educational programmes, while briefly noting reforms in other educational endeavours. Compulsory education, at the primary or secondary levels, can be viewed as the most political of educational reform efforts. This is not to say that the other efforts have not been politicized. Demobilized soldiers in need of vocational training can be manipulated by political parties, particularly before elections. Higher education and academia have been plagued by politics and intellectual and academic freedom has been compromised through attempts to exert political control over universities. However, the education and transmission of basic facts and values to a country's youth is at the crux of both the identity-based conflicts that can occur and of the

⁴ Jackie Spinner, “Next: Operation Iraqi Education”, *The Washington Post*, 21 April 2003, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A58486-2003Apr19.html>.

intercommunal negotiations that are necessary in a multiethnic state. Researchers note that: “ethnic attitudes are formed early, and that once positive or negative prejudices are formed, they tend to increase with time. Early socialization experiences are, therefore, critical in the formation of ethnic attitudes.”⁵ A higher education or vocational system can be structured as modern and liberal, but if the students enter such a system from a dogmatic and politicized primary and secondary education, the foundation has already been established.

The information gathered in this report comes from a compilation of primary and secondary sources, drawing heavily on agency reports from the variety of international organizations (IOs) working on education in BiH. Information was also gathered through interviews and discussions in 2002 and 2003 with representatives of the various implementing agencies (both IOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and outside experts. The author participated in two of the European Commission Technical Assistance to Educational Reform Shared Modernization Strategy (EC-TAER SMS) workshops as a volunteer advisor to the working group on Integration of Returnee Children (SMS Working Group 4.3), attended several SMS support group meetings as an observer and participated in the OSCE-organized education forum meetings.

This paper is organized into four general sections. First, a framework for analyzing the role of education and educational reform in societies undergoing a variety of potential transitions is presented in order to provide a basis for understanding the challenges facing BiH. Second, the education system in BiH is reviewed with a focus on primary and secondary education. BiH’s pre-war system, the impact of the war on education from 1992 to 1995 and the post-war reform needs are also presented to illustrate the broad need for modernization. Next, several of the reform efforts that have been initiated or supported by the IC are reviewed, with a focus on several of the largest and most influential initiatives. Finally, lessons learned from the education reform effort in BiH are presented to provide suggestions for future innovations in BiH, or for other societies in transition and in need of educational reform or modernization. While

⁵ Kenneth D. Bush and Diana Saltarelli, “The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict”, UNICEF (August 2000), 3. In reference to research by Padilla, Ruiz and Brand.

BiH, due to heavy international involvement, is often a very specific case study, its experiences can still offer lessons for intervention and state-building efforts in other regions.

The debate on educational reform in BiH cannot be viewed in a vacuum. It is occurring at a time when the IC is increasingly frustrated with the pace of change in BiH and is pre-occupied by other global imperatives. Additionally, the international donor aid community is experiencing donor 'fatigue' and reallocating its resources to 'sexier' trouble-spots across the globe, as BiH politicians continue to fail to create and consolidate a vision of a state based on the premises of multiethnicity, equality and power-sharing. However, it is also occurring at a time when BiH's human resources increasingly see more hope outside the borders of the fragile country than within, and where parents and children who desperately want a better education and future are uncertain whether it will be delivered. There is therefore little room for failure, as educational reform will, in the short and long-term, create a generation of citizens who will bear the burden of determining the future of BiH.

II. Reform at a Time of Multiple Transitions

BiH is in the unfortunate position of undergoing not one transition, but three: the post-Cold War transition from a one-party political system and a controlled economy to a multiparty, democratic, free market state; the post-war transition resulting from the violent dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; and the transition from a socialist state towards membership in the European Union (EU), including the integration of all of the human and minority rights protections that are necessary for future participation in European structures. Educational reform would be necessary under any *one* of these transitions, but at the conflux of all three it becomes clear why it has been so difficult to achieve to date. This section will provide an overview of the issues, norms, themes and specific challenges facing any country undergoing any one of these transitions. Together, they provide a general framework for thinking about educational reform in BiH.

A. Education in Multiethnic Societies

The link between education and one's identity has been well-established. Language, culture, history and worldview are all transmitted through both informal education in the home and formal education in school. Education is inextricably linked to the right to have, express, protect and promote one's identity: "Next to the family, (education) is the single most important agency for cultural reproduction, socialization and identity formation."⁶ Educational rights and unrestricted access are particularly important issues in the multiethnic, multilingual societies that dominate a Europe in which many groups demand full participation and representation in political, social and economic affairs. Therefore, to genuinely protect minority rights, education is one of the most critical areas of implementation.

Over the past 50 years, numerous conventions, declarations and frameworks guaranteeing human rights and minority rights in general, and educational and cultural rights in particular, have been developed and ratified by countries across Europe and the world. The following list highlights some of the most significant:

⁶ C.H. Williams, "The Cultural Rights of Minorities: Recognition and Implementation", in J. Plichtova (ed.), *Minorities in Politics: Cultural and Language Rights* (Bratislava, Slovakia, 1992). Cited in Kristin Henrard, "Education and Multiculturalism", *7 International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* (2000), 393-410.

- European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (adopted in 1950; entry into force 1953)
(<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/CadreListeTraites.htm>)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (adopted and opened for signature in 1965; entry into force 1969)
(http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_icerd.htm)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted and opened for signature in 1966; entry into force 1976)
(http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted and opened for signature in 1966; entry into force 1976)
(http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted and opened for signature in 1989; entry into force 1990)
(<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>)
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (adopted and opened for signature in 1992)
(<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/WhatYouWant.asp?NT=148>)
- European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (adopted in 1995; entry into force 1998)
(<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/157.htm>)

These and other agreements begin to define the relationship between a state's obligations and an individual's rights, entering into the complex and often controversial territory governing the needs of a state for a cohesive citizenry and the rights of a family or national minority group for cultural protection and autonomy in their community affairs. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly and plainly states, "Everyone has the right to education",⁷ and goes on to note more specific rights that form the basis of the relationship between national minorities and the state authorities: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."⁸ The 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child includes several comple-

⁷ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, Article 26, paragraph 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, point 3.

mentary principles: “[The child] shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society.”⁹

However, while progress is being made in accepting and implementing these protections, and while acknowledgement of these rights is an important first step, there is still significant room for improvement. For instance, there is discussion about whether these principles can be best fulfilled, both in letter and spirit, by policies that promote curricular modules targeted towards specific minority groups, or through a curriculum that aims to mainstream these issues into the overall educational approach. A report prepared by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities explored the issues of national minority educational and linguistic rights.¹⁰ In a questionnaire distributed in December 1996 to all of the OSCE participating states, one of the questions asked was, “To what extent is the culture, history, religion and belief of national minorities taught in the general curriculum?”¹¹ The report notes that while the vast majority of states that responded to this question asserted that they do teach about one or more of their national minorities in the curriculum, 15 (including BiH) indicated that this teaching was not part of the *general* curriculum at either the primary or secondary school level: “Minority cultures were taught only to the members of the minorities.”¹²

⁹ *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, 1959, paragraph 7. Full text available at <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/25.htm>.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the HCNM report only concerned *national minorities*, and that in BiH, the three dominant factions are *not* considered to be national minorities. There is no single ‘titular nation’ in Bosnia, and there is no dominant majority. Before the war, Bosnia had a population of approximately 4.4 million people, which was about 45% Bosniak, 35% Serb, and 18% Croat. Rough estimates in 2000 suggest the breakdown is now 48% Bosniak, 39% Serbs, and 12% Croat. See Sumantra Bose, *Bosnia After Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention* (London, 2002), 45. The last census was held in 1991, and while an updated census is sorely needed, there has been no agreement on such a process as it would be highly charged politically. In the absence of a titular nationality, the Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs are each considered a ‘constituent people’ or ‘constituent nation’ enjoying equal rights throughout the country. The concept of ‘constituent peoples’ has been used to codify the distinction between a ‘nation’ and a ‘national minority’ and to address the issues of belonging, identity and ownership in a country made up of several nations. In BiH today the three constituent peoples are clearly not national minorities (BiH’s ‘real’ national minorities include Albanians, Czechs, Hungarians, Jews, Macedonians, Roma, Slovenes, Ukrainians and others) and the system ensures that as constituent peoples they enjoy some of the benefits of consociationalism, such as a national interest veto and proportional representation in many government bodies.

¹¹ OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, *Report on the Linguistic Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the OSCE Area*, March 1999, 24.

¹² OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, March 1999. *Report on the Linguistic Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the OSCE Area*, 25.

Sixteen states responded that they do have a programme to teach about national minorities in the general curriculum.¹³ Further, some states responded that they teach courses about tolerance and intercultural understanding, either in addition to, or in place of specific courses on national minorities.

In the analysis of these results, it is emphasized that “fewer than 1/3 of the states responded affirmatively that they teach about minority cultures in the general curriculum.”¹⁴ In the conclusions and recommendations, the authors of the report suggest that all states must be more aware of international standards, and that states could be well-served by legislation to ensure policy implementation. The authors also emphasize the need for close communication between government bodies and national minority communities to ensure effective implementation strategies that reflect community needs.

Educational strategies in multiethnic states must address two key areas of either inclusion or integration: linguistic and cultural rights. The language of instruction and the languages taught directly reflect the extent of minority participation. While no one would argue against the necessity of a strong education including math and science, whether these subjects are taught in a student’s potentially minority mother-tongue or some other dominant ‘official’ language can affect the quality of a student’s education and confer certain advantages on the native speakers of the majority tongue. Cultural rights include the basket of courses such as art, literature, music and history that reflects a people’s shared experience. These courses, subjective in nature, can prove controversial as they are potentially open to multiple perspectives and interpretations; there is no single cultural truth. Both aspects of education require appropriate legal protection and instructional methods to ensure equitable educational opportunity for all students.

The issue of segregating national minority study modules into an elective designed to extend specific knowledge to a self-selected audience raises the issue of whether the

¹³ Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia (particularly Baltic Germans), Germany (particularly Roma), Hungary, Kyrgystan, Lithuania (teaching about the Jews, Tatars and Karaites), Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden (particularly Sami), Switzerland, Turkey and Turkmenistan.

¹⁴ OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities. *Report on the Linguistic Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the OSCE Area*, March 1999, 25.

purpose of these norms is simply to ensure access by national minorities to an education that includes their own culture or to ensure the development of a society based on a tolerant and diverse citizenry. An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report published in September 2001 suggests that “education systems should not just be ‘fair’ to minorities – they should promote a spirit of equality and tolerance among ethnic and cultural groups.”¹⁵ In a report on minority rights in education in Estonia, Latvia, Romanian and Macedonia, it is similarly concluded that: “learning apart does not encourage living together”, and that “there is a danger of a strictly mono-lingual/mono-religious/mono-cultural or even mono-racial approach leading to ghettoization of minorities.”¹⁶

Wealthy and stable democracies have continued to struggle with the best way to implement these agreements throughout the past 60 years of peacetime development. The challenge to achieve such multiculturalism is complicated by situations in which cultural groups are, or perceive themselves to be excluded, marginalized or otherwise disenfranchised from the ‘mainstream’ society of the majority. The risk is cultural polarization and civil discontent, whether through latent dissatisfaction, low-level social criminal activity and unrest, or violent, politically driven conflict: “When these basic human needs – of identity, security, recognition, autonomy, participation, self-esteem and a sense of justice - continue to be frustrated and remain unfulfilled then fears of the other (often exaggerated) and a culture of separation prevail(s).”¹⁷ The norms noted above provide a framework for how to begin to address these issues; successful implementation is dependent on creative and trusted approaches developed jointly by communities and the relevant educational authorities.

¹⁵ OECD Centre for Co-operation with Non-members, Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, Education Committee. *Thematic Review of National Policies for Education – Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Report, Table 1, Task Force on Education, 27 September 2001, 15.

¹⁶ Duncan Wilson, *Minority Rights in Education: Lessons for the European Union from Estonia, Latvia, Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. The Right to Education Project (December 2002), 81.

¹⁷ Maria Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, “A Partnership Between Peace Education and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Cyprus”, at <http://www.construct.haifa.ac.il/~cerpe/papers/mariaht.htm>.

B. Education in Societies in Transition

The end of the Cold War introduced a new era in which the lid placed on development and modernization by the Communist system was lifted, revealing a plethora of political, economic and social sectors ripe for reform. While several countries outside the Warsaw Pact have themselves been slow to replace authoritarian teaching methods with more interactive approaches, the need for reform in education was particularly evident in Eastern Europe, where advances in modern teaching methods, progressive curricula and problem-solving oriented pedagogy passed over the top-down, technically accurate, yet pedagogically weak education systems in the East. In line with a single-party system in which conformity was valued and challenges to the social order repressed, curricula and teaching methods were rigidly defined, ideologically-driven and highly centralized, with little room for innovation and no room for critical thought, analysis or reflection of the ideas presented.

Three general areas of educational reform in these societies can be identified: legal/legislative, technical/pedagogical and content/curricula. In terms of legislative reform, a key priority has been de-centralization of education, to allow for greater local-level input in educational affairs under a general framework of standards mandated by the state. In a workshop on the topic of education in multiethnic societies in Central and Eastern Europe, participants affirmed the need for a mix of centralized and de-centralized control and authority on the issue of education. Local authorities and experts are best poised to ensure that education reflects the needs of a local community, and can be most responsive to student and parent interests: “In turn, central authorities have a role to play in ensuring that education and minority rights are protected, which will, in turn, contribute to social cohesion.”¹⁸ Additionally, in the absence of a centralized, one-party state driven by a central ideology, particularly at the level of higher education, legislation is needed to ensure academic independence, accountability, innovation and sound scholarship. Finally, while under the socialist regime the issue of national minorities was subsumed under the banner of ultimate equality for all peoples, the adoption of pertinent legislation and appropriate imple-

¹⁸ Minority Rights Groups International, “Education in Multi-Ethnic Societies of Central and Eastern Europe”, at <http://www.minorityrights.org>.

mentation strategies is needed to begin to address the educational needs of national minorities.

The second set of reforms focuses on technical methods of teaching and the introduction of modern pedagogical techniques. In the previous system, a key educational objective was to develop a society of conformist citizens who would advance the goals of the party and the state. Rote-memorization of a specific set of mono-perspective facts took the place of a Socratic learning environment in which questions serve as the basis for analytical thought. Educators were the medium for the transmission of knowledge, rather than a facilitator of individual creative growth and development. While these traditional, authoritarian methods were not confined only to countries behind the Iron Curtain (classrooms and teaching approaches children in the United States in 2003 may take for granted are very different from the education their grandparents or even parents experienced), other countries in more liberal systems have been able to progressively modernize, experimenting with methods and techniques over time. As with all social reforms in the post-Cold War region, however, these changes are being made more rapidly, and often more as a result of external rather than internal impetus.

In a post-Cold War economy where jobs are not guaranteed by the state and where students must be prepared for a demanding and fast-changing labour market, old teacher-centred approaches are no longer suitable and new student-centred teaching methods are needed. Pedagogy must be liberalized so that critical thinking can begin to enter the classroom. Students must possess a broad range of skills to ensure that their career potential is flexible, as 'employment for life' in a single state-owned industry is no longer available. As Europe becomes an increasingly integrated and unified continent, European countries must adopt homogenized standards to guarantee maximum mobility across educational systems (particularly institutions of higher learning) and labour markets.

The third set of reforms, regarding curriculum and content, is possibly the most controversial of the educational reforms in transition countries. The content taught to children, the facts they learn about their culture, the history of their country and the history of other (often neighbouring countries), will play a key part in shaping their

worldview and perceptions. Educating children about European development in the twentieth century has been particularly difficult and clearly illustrates the challenges educators face in addressing such reforms. The process of ‘recapturing history’ in the wake of the Cold War and the rapid social transformations of the twentieth century is a well known challenge:

History and historians were particularly ill-served under the communist regimes. The recovery of erased or manipulated memories may be at the centre of the transformation and encourage the move towards democracy (the memory of 1956 in Hungary), or may in contrast justify the worst (battle of Kosovo). Most of the time, history and memory have been carried away in the maelstrom of transitions, appropriated by politicians.¹⁹

All countries face these challenges, as the manipulation of history can be a tool for division, rather than tolerant enlightenment. It could even be said that at some level all countries adapting to the modernization of the twentieth century have been forced to face the issue of nationalism and education, with varying degrees of commitment and success. Again, the speed of reform and the social and political vacuums that often exist in societies in transition simply highlight this difficult process. For example, tensions between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania continue amidst demands for cultural and linguistic rights and claims of ethnic segregation in the wake of violence in the early 1990s.²⁰

History is both memory and identity, and education is a means of cultural identity preservation. This challenge has led to the development of initiatives such as the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research and various Council of Europe (COE) programmes.²¹ In its work on teaching history in the ‘New Europe’ the COE has recommended a history curricula that emphasizes shared and ‘transversal’

¹⁹ Jean-Yves Potel, “Political Manipulation of Memory and the Responsibilities of Historians (abstract)”, presented at the symposium *Rebuilding a Common Future: For a Critical Approach to History Teaching*, 10-13 May 2000, Sarajevo.

²⁰ “New Tensions Between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvanian City”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines*, 16 April 2002, <http://www.rferl.org/newslines/2002/04/4-See/see-160402.asp>.

²¹ The issue of textbooks and interpretations of history have been heavily discussed. See the Georg Eckert Institute web site at <http://www.gei.de> and the South-East Europe Textbook Network at http://storch.gei.de/seenet/states/bih/history_after_the_war.htm.

themes that have affected the continent as a whole, such as feudalism, population movements or the industrial revolution.²² The difficulty often lies in finding the appropriate balance between instilling pride in one's culture, history and heritage, and honestly exploring the less positive aspects of national development. The COE further emphasizes the difference between 'national' and 'nationalist' histories, and encourages a framework that does not just include political and military histories, but social and cultural history as well, including gender perspectives and the common human element of national development. In general, a multiple-perspective approach to learning is necessary to ensure children are equipped to analyze facts critically and independently, particularly the 'unquestionable truths' that have dominated curricula for so long.

This brief review of the challenges many countries in transition are facing provides a basic introduction to critical issues that must be addressed. Countries that have experienced relative success in making this difficult transition, such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, among others, can provide examples of best practices. However, they too are only at the beginning of a reform process that will take years to complete. The difficulties inherent in making these reforms in a peaceful state illustrate the even greater difficulties that countries must endure when they are proceeding through this reform in the wake of violent conflict.

C. Education in Post-War Societies/Education in Peace-Building

Education in times of war can be both a victim of, and a catalyst for the conflict. War obviously disrupts the educational process, as it does all patterns of normal life. Depending on how long a conflict lasts, an educational system must adapt in order to provide basic services to students.²³ In a post-war environment, education can help to facilitate recovery and reconciliation and be a focal point for community redevelopment. However, education can also be used as a tool in wartime or in the post-war environment to prolong or reignite the conflict and promote division and intolerance.

²² Denis Durand de Bousingen, *Lessons in History: The Council of Europe and the Teaching of History*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, April 1999, 20.

²³ The Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies provides resources and information to assist in the educational process in times of war. See <http://www.ineesite.org>.

This dual nature of the potential roles of education in peace and conflict – both the constructive and destructive – has been referred to as “the two faces of education”.²⁴

At its most basic, in a post-war environment, educational reform consists of the physical reconstruction of schools and education infrastructure, reconstitution of educators, (often a difficult task, as many former educators may have been killed or left the country during the war), and the burden of once again teaching routine subjects like math and science, with the anything-but-routine challenge of teaching history, art and culture through a fresh lens of violent conflict. Both consciously and subconsciously, war affects a person’s outlook, perceptions and worldview, and these reframed opinions are then transmitted from adults to children, either informally at home or formally in the schools. Contemporary history, as well as the history of centuries past, are suddenly all refocused through the lens of recent experience.

This is clearly the case in BiH and the former Yugoslavia. Similarly, the region’s close European neighbours are undertaking the same process now that the post-Cold War transition has ushered in a new era focused on analyzing the continent’s past - inclusive of the violence of the twentieth century. Post-Cold War transition states and post-conflict states face similar challenges in addressing educational approaches to teaching history and culture, which is often at the core of educational debate in BiH.

In Croatia, a moratorium was placed on the teaching of the history of the recent war in the Krajina, which is home to many Serbs. This history will be taught for the first time in the 2003 to 2004 school year, with a special textbook developed for approximately 4,100 students of Serb nationality in the region.²⁵ In Serbia, despite the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milosević, textbooks continue to be very nationalist in their content and approach to recent history.²⁶ While these offer examples of reactions to recent wars, memories can be long. There is an ongoing debate in China, Korea and Japan

²⁴ Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces...*, vii.

²⁵ Drago Hedl, “Young Serbs Finally Start Studying the Controversial Events Surrounding the War of Independence”, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 432 *Balkan Crisis Report*, 23 May 2003. See http://www.iwpr.net/archive/bcr3/bcr3_200305_432_2_eng.txt.

²⁶ See Goran Tarlac, “History Revised: Post-Milosevic High School History Textbooks Still Offer Lessons in Nationalism”, *Transitions Online*, 24 June 2003.

regarding history textbooks chronicling Japan's policies in the 1940s.²⁷ In Cyprus, education is very obviously used as a tool to promote the conflict on the divided island: "Schools are in part institutions used for promoting nationalism and militarism through activities like celebrating national motherland days, naming schools after military heroes, showing pictures of atrocities and holding competitions in poetry and essay-writing based on nationalistic themes or 'glories of the past' of each nation."²⁸

There is another aspect of post-war education that cannot be overlooked. Education in post-conflict societies cannot be traditionally defined according to the ages of school-age children in 'normal' conflict-free societies: "In divided and violent transformation societies, youth cannot be defined in terms of rigid age categories. Ten-year-old child soldiers are adults in some ways. Thirty-five-year old combatants, who have sacrificed their youth to their cause, may become a 'lost generation' if they are denied access to education and employment."²⁹ Therefore, educational reform strategies must address traditional compulsory primary and secondary education, as well as adult learning, vocational training and higher education. Large numbers of demobilized soldiers will not be easily reintegrated into civilian life if they do not have the skills needed to succeed or at least support their family. In the absence of education, they could be a force for continued social strife rather than a force for advancement.

The role of outside actors in post-conflict educational reform is still poorly defined and understood. Outside actors, believing education is best handled by the people of the community itself, are often reluctant to become involved in major reform efforts. Generally, it is agreed that outside actors should play a primarily supportive role, with most of the decision-making devolved to local actors to ensure appropriate solutions and local ownership.³⁰ However, in some cases politicians and spoilers seeking to prolong the conflict preclude local self-initiative. The injection of external actors can, in these cases, minimize the effect of anti-peace, anti-progress spoilers. BiH is an example of a case in which the role of local authorities and international authorities is

²⁷ Thomas Crampton, "The Ongoing Battle Over Japan's Textbooks", *International Herald Tribune*, 12 February 2002, 3.

²⁸ Maria Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, "A Partnership Between Peace Education and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Cyprus" (2000), at <http://construct.haifa.ac.il/~cerpe/papers/mariaht.htm>.

²⁹ Stephanie Schell-Fauson, "Conflict Transformation through Educational and Youth Programmes", *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, Berlin, April 2001, 2.

³⁰ Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces...*, 27.

frequently debated, because there often appears to be a trade-off between locally-owned processes that fail to facilitate change in a timely manner, and externally imposed processes that, while potentially more expedient, may not in themselves provide the basis for a model of the democratic process.

Historian James Tent's study of US reeducation and de-nazification efforts goes beyond specific issues of political indoctrination and 'decontamination' and illustrates that the overall effort entailed general educational reform. While there are certainly differences in the two cases, some similarities between the international educational reform effort in Germany then and the IC effort in BiH today are striking. During the American occupation of Germany after World War II, education was a key part of the democratization and de-nazification effort made possible in the environment of unconditional surrender.³¹ However, even in the German case the US was uncomfortable with this task because it fell outside its military and even its civil-military affairs functions, and there was unfortunately no other agency prepared to assume this responsibility.³² Officials consistently noted the need for the German people to bear the main burden of reform with only assistance from the US. This approach (coupled with the rigorous de-nazification effort) both ensured local ownership and the development of appropriate ideas and minimized the Americans' mandate in a role they were uncomfortable playing. Tent also briefly reviews Britain and France's different approaches within their zones, with a particular focus on their level of local involvement. Even in a situation of occupation, it becomes clear that education is an issue that will be coveted and protected by the people, and the effectiveness with which external actors can negotiate this terrain will determine the ultimate success of the effort.

³¹ The Education and Religious Affairs Branch was responsible for reeducation initiatives. See Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*.

³² Tent, *Mission on the Rhine...*, 9-10.

III. BiH's Educational Inheritance

One important factor that reformers must keep in mind is that BiH cannot be viewed as a *tabula rasa* upon which a completely new educational system can be transcribed. BiH and the rest of the former Yugoslavia had a high quality and broad-based educational system that, while in need of reform in the last years before dissolution, provided for a well-educated and well-trained workforce that reflected the needs and structures of the time. Therefore, development strategies intended for societies with no tradition of public, compulsory and formal education cannot be applied in BiH. Similarly, professional educators from throughout the country, while in need of updated skills and methods, must be engaged in the reform process and reformers must recognize that they will bring their training and experience to the modernization process. This section will very briefly review some basic elements of pre-war and wartime education in BiH in order to provide a general backdrop. Section IV will review the state of education in BiH today, with an emphasis on the challenges and problems that must be addressed as part of any reform process.

A. Education in the Former Yugoslavia

In general, Yugoslavia³³ had a quality education system, which while in need of modernization in the waning years of its existence, provided its citizens with equitable access and a basic foundation of skills and knowledge. In the wake of the devastation of the region after World War II and the concurrent civil wars and period of state-consolidation (during which period over one million people were killed), the President of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, considered education “to be one of the most important activities for the reconstruction and development of the country.”³⁴ He recognized the political role that education could play in terms of uniting people who had been through the brutality of World War II as both allies and opponents who then had to live together in the same country. Similarly, he was cognizant of the economic role education could play as a catalyst for modernization, progress and the development of a socialist economy.

³³ The term ‘Yugoslavia’ refers to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia established after World War II and in existence until the wars of dissolution in the 1990s.

³⁴ As cited in Charles J. Russo, “Religion and Education in Bosnia: Integration not Segregation?”, 3 *Brigham Young University Law Review* (2000), at 951.

Education in the former Yugoslavia was viewed as a potentially equalizing force in keeping with the goals of the socialist state. The 1958 General Law on Primary Education made an eight-year primary school education obligatory.³⁵ Socialist values and ideology were not aimed at promoting critical thinking and analysis; rather they sought to encourage conformity and dedication to the political regime. As in all efforts to promote ‘brotherhood and unity’, encourage tolerance and dissuade signs of nationalism, the educational system in the former Yugoslavia recognized three official languages (one of which was Serbo-Croatian, now referred to as Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian) and nine ‘nationality’ languages representing the country’s national minorities.³⁶ Bilingual education was offered to over 400,000 primary school children in the 1970s.³⁷ Cultural expressions deemed as ‘safe’ were allowed, but potentially destabilizing political and nationalist sentiments were suppressed as part of Tito’s heavy-handed approach to managing ethnic relations. Yugoslavia’s national minorities enjoyed education and media programmes designed to preserve their heritage while simultaneously asserting their “Yugoslav-ness”. As is often the case in Central and Southeastern Europe, the state’s commitment to multinationalism often passed over the socially marginalized Romani population, and Romani children were over-represented in special schools for children with mental or physical disabilities.³⁸ While much of Western Europe passed through a painful catharsis of acknowledgement and recognition of the recent wartime atrocities, in Yugoslavia such openness was stifled in exchange for a peaceful coexistence ensured by a relatively comfortable, middle class standard of living. The violent history of the twentieth century was glossed over in favour of glorious depictions of the creation of the Socialist Yugoslav state.

In terms of administration, the educational system was relatively devolved:

Education was the responsibility of each of the republics and co-ordination efforts at the federal level were primarily concerned with ideology. However, in terms of general structure and of curriculum content and form, between 1945

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 952.

³⁶ Council of Europe Programme for Higher Education and Research (Report by the Council of Europe for the World Bank), *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, 10 November 1999, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁸ Save the Children, *Denied a Future? The Right to Education of Roma Children in Europe, Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2002, 47.

and 1990 the education system in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was not substantially different from that in the other republics of the former Yugoslavia.³⁹

At the local level, educational administration was directed by the concept of 'self-management' typical of Tito's brand of socialism. Through a series of committees this approach sought to ensure participatory decision-making and planning which was reflective of an ideology in which workers owned the means of production. Community input ensured local participation within the centralized ideological parameters established by the state. While theoretically a good idea, self-management, with its demands for consensus, extensive low-level consultations and bargaining, in effect led to an inefficient system with minimal accountability or individual responsibility in which any one of the many consultative stages could delay progress on necessary decisions or reforms.⁴⁰

The 1974 Constitution that further significantly decentralized social and political life in Yugoslavia affected education as well, particularly in terms of management and financing:

While central party control ensured a degree of national consistency of education programmes and delivery, local resources varied considerably. As a result, the quality of education progressively diverged between richer and poorer parts of the country, and significant disparities emerged among and even within the several Republics and Autonomous Provinces.⁴¹

This disparity in educational spending paralleled similar financial disparities occurring throughout the country as the economic recession of the 1970s and 1980s began to have an impact on social programmes and ultimately on state stability. After Tito's death in 1980, the singular Yugoslav ideology he embodied, embraced and promoted began to dilute in the absence of a single, effective successor to carry on his legacy. In a late expression of centralization in 1987 "the first common 'all-Yugoslav' core curriculum was introduced."⁴² However, this did not last, for as the Yugoslav economic

³⁹ Mr. Lluís Maria de Puig, Rapporteur on Education, *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Document 8663), 14 March 2000, Council of Europe, at <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc00/EDOC8663.HTM>.

⁴⁰ *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, 5-6.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 51.

⁴² Russo, *Religion and Education...*, 952. Citing Srebren Dizdar (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education Science, Culture and Sport, Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina, 1994), *A Development and*

and political environment deteriorated in the early 1990s, the educational system became increasingly decentralized and politicized, both throughout Yugoslavia and within BiH itself.

B. Wartime Education

The end of the Cold War and the single party state, combined with continued economic deterioration, led to the rapid disintegration of the Yugoslav political system. Yugoslavia's six republics,⁴³ which since 1974 had enjoyed increasing autonomy while still under the single framework of the country's unique brand of socialism, began to focus more on their needs (and dominant national groups) and devoted less attention to advancing the interests of the Yugoslav state. The unintended consequence of political liberalization and multiparty elections was the rise of nationalist politicians who consolidated their power bases in the republics. Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and gained recognition from the IC as independent states. The Yugoslav National Army, controlled by Belgrade, intervened to stop these secessions and Slovenia experienced a short 11-day war, while Croatia endured fighting until the declaration of a January 1992 ceasefire. Bosnia followed suit and declared its independence in April 1992. However, as the most heterogeneous of the republics, with Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs all living within the republic's borders, the secession led to a three and a half year war that would ultimately claim the lives of approximately 200,000 people.

The region's educational landscape reflected the political change and upheaval that marked the final days of Yugoslavia. From 1990 to 1992 the curricula was increasingly politicised by nationalist politicians representing the three main groups in BiH, creating cleavages that were intensified during the war from 1992 to 1995. Nationalist-driven teachings promoted division and fear, preparing the ground for ethnic cleansing operations aimed primarily against the Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) population. Once the war began, education was seriously disrupted throughout the country, as massive population displacements, fighting and economic shortages ravaged BiH.

Perspective on Teacher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1998. See also Srebren Dizdar, the UNICEF-commissioned report, "Situation Analysis of Educational Services for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina", November 1996, at www.pitt.edu/~ginie/bosnia/pdf/analysis.pdf.

⁴³ Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

During the war, 60 per cent of all schools were damaged, destroyed or requisitioned for military use.⁴⁴ University, public and private libraries were destroyed with alarming efficiency.⁴⁵ However, many schools continued to operate out of sheer determination and improvisation. In Sarajevo, a city struggling to live normally while under siege, schools operated on a shortened calendar in school buildings or private homes when possible.⁴⁶ Secondary schools met more regularly than primary schools and subjects were taught as teachers were available. In this respect the cities in BiH had a great advantage over rural areas as there was a larger pool of educated people who could serve as teachers if qualified instructors were not available. Rural villages dependent on regional schools or on teachers traveling to the village from other towns, had fewer resources to ensure education could continue.

In addition to the physical hardships of attempting to continue education during a time of war, the general trauma of war took its toll on both students and teachers. Towns and villages that were the sites of ethnic cleansing ushered in horrors not seen in Europe since WWII. The siege of Sarajevo, which lasted three and a half years, was even more difficult to comprehend in a city which had boasted of its multiculturalism and in which many mixed marriages and multiethnic families made the fighting among fellow Bosnians that much more incomprehensible. School, however, even on an abbreviated schedule, was one way to try to continue some semblance of normal life and could therefore potentially serve as a coping mechanism for students and parents alike.

In spite of the shelling, death, destruction and total disruption of normal patterns of life, Charles Russo writes that, “In retrospect, many educators in Sarajevo believe that the war forced them to develop new approaches in working with students and required them to adopt new teaching methodologies”, becoming less hierarchical and teacher-

⁴⁴ *Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1996-1998 Lessons and Accomplishments, Review of the Priority Reconstruction Program*. Prepared for the May 1999 Donor’s Conference co-hosted by the European Commission and the World Bank.

⁴⁵ For a thorough review of the destruction of libraries and documents in the war, see Andras Riedlmayer, “Convivencia under Fire: Genocide and Book-burning in Bosnia”, and J. Rose (ed.), *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book* (Amherst, Mass., 2001), 266-291.

⁴⁶ See, David M. Berman, “The Organization of War Schools During the Siege of Sarajevo, 1992-1995”, *Sociological Imagination*, Special Issue on “Bosnia and Sociology” (1999), 36:2/3, 183-198.

centred than had been the norm in the region.⁴⁷ If the adage, “necessity is the mother of invention” is true, then the innovation needed to continue education during war provided an opportunity for a more cooperative learning environment to emerge from the teacher-centred approach that dominated pre-war Yugoslavia. The wartime environment released society from past restrictions and expectations and impacted traditional social roles and relationships.⁴⁸ It also suggested an adaptability among educators that could be tapped in post-war educational efforts, if the political will existed to utilize this resource.

⁴⁷ As cited in Charles J. Russo, “Religion and Education in Bosnia: Integration not Segregation?”, 3 *Brigham Young University Law Review* (2000), at 953.

⁴⁸ Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces...*, 24.

IV. Post-War Education in BiH

The state of education in post-war BiH shares many characteristics with the overall social and political environment of the country as it emerged from the ashes of Yugoslavia. In order to preserve BiH as a multiethnic state, a complex web of power-sharing mechanisms were developed. The DPA confirmed BiH as a single, independent state, comprised of two highly autonomous ‘entities’, the predominantly Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and Bosnian Croat (Bosnian Catholic) Federation of BiH (FBiH) and the predominantly Bosnian Serb (Bosnian Orthodox) Republika Srpska (RS). The Federation is further divided into ten cantons, five of which are majority Bosniak, three of which are majority Bosnian Croat, and two of which are mixed.⁴⁹ While the capital of the FBiH is Sarajevo (which is also the capital of the state of BiH), the Federation is very decentralized, with significant authority and resources devolved to the cantons, or even to the municipalities. The RS, while divided into municipalities, is more centralized, with much decision-making power centred in Banja Luka. BiH’s educational systems must be understood against this complex political and constitutional backdrop. The following sections will introduce the state of affairs in BiH education before reform efforts began to gain momentum and realize changes in policy and in practice.

A. Legal Framework and Structures

In post-Dayton BiH, education has been highly decentralized in the Federation and highly centralized in the RS. Article III of the BiH constitution details the responsibilities of the state-level institutions, with article 3 noting that: “All governmental functions and powers not expressly assigned in this Constitution to the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be those of the Entities.” Section III, article 4(b) of the constitution of the Federation states that the cantons shall have all responsibilities not expressly granted to the Federation government, including “making education policy, including decisions concerning the regulation and provision of education.” Article 38 of the RS constitution states that: “everyone shall be entitled to education under equal

⁴⁹ The Federation of BiH consists of ten cantons. Five are Bosniak majority (Una-Sana, Tuzla-Podrinje, Zenica-Doboj, Bosna-Drina Gorazde, and Sarajevo), three are majority Bosnian Croat (Western Herzegovina, Posavina, and Livno-Tomislav), and two mixed cantons (Herzegovina-Neretva and Central Bosnia).

conditions”, that “primary schooling shall be compulsory and free”, and “everyone shall have access, under the same conditions, to secondary and higher education.”

In the Federation, cantonal level laws on primary education, secondary education and education inspection provide a legal framework for operations. In the RS, primary schools are regulated by the Law on Primary School and the Law on Inspection for Education, while secondary schools are regulated through the Law on Secondary Education. In the Brčko District, one law (imposed by the District Supervisor) regulates both primary and secondary schooling.⁵⁰

There are approximately 19,600 primary and 9000 secondary school teachers in BiH.⁵¹ A 2001 report estimates the total number of primary and secondary schools at 920, educating a total of approximately 507,000 students.⁵² There are seven Pedagogic Institutes authorized by the cantonal and RS ministries of education to provide in-service teacher training. Education is compulsory for eight years, with secondary school following for an additional three to four years. In terms of higher education, while pre-war BiH was home to four universities, post-war BiH hosts seven.⁵³ The university system in BiH consists of approximately 70 component institutions or faculties, each of which has significant autonomy. Universities are currently regarded as “associations of Faculties”.⁵⁴ The faculties are funded directly, rather than through the university, and authority is further devolved to individual professors, who have significant authority to admit students, structure their course of study, examine and promote students - all with little accountability.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ For a thorough review of educational administration practices, including hiring teachers, school boards, school establishment and other details, see the *OSCE MBiH Inter-Agency Guidelines to the Field: Monitoring and Intervening in Education-Related Issues*, August 2002.

⁵¹ *Model for System Change in Secondary Education*. Open Society Fund BH.

⁵² Paul Roeders and Hugh Glanville, *Technical Assistance to the Education Reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, EC-TAER Inception Report, 31 January 2001, 16.

⁵³ Sarajevo, East Mostar, West Mostar, Serb Sarajevo, Bihać, Zenica, Banja Luka and Tuzla.

⁵⁴ Hugh Glanville, “Towards an IC Strategy in Support of Higher Education in BiH”, internal document of the EC-TAER programme, 2001.

⁵⁵ As of this writing, only Tuzla University has made progress in ending the status of faculties as independent legal units.

B. Reform Needs

1. Administration and Finance

The Federation-level Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (FBiH MOE) has until recently had substantial influence only in the Bosniak majority regions. As the DPA places responsibility for education at the cantonal level, there is significant parallelism among the ten cantons, with more cooperation evident among the five Bosniak-majority and among three Bosnian Croat majority cantons. In the mixed cantons of Central Bosnia and Neretva there are parallel educational systems even within the canton, with little coordination.⁵⁶ Subsequently, these parallel systems fail to benefit from economies of scale and suffer from duplication, redundancy and an expensive system in an already poverty-stricken country.⁵⁷ Additionally, the complete decentralization has led to a situation in which there is virtually no financial accountability for educational administrators. These financial weaknesses, compounded by the poor state of the economy, result in a system in which “the highest spending areas spend more than twice per student at all levels than the lowest spending areas.”⁵⁸ In addition to the financial concerns, the multiple levels of government in the Federation (entity, cantonal, municipal) have led to ambiguity concerning who is responsible for what at what level, creating an environment in which there is little accountability or responsibility.

There has been support for policy change in the Federation among the Bosniaks, who in general favour a more centralized system consistent with a tendency to support a more highly centralized state structure, while the Bosnian Croats have generally preferred a decentralized system in which more control is given to the cantons. Early reform efforts met considerable resistance from representatives of the Catholic church because they often viewed suggestions for a course in ‘culture of religions’ to be the beginning of the end of the newly established religious education.⁵⁹ However, while it was difficult to encourage the Bosnian Croats to accept more streamlined, harmonized

⁵⁶ For a good review of the legal situation in BiH’s cantons and regions, see *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, 1999.

⁵⁷ Budgets are so stretched that supplies are often unavailable and teacher salaries unpaid. In September 2002, educational workers in the Central Bosnia Canton went on a general strike in protest against unpaid salaries from the previous year.

⁵⁸ World Bank, *World Bank Project Appraisal Document for an Education Development Project*, 19 April 2000, 9.

⁵⁹ Personal interview, Claude Kieffer, Sarajevo, 1 February 2002.

and centralized educational initiatives in the initial years of reform, this is beginning to change. Apart from the identity issues inherent in the ‘national subjects’ such as language and history, there is recognition by both sides of the need for basic reform.⁶⁰ When the HDZ’s (the hardline Bosnian Croat party) third entity movement failed in the spring of 2001, OHR contacted the ministers of education in the HDZ-dominated cantons to encourage them to again work within the system. As it became increasingly clear among practical-minded Bosnian Croat leaders that Europe-focused Zagreb would no longer morally or financially support the political efforts of their Bosnian cousins, the choice left to the Bosnian Croats became involvement in the reform process or exclusion from the debate. In 2002, officials noted that the Bosnian Croats were becoming increasingly cooperative and in favour of a state-level law on education – something that was unthinkable a few years ago.⁶¹

Education in the RS is more centralized, and while there is some difference in approach and outlook among the north and eastern parts of the boomerang-shaped region, all schools and educators face the same problems and challenges. Similar to the Federation, financial accountability is a concern primarily because of a lack of transparency within budgeting and spending processes. The Bosnian Serbs are, as with virtually all policies, against state-level laws that could weaken entity powers. However, potential obstructionists have been warned by the IC not to hold the issue hostage to political manoeuvrings.

At every level of educational management, reforms are needed in finance and administration to lower costs and develop a more harmonized system within which students can move and transfer without difficulty. Legislation to ensure that the systems in place throughout BiH meet certain minimal standards and expectations will help to counteract inequities and potential problems with access to educational resources. Such harmonization will not only improve internal accountability, but will lend professionalism to the system as a whole and make it easier to integrate into the broader European educational networks.

⁶⁰ Personal interview, Hugh Glanville, Sarajevo, November 2002.

⁶¹ Personal interview, Claude Kieffer, Sarajevo, 4 February 2003.

2. *The Politicization of Education*

This extreme decentralization, compounded with little accountability and a political environment that continues to be dominated by fear and manipulated by nationalist politicians, has created a structure in which abuse and inequity can flourish. In a 2000 COE report, the gap between legislation and implementation of policies meant to ensure equal access to education - particularly among minority returnees - was vividly described:

We were informed by Mr. Dragosavljević, the Republika Srpska Deputy Minister for Education, that each school with at least 25 non-Serb pupils could request instruction in their mother tongue and follow their own curriculum. We later learned that this is not true of a single school in the Republika Srpska. On the contrary, Bosniac and Croat children are obliged to follow the Serb curriculum.

The same situation obtains [sic] in the Federation. For example, at the beginning of the current academic year the media reported that some 300 children of Bosniac refugees had been unable to attend school in Žepče municipality, where the Croat curriculum is used, and that some 250 Croat refugee children had faced difficulties in Bugojno, which has a Bosniac majority. Similar problems have been reported in Stolac, Čapljina and Vareš.⁶²

Through this and other studies, it became evident that the politicization of education was not a localized phenomenon, but a deliberate strategy by nationalist politicians to use the politics of identity and fear to continue the war by other means in spite of the peace agreement.

Possibly the most visible and obvious symbol of the politicization of education in BiH is the 'two schools under one roof' phenomenon. This practice was evident in various forms throughout BiH, particularly in the Muslim-Croat Federation,⁶³ and was acutely

⁶² Mr. Lluís Maria de Puig, Rapporteur on Education, *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Document 8663), 14 March 2000, Council of Europe, at <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc00/EDOC8663.HTM>.

⁶³ Schools might be separated by floor, wing or staggered school hours.

vivid in Stolac, where Bosnian Croat children attended a new school that had been built with World Bank funds, while Bosniak children were forced to be schooled out of private homes in sub-standard conditions. Upon hearing of this egregious situation, OHR stepped in and said that if space in the new school was available (and it was), the Bosniak children should be able to benefit from the World Bank project as well. While a good intention, the OHR underestimated the divisions in Stolac and the nationalist politics that drive the hardline city in Herzegovina. Rather than integrating the Bosniak children into the school, the school was essentially divided into Bosnian Croat and Bosniak sections, separating students by floor, with piles of chairs and desks serving as barriers in the corridors and with separate entrances for each group. Other similar cases occurred in BiH as nationalists sought to ensure the minimal level of compliance and to continue homogenous education to the maximum extent possible.⁶⁴ Despite proposals by the IC to merge the schools, the situation in Stolac remained unchanged even in 2003.⁶⁵

3. Access

The issue of access to education and educational facilities is closely linked to the politicization of education. In 2002, Dr. Paul Roeders of the European Commission Technical Assistance to Education Reform (EC TAER) programme estimated that between 5000-10,000 students crossed the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) to go to school each day. This brings to light the concerns many minority returnees have concerning the education their children might receive as minority members of the community. In March 2003, the OSCE referred to “the widespread phenomena of bussing children to monoethnic schools long distances from their homes.”⁶⁶ Additionally, while students

⁶⁴ In 2003, the OSCE estimated that there are 56 such schools in the Federation, with many in the Central Bosnia, Herzegovina Neretva and Zenica-Doboj Cantons. “OSCE Concerned Over Segregation of Students”, *OSCE Press Release*, 3 April 2003. A Bosniak secondary school annex in Žepče was opened to much fanfare in April 2002, though it was understood that it would, at least at the beginning, be “2 schools under 1 roof.” In his remarks, PDHR Hays noted that while the return of Bosniak students to the Žepče secondary school was an important step, it was only a transitional step towards a truly equal and integrated system. He also noted that computer classes would be integrated as “the future is high tech and the future doesn’t care about ethnicity”. “Remarks by PDHR Donald Hays at the opening of the Bosniak Secondary School Annex in Zepce”, *OHR Press Release*, 3 April 2002.

⁶⁵ *Dnevni Avaz*, 7 January 2003, as cited in *OHR Media Round-up*, 7 January 2003.

⁶⁶ “Bussing children to mono-ethnic schools must stop”, *OSCE Press Release*, 13 March 2003. On 13 March the OSCE noted two extreme examples that illustrate the extent of the problem: “Approximately 10 returnee children are being bussed 15 kilometres to the school in Dejčići (Trnovo, FBiH) but live only a few hundred meters from the primary school in Trnovo (RS) which was completely reconstructed and equipped in 1996. [Also] children from Bukovaća (FBiH) are being bussed to the village of Drinić (RS), while the Bukovaća reconstructed school remains empty.” They further point out the

might have basic, physical access to a school, the reception and education they might receive once inside is not always assured. The COE and the World Bank noted that “pupils of a minority cultural or religious orientation can still gain access to majority schools, *provided they conform to the dominant cultural and religious views* [emphasis added].”⁶⁷ This conformity to majority views is not only impossible in BiH’s post-war environment, but antithetical to European standards, and therefore severely limits educational access to students who are a minority in a community.

Access can be broadly interpreted in order to assess the entire set of issues that can make a school appear to be accessible or inaccessible, particularly by a member of a minority population. *Physical or geographic* access to schools relates particularly to children in rural areas and considers whether or not they can realistically attend school due to the infrastructure in their area. This is particularly important in minority return areas or in Romani communities, where adequate roads or transportation may be lacking, making it more difficult for children from these communities to attend school regularly.

A second kind of access is *psychosocial*, which is particularly relevant to returnee children, or to children who are in a minority in their community and/or school. The trauma of war and the difficulty of post-war return inevitably makes minority return a stressful experience, for adults as well as students. Concerns over discrimination based on the dialect of the local language that a child speaks, the alphabet (Latin or Cyrillic) that a child has studied, or basic prejudice by teachers or fellow students can erect psychological barriers that can impede real access to education.

Symbolic access must also be considered, as symbolic barriers such as national and religious symbols can create a hostile atmosphere (for instance, the presence of a crucifix, an Islamic banner, or a Serbian flag) for a student who is not in the majority and for whom the symbol may have highly negative connotations. Finally, *contextual access* relates to curricular and educational content issues, and refers to the content bar-

expense of such practices: “Municipal authorities in Travnik calculated that 35-40,000 KM is being spent monthly on transporting students and that this amount could be reduced by 50% if children attend the school closest to their residence.”

⁶⁷ *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, 10.

riers that may exist in a curriculum that make it difficult for a child to attend school in a positive and comfortable environment, an issue which is discussed in more detail below.

4. Curriculum and the 'National Subjects'

The debate concerning curriculum reform can essentially be divided into two issues: basic curricular structure and content. There is general agreement that the numbers of courses in the current curriculum is too high, with approximately 15 different subjects, and should be reduced, reorganized into compulsory and elective subjects and made more flexible. Rather than serving as a framework ensuring that students acquire a certain set of skills, curricula in BiH today are more a checklist to ensure that information is transmitted to the students for memorization and recall. While reforming this approach will necessitate teaching training and changes in classroom methodology, it is a technical and professional issue that can be addressed over time without significant controversy.

Additionally, the pedagogical methods currently in place to teach a curriculum must also be updated. Teacher training is desperately needed, as a result of antiquated, pre-war teaching methods, the impact of the war and resultant brain-drain and the politicization of the authorities and the educational environment. In its 1999 report, the COE/World Bank noted that in some areas up to 25 per cent of teachers were not qualified for the level or grade they taught.⁶⁸ The problem needs to be assessed and addressed, and incentives must be offered to attract qualified people to the teaching profession. Approaches and techniques that encourage critical thought, a multiperspective approach and an open learning environment must be in place to support a modernized curricular structure. Teaching and learning must be democratized, with values transmitted in action as well as word: "Curriculum packages that promote tolerance will have little impact if they are delivered within educational structures that are fundamentally intolerant."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, 46.

⁶⁹ Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces...*, foreword.

Content-centred reform efforts have proved to be much more controversial and have absorbed a large part of the reform efforts to date. Math, biology, health and other subjects are not the core of the problem.⁷⁰ The so-called ‘national subjects’ dominate discussion, with history, literature, geography, religion, language, art and music deemed to be of vital interest to the three constituent peoples and an important medium for transmitting essential cultural values. The national subjects are the most difficult curricular issue to reform and address and they are controversial precisely because they hit to the core of interpreting the region’s distant and recent political, cultural and social history. It has been suggested that the controversy concerning the national subjects is not so much an issue of actual attempts by one ethnic group to impose its culture on others; rather it is the parents’ fear that their children will be indoctrinated in the culture of another group in those schools in which one or another particular cultural outlook tends to dominate.⁷¹ National subjects, such as language and literature, are “two essential components in what has been called the ‘naturalization of citizens’, and are therefore a part of nationalist processes that seek to maintain this fictive image of cultural homogeneity.”⁷²

The issue of national subjects continues to be inflammatory and has been used by nationalist politicians to stall reform efforts. Non-political reforms that are sorely needed, such as teacher training, standards and assessment and skills-focused curricula, have been overshadowed by debates on textbooks, histories and these national subjects. Although the national subjects are a potentially legitimate venue for teaching about a particular culture, they can also potentially create division, perpetrate stereotypes and promote questionable historical interpretations and cultural myths. At a more basic level, the physical segregation of students either choosing not to attend these classes, or opting for other curricular or extracurricular classes, perpetuates a division that will not likely be helpful in forging a common BiH identity among BiH’s youth. Satisfactory compromise solutions that enable the study of one’s culture without disparaging others, must be identified and implemented.

⁷⁰ These technical subjects were always a strength in the Yugoslav system, as well as in other communist countries, as they rely on simple transmission of facts and do not necessitate or lead to multiple perspectives or interpretations.

⁷¹ Personal interview, Hugh Glanville, Sarajevo, November 2002.

⁷² Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces...*, 6.

History and Geography

It should come as no surprise that the issue of teaching history is politically charged and controversial. However, BiH is far from unique in facing this problem.⁷³ From 10-13 May 2000 the COE, together with the OHR, sponsored a symposium in Sarajevo entitled, “Rebuilding a Common Future: For a Critical Approach to History Teaching”.⁷⁴ This meeting was not only for educators from BiH, but for teachers throughout the COE member states teaching twentieth century European history. The symposium provided a forum for embarking on initial steps towards developing an objective history of the region.

Teaching history is not solely dependent on the textbooks used in the classroom, but in how material is presented to the students. The following excerpt from a 1999 COE report on the topic illustrates the impact of both content and presentation:

Bosnia and Herzegovina was concerned nonetheless about the problem of re-thinking history in a country where past wounds have not had time to heal and proposed that the content of less controversial subjects such as life sciences and mathematics be reviewed first. Reacting to [a participant’s] fears, the other countries argued that it was precisely because of the controversial nature of history that it was so urgent to deal with the teaching of this subject. However, the modernization of history teaching was also dependent on improved training for history teachers. Changing the syllabus was not enough: it was important to train teachers to provide a more critical-minded form of teaching, to question the world and to compare points of view, steering clear of official or supposedly sacrosanct versions of the truth.⁷⁵

In BiH, each of the three constituent peoples has their own preferred interpretation of history, with the Bosnian Croat view influenced by Zagreb and the Bosnian Serb view

⁷³ The *International Herald Tribune* reported that in August 2001 “20 men in Seoul draped themselves in Korea’s national colours and ceremonially chopped off part of their little fingers to protest the wording in one Japanese textbook.” It was only in mid-1990s that Japanese officials began to grapple with how to portray and explain the country’s policies during WWII. “The Ongoing Battle over Japan’s Textbooks”, *International Herald Tribune*, 12 February 2002, 3. There have been no similar protests involving such extreme measures in BiH.

⁷⁴ The symposium was hosted by the Federation Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, with the support of the Academy of Sciences of BiH.

⁷⁵ “Education for Democratic Development and Stability in South-east Europe: Final Declaration and Ideas”. Informal Conference of Ministers of Education from Southeast Europe, held under the auspices of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, December 1999, 10.

by Belgrade. The Bosniak frame of reference is different, as the Bosnian Muslims do not have a kin-state. They have therefore been more amenable to new texts, while maintaining an interest in the role that the Ottoman empire played in shaping the culture of BiH.

Geography is a similarly politically-charged topic that is directly related to the kin-states of Croatia and Serbia. A textbook used in primary schools in the RS provides a vivid example of the politicization of geography in post-war BiH.⁷⁶ The map graphic on the cover of the book shows the regions of Serbia and Montenegro and the RS, without any sign of surrounding states, as if that map represented a single country. The book's discussion of state symbols reviews the symbols of the RS, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro. Belgrade, Podgorica, Srpsko Sarajevo and Banja Luka are included in the section on 'capital cities'. Srpsko Sarajevo is described as the part of Sarajevo that is in the RS and while a post-war creation, its history is gloriously portrayed: "Throughout its five centuries long history it has always borne the mark of Serb creation and existence." Similar texts demonstrating a bias towards Croatia can be found in schools in Croat majority parts of BiH. In general, such content teaches not just geography, but political allegiance, thereby challenging the integrity of BiH as a state in its own right.

Language and Literature

Language is similarly controversial. While in 2001 it became obligatory to teach both alphabets in primary and secondary schools in both entities, implementation of this has not been consistent or guaranteed.⁷⁷ Before the war, all students spoke and studied Serbo-Croatian, often alternating between the Latin and Cyrillic scripts every other week. Since the war and the proclamation of three distinct languages (and active attempts to differentiate each from one another through the introduction of new words, spellings and pronunciation), the right to speak 'one's own' language has become a demand closely linked to identity. At the beginning of the school year in 2002, Bosnian Serb high school students in Drvar decided to boycott the school after the au-

⁷⁶ The textbook title is *Atlas of Contour (Blank) Maps for the 3rd and 4th Grades of Primary School* by Dr. Stevo Pasalić. It has been banned by the OHR.

⁷⁷ Speech by Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays to an OHR-sponsored Conference on Education in BiH, *OHR Speech*, 22 January 2002.

thorities denied their requests for the introduction of their national subjects curriculum and the right to study in the Serbian rather than Croatian language.⁷⁸ Parents of primary school pupils had also made demands regarding the use of the Serbian language for their children, threatening to pull their children out of the school.⁷⁹ There are many similar examples of discontent, particularly in areas experiencing high minority return and regions where the majority balance is shifting in the face of return.

Literature has also been politicized. While the teaching of Serb epic poems might be viewed as study of legitimate cultural heritage by Bosnian Serbs, it can be seen as an expression of extreme nationalism by Bosniaks. Bosnian Croat curricula tends to emphasize Croatian writers, Bosnian Serb curricula Serbian writers, and Bosniak curricula literature from the Ottoman era and Bosniak writers - all to the detriment of a well-rounded and broad literary experience. Through reforms pushed in 2002, “since September [2002], 20-40 periods annually have been set aside to teach the literature of the three constituent peoples in the primary and secondary school curriculum.”⁸⁰ This demonstrates progress, an example of compromise, and the need for continued monitoring to ensure full compliance and implementation.

Religion

Since the introduction of religious education in the early 1990s, religion classes have been taught more as a catechism than as an academic subject, leaving little room for participation and inclusion of children of a different faith.⁸¹ Religious instruction has been affected by the dual impact of the ability to teach religion after years of official atheism and the politicization of religion during the war: “Following the first multi-party elections in BiH in 1990, the Ministry of Education introduced religious education in schools in order to satisfy the intention to respect and enforce human rights. The Ministry of Education initiated this change to move beyond the previous educa-

⁷⁸ *Glas Srpski*, as reported in *OHR Media Round-Up*, 20 September 2002. This boycott came on the heels of the resignation of Stipe Barac, a Cantonal Minister of Education, who had promised the Serbs in Drvar that they would have classes according to a national group of subjects.

⁷⁹ *Večernji List* as reported in *OHR Media Round-Up*, 16 September 2002.

⁸⁰ Speech by Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays to an OHR-sponsored Conference on Education in BiH, *OHR Speech*, 22 January 2002.

⁸¹ For specific anecdotes reflecting the results of this approach, see *Summary Report on the State of Protection of the Right of the Child in the Federation of BiH*, Ombudsmen of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7 May 2001.

tion system where religion was discriminated against and marginalized.”⁸² The formal separation of religion and education in the US is seen as impossible in BiH at the present time.⁸³ After years of being unable to teach religion in schools, many people, leaders and religious authorities are loathe to relinquish this vital part of their identity. This is not unique to BiH, as Serbia and Croatia have also introduced official religious instruction in their schools.

While religion classes themselves do not have to be problematic, whether they are a mandatory requirement or an optional elective is important: “In theory, religious education classes in public schools in BiH are optional. The reality is that in some cantons and municipalities, children who do not choose to attend these classes are subject to pressure and discrimination from peers and teachers.”⁸⁴ State-wide introduction of a “Culture of Religions” course that teaches about many religions from a cultural standpoint provides one compromise option.⁸⁵ Optional or the introduction of extra-curricular modules for religious instruction could minimize segregated study time during regular school hours.

It is important to note that religion does not have to be eliminated from the schools to ensure peace and stability in a multiethnic state. A 2000 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Youth report notes: “We think the inclusion of religious education may be one of many steps that can lead our country towards recovery. If we can separate the essential principles of a religious tradition from the way religion was used to manipulate the population to take part in war, then perhaps we can move towards the beginning of healing.”⁸⁶ As with all of the national subjects, the goal should be to maximize the time students spend in a classroom together so that tolerance can be learned through the simple process of going to school.

⁸² *Human Development Report Bosnia and Herzegovina Youth*, UN Development Programme, 2000, 19.

⁸³ Russo, *Religion and Education...*, 965.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 961.

⁸⁵ Initial proposals for such a course were poorly received, manipulated by nationalist leaders and interpreted as an attempt to remove religious instruction in the schools, prompting the OHR to issue a statement noting that the course was not “designed in any way to replace religious instruction where it is taught. It is meant to provide objective, non-discriminatory information to all pupils on the four major religions practiced in BiH and their respective traditions.”

“School Subject ‘Culture of Religions’”, *OHR Press Release*, 1 December 2000.

⁸⁶ *Human Development Report Bosnia and Herzegovina Youth*, UN Development Programme, 2000, 20.

5. *Vocational and University Education*

Although not the primary focus of this paper, vocational and higher education are also in need of reform. A review of some of these specific weaknesses and challenges further strengthens the case for reform of every aspect of education in BiH. Experts from EC-TAER have indicated that 70 per cent of students going to secondary schools attend vocational schools. Changes in the law are needed to ensure that graduates of vocational programmes can transfer or apply their vocational degrees for credit and admission to university programmes. In the current system, there is virtually no provision for such a decision: “Graduates are trained in narrow, often occupationally specific specialization for which there is questionable labour market demand. The secondary system in BiH is, thus, out of alignment with the emerging market economy’s need for broad-based skills, labour flexibility and continuous learning.”⁸⁷ As the country’s economy continues to stagnate and the ranks of the unemployed swell, vocational training, skills-updating and continuing adult education are vitally needed.

The state of university education has also deteriorated, and there are four key problems that must be solved if BiH’s universities are to reach a quality that will stem the brain-drain that is pulling youth out of the country. First, the current system in which legal authority is placed in the individual university faculties, rather than in the university itself, and in which professors enjoy virtual autonomy, perpetuates a system that lacks accountability and efficiency that must be reformed.⁸⁸ Second, control of higher education must move from a cantonal level concern to an entity level issue in the Federation, again to improve accountability and efficiency, and to reflect more general European practices. Third, as is the case with primary and secondary education in BiH, learning is very professor-oriented, with a focus on repetition of facts memorized by students rather than on problem-solving and critical analysis. A reformed teaching and learning approach would not only improve the quality of education received by the students, but would increase the value of a BiH degree globally

⁸⁷ World Bank Human Development Sector Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, *Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit to BiH for an Educational Development Project*, 19 April 2000, Report No: 20170 BiH, 5.

⁸⁸ Under such a loose structure, it is common for professors to hold multiple posts and therefore rarely be available for student support.

and help to ensure future accreditation and diploma recognition at institutions of higher learning throughout Europe.

A fourth concern is the politicization of universities, through both subtle and obvious means.

The ethnic exclusivity of the universities can be exaggerated. While it is clear that most if not all the universities are more ethnically homogenous than before, this can mainly be put down to a general population displacement and to a tradition of attending the local university. There is however a trend towards seeking to increase political control over the universities, e.g. through ‘Steering Boards’ of Canton appointees in the Federation and a Higher Education council in the RS.⁸⁹

Such politicization directly contradicts the European-wide Bologna Process, which seeks to create a single European space for higher education by 2010.⁹⁰ Although adult education faces different challenges than primary and secondary education, it will clearly also play a role in the success or failure of ongoing development in BiH.

6. *Inclusion of National Minorities*

Finally, in addition to ensuring educational rights and access among the three constituent peoples of BiH, the country’s national minorities’ rights must also be included in reform efforts. In the ongoing political debates about BiH’s Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs, the country’s *real* minorities – the Czechs, Hungarians, Macedonians, Albanians, Slovenes, Ukrainians, Jews and Roma – are typically overlooked or forgotten. A spring 2001 report noted “a pronounced lack of appropriate arrangements for the needs of the minorities such as Roma, Albanians and other children”⁹¹, yet as late as November 2002, with the exception of Roma-focused capacity building programmes, national minorities had not been included in the education reform debate.⁹²

⁸⁹ Hugh Glanville, “The Universities of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, unpublished paper, November 2001, 2.

⁹⁰ The Bologna Declaration was signed by 29 European countries in 1999.

⁹¹ *Summary Report on the State of Protection of the Right of the Child in the Federation of BiH*, Ombudsmen of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7 May 2001, 4.

⁹² In November 2002 the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) sponsored a workshop in Sarajevo entitled “National Minorities and Educational Reform in BiH”. See <http://www.ecmi.de> for the workshop report.

The Roma are both the most marginalized national minority, in terms of education and society in general and the largest minority population in BiH, with pre-war estimates ranging from 9000 – 80,000. The Save the Children report, *Denied A Future* estimates that 23 per cent of Romani households in BiH are illiterate and that pre-school and primary school attendance in the FBiH is low, with practically no attendance in secondary or post-secondary education, while in the RS practically no Roma attend pre-school.⁹³ Many of the challenges facing Roma in terms of education can be more broadly tied to larger social and economic challenges, such as poverty, mistrust of government, discrimination, and the “presumed irrelevance of mainstream education” of some Roma parents. Additionally, many Romani children are not proficient in non-Roma languages and therefore cannot function effectively in a mainstream classroom.⁹⁴

These reform issues relate not only to compliance with agreements that BiH has signed, but to the economic future of the country, as large groups of marginalized people are both a drain on society, as well as a wasted potential resource. Minority issues should be mainstreamed into the overall reform efforts, to ensure that the values of diversity are not compartmentalized, but truly integrated.

There are many other problems and challenges that BiH must overcome: high rates of non-attendance and drop-outs;⁹⁵ the decline in the status of the teaching profession - both a cause of, and caused by the inadequacy of teacher training and the lack of support offered to dedicated teachers;⁹⁶ the difficult transition facing children returning to the BiH system after time abroad and the effect of brain drain on the student body and teaching profession. This is simply an overview of some of the most prevalent and pressing.

Until reform efforts began, even in *ad hoc* fashion, manipulation of education was a mechanism for continuing the war by other means - discouraging return, inculcating

⁹³ Save the Children, *Denied a Future*, 2002, 47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 76.

⁹⁵ The OECD cites the drop out rates in compulsory schools as 20.3%, and in post-compulsory schools 25.9%. *OECD Thematic Review of National Policies for Education – Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 27 September 2001, 8.

⁹⁶ Prof. (hon.) Dr. Paul Roeders, *Towards a Sector Development Programme in BiH General Education*, Concept Paper, final version, 31 May 2001, 4.

hatred and fear and promoting destructive and self-centred nationalism. As governmental bodies have evolved in the wake of the November 2002 elections, at the time of this writing it is unknown how the new authorities will affect the reform process during its full four-year mandate.⁹⁷ However, a review of past and current reform efforts can shed some light on the processes and approaches that have brought the post-war educational system to its current state.

⁹⁷ The government structures built after the November elections are also the first to reflect the constitutional reforms implemented in the spring of 2002, which are aimed at ensuring power-sharing and equal rights among the three constituent peoples throughout BiH.

V. Reform Efforts

Although education is briefly noted in Annex 6 of the DPA, the mandate to implement educational reform was not awarded to any specific organization as was the case with other areas earmarked for reform.⁹⁸ This did not preclude organizations and agencies from addressing the issue, and the following pages will review several of these efforts. Additionally, the basic human rights protections guaranteed in Annex 6 (Agreement on Human Rights) in principle should have applied to educational access and non-discrimination in general and in particular to returnees. However, the lack of a specific mandate in the peace agreement denied education the legitimacy of inclusion and the dedicated help of a designated responsible body.

There are several possible explanations for this. First, while policing, elections and other tasks were included in the DPA as elements of state-building, education can be viewed as a highly ‘personal’ domestic issue in which reluctant international administrators would be loathe to become involved. It is also a highly bureaucratic, devolved and locally-sensitive issue, as in the case of BiH, over half a million students receive an education in a system comprised of hundreds of school and thousands of teachers. Education therefore has a significant impact on a large percentage of the population and reaches into every community. As illustrated earlier, even in the atmosphere of unconditional surrender in post-war Germany, American occupiers were uncomfortable with this task. In the case of BiH, where there was neither victor nor vanquished, and where there is no formal protectorate occupying the country, it is easy to see why education was not a priority of Dayton authors preoccupied with the ‘harder’ security-focused aspects of peace-building, such as military stabilization and policing, and with general democratization priorities such as elections. These were the issues that were seen as key to stabilization and an ultimate IC exit strategy – a particularly important imperative for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Implementation Force (IFOR, later Stabilization Force, or SFOR) peacekeeping troops.

Second, there was no strong organization poised to lobby for inclusion of education in the DPA. The IOs that traditionally address educational issues, such as the United

⁹⁸ For example, the OSCE was given the election mandate (Annex 3), UNHCR was given the return mandate (Annex 7, article I, 5), and the UN given the police reform mandate (Annex 11).

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), were relatively weak bodies, made weaker through their UN-affiliation and the poor reputation (not necessarily deserved) that the UN had gained in the eyes of many due to its wartime peace-keeping experience in BiH. The OSCE, which received the election mandate in Annex 3 of the DPA in spite of limited election experience, and other civilian diplomatic organisations such as the EU or COE, were not present at the Dayton negotiations and were not poised to assume or encourage inclusion of an education mandate in the peace plans.

Third, the short-term mindset driving the IC during the drafting of the DPA likely precluded any thought of efforts requiring long-term commitments, such as educational reform. There was strong pressure, particularly by the United States, to end the international involvement of peacekeeping troops after one year and strong reluctance to take any steps that might be seen as indicating extended involvement in the Balkans. Educational reform was viewed as an issue that would tie up international actors longer than desired. The realization that one and two year exit strategy plans were simply not realistic and that long-term strategies and commitment in the region were necessary was gradual.

Finally, it is likely that the parties to the Agreement themselves were not eager to hand over educational reform responsibilities to outsiders. After years of fairly centralized educational control and an environment in which many signs of nationalism and virtually all elements of religion were excluded from the curricula, many politicians and citizens were eager to establish 'their own' educational systems for the first time. Other 'soft' or 'optional' issues *were* included in the DPA such as Annex 8, which was included to respond to the destruction of cultural and religious buildings during the war. It is likely that Bosniak negotiators made this demand in order to rebuild the over 1,000 damaged or destroyed mosques.⁹⁹ It is therefore possible that had

⁹⁹ This issue was not included in Richard Holbrooke's memoirs of the Dayton negotiations, *To End a War* (New York, 1998), and attempts to clarify this with Dayton participants did not yield a definitive answer. However, as relatively few such religious/cultural sites were damaged or destroyed representing Bosnian Serb or Bosnian Croat culture (approximately 100 and 300 respectively), and as there is no precedent for outside international actors to insist on inclusion of cultural heritage reconstruction and protection, it is likely that it was demanded by the Bosniaks as the party most affected by this form of damage.

one or more of the parties insisted on the inclusion of educational reform in the Agreement, it might have formed part of an existing Annex, or warranted an Annex of its own. In the absence of domestic actors willing to commit to post-conflict educational reform, and outsiders unwilling to become involved in the complex issue, it was simply not a priority.¹⁰⁰ However, while this may have appealed to Dayton's authors, such an approach was certainly not conducive to the reconciliation or peace-building processes.

Educational reform has therefore - until 2002 - been driven by a piecemeal approach involving many actors working on a variety of projects with varying degrees of cooperation and coordination and without a firm mandate. This created an environment in which there was much talk, but little substantive implementation and change. At a spring 2001 workshop on history curricula and textbooks, one teacher expressed frustration with the pace of change, noting, "every year we go over the problems and hope for some improvement, which does not happen."¹⁰¹ Until 2002, no organization held the education reform mandate or demonstrated the political will and ability to force change and the extent to which the OSCE backed by the OHR will force unpopular but necessary changes remains to be seen.

This section will review several reform efforts to provide a framework for considering the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. In addition to summarizing the achievements and challenges these various initiatives faced, there is an emphasis on the process of reform efforts to explore the dynamics of international and domestic involvement and to highlight some examples of how reforms that sound simple in theory are negotiated in practice.

A. Reports and Assessments

It would be impossible to argue that international or domestic authorities were not aware of the need for educational reform. There has been no shortage of reports, reviews, conferences and assessments of the status of, and the need for reform in the

¹⁰⁰ A significant part of the Dayton negotiations was consumed with territorial issues, as a 51%/49% divisions between the two Entities was a priority. See Richard Holbrooke's *To End A War*.

¹⁰¹ Ann Low-Beer, *Seminar on History Curricula and Textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sponsored by the Stability Pact, UNESCO and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, 5-8 April 2001.

education sector in BiH. Each of these details problems and provides implementation plans and proposals. The following list includes several of the more extensive reports compiled and conferences organized:

- *The Education Sector in Bosnia Herzegovina and Possible Long-term Options for Educational Policy, Planning and Development Assistance*, prepared by Seth Spaulding (UNICEF Consultant) and Rob Fuderich (UNICEF Education Officer), November 1994.
- *Situation Analysis of Educational Services for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, prepared by Srebren Dizdar for UNICEF, November 1996.
- The Curricula of the “National Subjects” in Bosnia and Herzegovina, prepared by Volker Lenhart for UNESCO, 1999.
- *SFOR CIMIC¹⁰² Development Conference Series – Education in BiH*, 12 October 1999.
- *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, Prepared by the COE (on behalf of the World Bank), 10 November 1999.
- *A Project Appraisal Document for an Education Development Project*, prepared by the World Bank, 19 April 2000.
- *Rebuilding a Common Future: for a Critical Approach to History Teaching*, Organized by the COE, OHR, and Federation Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, May 2000.
- *Seminar on History Curricula and Textbooks in BiH*, organized by the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, UNESCO and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Sarajevo, April 2001.
- *Summary Report on the State of Protection of the Right of the Child in the Federation of BiH*, Ombudsmen of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7 May 2001.
- *Thematic Review of National Policies for Education – Bosnia and Herzegovina*, OECD, 27 September 2001.
- *Basis for the Educational Politics and Strategic Development of Education in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, BiH Federation Ministry of Education, Science Culture and Sport, September 2001.

¹⁰² NATO Stabilisation Force Civil Military Co-operation task force.

In addition to these publications and events focusing specifically on the case of BiH, there have been other region-wide conferences on the topic. For example, in 1999 BiH representatives attended meetings of the Southeastern European Ministers of Education, adopting a declaration committing to reform and cooperation.¹⁰³ Although basic information concerning the need for reform in BiH and the region was forthcoming, the will to systematically address the problem by short-sighted BiH politicians or reluctant international authorities and develop a coordinated plan for action backed by the financial, political and diplomatic currency needed to move any reform ahead in BiH was generally absent.

According to COE and World Bank figures, between 1996 and 1998, \$172 million was spent on education (out of a total \$3.8 billion overall).¹⁰⁴ However, the education commitment declined in each of these years: \$110 million in 1996, \$49 million in 1997, and \$13 million in 1998. This funding supported school reconstruction, training, supplies and expert assessment and consultation during the emergency response phase of the early post-war period. While the spending was really a drop in the proverbial bucket, particularly when including the costs of physical repairs and reconstruction, it too illustrates that there was at least a minimal appreciation of the need for educational support from the beginning of the post-war effort.

The following sections review several efforts at both policy-oriented and technical reform. The information is roughly chronological, though organized according to five sections that represent various reform phases and lead actors. First, efforts organized by the OHR are reviewed to illustrate the initial environment for reform and early steps toward change. Next, the EC-TAER SMS programme is examined in depth as an example of a significant technical reform effort. Third, several additional, targeted assistance and reform efforts are briefly reviewed to demonstrate the range of activities that have been pursued by individual agencies. Fourth, the Brčko model or ‘ex-

¹⁰³ *Education for Democratic Development and Stability in South-east Europe: Informal Conference of Ministers of Education from South-East Europe*, Council of Europe, 2-3 December 1999, Strasbourg. A meeting was also held in Sofia in November 1999.

¹⁰⁴ *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, 20. A report prepared for the May 1999 Donor’s Conference co-hosted by the European Commission and the World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1996-1998 Lessons and Accomplishment, Review of the Priority Reconstruction Program*, states that \$192 million was committed and \$144 million disbursed between 1996-1998.

perience' is considered, as its reform efforts have proceeded independently of reform in the entities. Finally, the OSCE's formal mandate will be explored, together with a status report on progress to date.

B. OHR's Reform Efforts

Since its establishment in 1996, the OHR has had no formal education department or strong education portfolio. Taken in context this is not surprising, as until mid-to late 1997 the OHR was relatively resource-constrained, had minimal enforcement capabilities,¹⁰⁵ and focused its efforts on those elements of the peace implementation clearly delineated in the DPA. OHR had one educational expert on staff, housed within the human rights department, working with two Bosnian assistants. An OHR education expert who worked on the issue for three years (beginning in June 1999) notes that while he tried to convince the High Representative of the need for a dedicated education department, educational reform was not seen as a priority at the time and he failed to convince him of its importance.¹⁰⁶

Despite the lack of a formal education reform mandate, there were voices at high levels calling for reform. The Peace Implementation Council (PIC)¹⁰⁷ meeting in Bonn in December 1997, called on:

the competent authorities to work together to ensure that all persons are educated according to their needs and in a manner which also contributes to tolerance and stability within a multiethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to develop without delay an education programme consistent with these principles, in co-operation with the High Representative, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the OSCE, UNICEF, the World Bank and other relevant organizations.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ At the Bonn Peace Implementation Conference, 10 December 1997, the powers of the High Representative were significantly expanded: "The Council welcomes the High Representative's intention to use his final authority in the area regarding interpretation of the Agreement on the Civilian Implementation of the Peace Settlement in order to facilitate the resolution of difficulties by making binding decisions, as he judges necessary, on the following issues..." *Conference Conclusions*, XI, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Personal interview, Claude Kieffer, Sarajevo, February 2003.

¹⁰⁷ The PIC Steering Board provides the High Representative with political guidance.

¹⁰⁸ PIC Bonn Conclusions, I (d).

Although an admirable proclamation, in reality this was more of a request than a demand, and neither a mandate nor necessary resources supported these good intentions. In the absence of any broad modernization initiative, reform efforts did begin to command the attention of representatives of several of the international organizations in BiH. From the beginning, reform efforts focused on the most controversial of the needed reforms - textbooks (particularly history books) and curriculum reform. During the war, education had become highly politicized and the ethnic separations that ensued after the signing of Dayton ensured that students throughout BiH were not being educated in an objective or harmonized manner. Textbooks developed by the various parties depicted history according to their own interpretations, cultural myths, stereotypes and prejudices. Therefore, the ‘cleansing’ of these objectionable elements from the texts and curricula used in schools throughout BiH was made a priority. While a good intention, however, this focus on the most controversial of possible reform efforts politicized discussions of education reform from the beginning.

The OHR’s primary goal in its education work was to influence policy change and promote an atmosphere in which education reforms could take place. Its focus was policy, and it was not involved in providing or coordinating technical assistance or implementation strategies. Together with the COE, the OHR organized conferences of the Ministers of Education of both entities and regular meetings and consultations with cantonal education ministers in the Federation. Prior to ministerial meetings, preparatory policy meetings were organized together with the World Bank, the EU and other IOs involved in relevant independent activities.¹⁰⁹ Larger meetings of 50-60 people from the various parties working in educational reform (NGOs, IOs, etc.), referred to as the Core Education Policy Group, were held approximately every three months.¹¹⁰

The PIC Madrid Declaration of December 1998 emphasized content and textbooks and called on the entity authorities to develop curricula “which meet international standards and contribute to tolerance and stability.”¹¹¹ Therefore, educational content

¹⁰⁹ It has been noted that the OSCE was invited to these meetings but was not interested in education reform at the time.

¹¹⁰ No reports for external circulation were developed through these meetings.

¹¹¹ Peace Implementation Council, *Reinforcing Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina – The Way Ahead*. Madrid, 16 December 1998, Section II, point 7.

issues continued to be the primary focus of the OHR as efforts to remove objectionable materials and develop a policy that would ensure harmonized curricula were the priorities. One of the earliest efforts at textbook reform set the stage for the politicization of educational reform and the dominant theme of history texts. It also damaged relations between international authorities and BiH politicians and communities, thus creating an atmosphere of distrust that would impact the pace of future reform efforts.

Throughout 1998, an initiative aimed at reforming educational practices and textbooks in order to promote non-Bosniak return to Sarajevo was initiated by the OHR.¹¹² An Education Working Group and a Sub-group on Textbooks were established, consisting of BiH and international participants who worked specifically to address needed changes in the Sarajevo educational arena with a focus on eliminating passages from Bosniak texts that could be offensive to non-Bosniak returnees. The review process was conducted in a quiet manner to avoid raising any eyebrows before the analysis was complete. There were no published reports of meeting minutes of interim findings. Although this can be frustrating for researchers, in itself it is not too surprising as open discussion of highly controversial issues often thwarts progress before an initiative even gets off the ground. While it is important to genuinely seek middle ground between effective process and public transparency, in this case this balance was not found.

UNESCO played a key role in the textbook review process and identified several genuinely needed changes. The most controversial recommendation was to omit any discussion of the recent violence in Bosnia until an objective interpretation could be agreed upon. Issues of definitions of genocide and the identification of victims and oppressors were viewed as too politically charged to remain in childrens' textbooks. Unfortunately, the presumably good intentions of the textbook group were overshadowed by the non-transparent nature of the review process and the manner in which the group's suggestions were leaked to the press and later manipulated by the politicized media, resulting in public rejection of the recommendations. "The OHR's insistence on protracted secrecy, coupled with UNESCO's ill-conceived release of the

¹¹² For an excellent in-depth review of this effort, see Robert Donia, "The Quest for Tolerance in Sarajevo's Textbooks", (1)2 *Human Rights Review*, January-March 2000, 38-55.

group's recommendations as mandatory, provided Bosniac political leaders with selective instances to use in attacking the Sub-Group's work."¹¹³ The Sarajevo Canton government renounced the group's conclusions and forbade the implementation of its recommendations. An important and early reform initiative had failed and had alienated local reform partners.

Despite this setback, the OHR continued to work on the issue of textbooks. An initial "Agreement Regarding Textbook Review and Removal of Objectionable Material" was signed on 18 May 1998. On 19 July 1999 an "Agreement on the Removal of Objectionable Material from Textbooks" was signed in Mostar. An "Implementation Agreement" based on the July agreement was signed in Banja Luka on 20 August 1999.¹¹⁴ By signing these agreements the Ministries each agreed to set up a Standing Textbook Review Commission that would review texts and suggest revisions. In addition to immediately removing blatantly objectionable materials from texts, long-term goals included replacing texts produced in Zagreb and Belgrade that used Croatia and the FRY as the frame of reference with new texts developed for BiH.

Spot checks were conducted to monitor compliance, conducted by OHR, SFOR's CIMIC Task Force, ECMM, OSCE and UNESCO. A report issued on implementation status through 30 December 1999 noted that in general the agreement "was better and more fully implemented in primary than in secondary schools, and in the Federation than in the RS", with schools using the Bosniak curriculum having the highest rate of compliance. The highest rates of non-compliance were in Serb schools in the eastern RS. The report highlighted the fact that many objectionable texts had only partially been deleted due to the use of light markers (or in some cases highlighters), and reported that with different editions of texts being used it was at times difficult to monitor compliance according to the agreed-upon texts.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ For the text of these agreements, see http://storch.gei.de/seenet/states/bih/textbook_revision_process.htm#seeregionsboheagr2.

¹¹⁵ "Draft Preliminary Report: Textbook Review (Spot Check) Monitoring" as of 30 December 1999. The findings noted in this report were based on reports and remarks from ECMM, OSCE and OHR, as no SFOR, CIMIC, or UNESCO reports were received.

In addition to the work on textbooks, initial steps were taken in support of broader curricular reform in the Federation. In September 1999 the five Bosniak cantons used a curricula in which 70 per cent of the material would be the same, with 30 per cent to be developed by cantonal authorities presumably in the national subjects. Cooperation and coordination among the other cantonal ministers was particularly challenging, because in spite of the costs of multiple parallel systems, there was little desire among the minority Bosnian Croat entities to cede educational control to the Federation. This obstruction continued until the defeat of the third entity movement orchestrated by nationalist Bosnian Croats in spring 2001, which ushered in a more cooperative approach to reform.

At a February 2000 symposium on curriculum reform, organized by OHR and attended by the Ministries of Education, education experts, IOs and NGOs, options supporting the goal of a harmonized curricula were presented and discussed. For instance, the Swiss model was identified as a potential model for BiH. There was also a proposal that “each constituent people should offer modules that would be integrated into the curriculum of the others, especially for culture, language and literature.”¹¹⁶ While they would not be exchanged among the other constituent peoples, the module concept would essentially become the national group subject curricula approach used as the basis for reform efforts in 2002 to 2003.

On 10 May 2000, at a meeting of the Conference of the Ministers of Education of BiH, attended by the OHR, COE, UNESCO and others, the parties agreed to a series of steps aimed at harmonizing the segregated education systems.¹¹⁷ The agreement defined “concrete steps toward a co-ordinated education system, respecting ethnic differences”,¹¹⁸ and “the elimination of any forms of segregation in the current educational systems.”¹¹⁹ Key points included:

- Continued review of textbooks and elimination of objectionable materials by the Independent Commission for Textbook Review

¹¹⁶ *Human Development Report Bosnian and Herzegovina Youth*, UN Development Programme, 2000, 17.

¹¹⁷ The Agreement was signed by Fahrudin Rizvanbegović, Minister of Education, in the FBiH, Nenad Suzić, Minister of Education in the RS, and Ivo Miro Jović, Deputy Minister of Education in the FBiH.

¹¹⁸ Prof. (hon.) Dr. Paul Roeders, “Towards a Sector Development Program...”, 3.

¹¹⁹ From EC-TAER promotional brochure.

- The establishment of a Curriculum Harmonization Board (CHB), to reform and coordinate curriculum reform
- Development of curricular modules addressing the national group of subjects and reflecting national minorities
- Introduction of a course on world religions and replacement of Civic Defense with Human Rights and Civic Education studies

The first three points continued to be discussed and debated, but no final approach for implementation was agreed. In contrast, the fourth point was more immediately achieved as coursework in Human Rights and Civic Education replaced Civil Defense in the first and second-year secondary school syllabus in September 2001.¹²⁰

An additional agreement on textbook review, signed in Jahorina on 14 December 2001, further outlined a reform process and the goals of review. In June 2002 the entity ministries provided the results of their analysis of the textbooks to OHR, and the Textbook Commissions meeting in July to further exchange information, just over three years after the initial textbook agreements were signed in 1999. The slow pace of progress illustrates that the MOEs and BiH authorities were not seriously interested in implementing reform, and in the absence of IC pressure backed by strong enforcement mechanisms, could significantly stall the process.

From 22-23 January 2002 the OHR organized a roundtable on education, which was attended by approximately 100 people. The roundtable included a discussion of the Brčko model of educational reform that had been imposed by the Brčko supervisor in June 2001. Principal Deputy High Representative (PDHR) Ambassador Donald Hays announced that OHR was inaugurating a “Learning Partnerships” public information campaign to increase awareness of the importance of education and education reform for all citizens, identifying best practices and encouraging local ownership in reform.¹²¹ Later that month, on 29 January the cantonal and entity ministers again agreed to more closely coordinate their reform efforts.

¹²⁰ *OHR Speech*, January 22, 2002. The coursework was designed and implemented by the US-funded CIVITAS project.

¹²¹ Speech by Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays to an OHR-sponsored Conference on Education in BiH. *OHR Speech*, Sarajevo, 22 January 2002. See <http://www.ohr.int/ohr->

Considering the political and social environment in which these reforms took place and the sensitive nature of educational reform, particularly curricular and textbook issues, these achievements were important steps forward. However, systemic weaknesses prevented these successes from having a deeper impact. First, while entity authorities signed agreements and made general statements proclaiming cooperation, compliance with and implementation of these pronouncements was absent or uneven. In the absence of real initiative on the part of the BiH authorities for change, harmonized laws that could regulate educational issues, or a High Representative willing to “sack” authorities obstructing the process and impose necessary legislation, there was a limit to the progress that could be made. However, without a stronger mandate to lead reform and the financial and moral commitment needed to realize such measures, a dedicated and enforced approach was politically impossible.

Additionally, the focus on controversial content reform issues and the emphasis on policy reform rather than technical assistance focused the debate exclusively on national subjects and textbooks - two of the most politicized topics in the education process. Other reforms needed in any post-Cold War transitional society – teacher training, pedagogical reform, administration and management, etc. – were left unaddressed. Although independent efforts to tackle these issues were underway, they were not a primary focus and were not a part of an overall modernization plan. Additionally, while a comprehensive public information or awareness campaign could have helped to raise the profile of the effort, increased transparency and better informed the public of the need for reform, no such campaign was developed. Unfortunately, there was no single actor interested in a broad education awareness campaign that could drive and coordinate these various efforts. However, these observations are not so much criticisms of the individuals driving these reforms attempts as they are reflective of the limitations of reform in the absence of a real mandate and political support by BiH or IC authorities.

dept/presso/presssp/default.asp?content_id=6766. The proposed “Learning Partnerships” campaign did not materialize.

C. EC-TAER and the SMS

EC-TAER's contributions to education reform have addressed a broad set of reform needs as technical support has been provided for initiatives related to higher and vocational education, standards and assessment practices and primary and secondary school reform. Primary and secondary school reform in itself encompasses a diverse range of issues including teacher training, legislation development, curricular reform and educational management practices. It is therefore the most comprehensive coordinated reform effort implemented prior to the OSCE's assumption of the reform mandate.

The EC-TAER SMS (Shared Modernization Strategy) project, focusing on basic reform, modernization and development of primary and secondary education throughout BiH, provided a foundation for work that continues in 2003 under the OSCE mandate. This section will examine the SMS project in some detail because the SMS experience provides an interesting case study through which to better understand the challenges of promoting local ownership of reform, as well as to explore the relationships among the various IOs working on educational reform issues in BiH. First, the genesis and evolution of the general EC-TAER and specific SMS projects will be reviewed to provide an understanding of how goals were set and priorities developed. Second, the implementation of the SMS will be summarized to illustrate not only the end-product of the initiative, but the process that led to the development of a set of recommendations. This process will be further illustrated by a closer review of one of the SMS working groups to highlight the challenges facing the participants in the reform effort. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of the SMS effort will be presented, together with an analysis of what worked and what did not work and some lessons to be learned.¹²²

1. *The Genesis of the SMS*

The EC-TAER educational reform project was an ambitious initiative that evolved as the project was proposed, developed and implemented. Beginning on 1 November

¹²² Terms of Reference for "An Evaluation of EC-financed Support to the Education Sector in BiH" were released in late 2002 and will provide a formal evaluation of the effort.

2000, the programme's goal was "to bring the education system in BiH on par with European standards"¹²³ by coordinating reform efforts in four broad areas:

1. Support to the development of a Standards and Assessment Agency (SAA)
2. Institutional Development and Policy Advice
3. Higher Education (including the Higher Education Co-ordination Board)
4. European School Networking

It is interesting to note that the SMS as it would eventually emerge was not initially a distinct part of the EC-TAER project inception report.¹²⁴ The activities in support of point 2, *Institutional Development and Policy Advice*, were the most closely related to the SMS that would emerge and were originally intended to focus on two efforts: the Curriculum Harmonization Board (CHB) established through the work of OHR and the 10 May Agreement, and a programme to cooperate with the OHR in support of multiethnic primary education reform in Brčko. This initial plan underwent significant changes throughout 2001 and 2002. Component 4 (European Networking) eventually disappeared as its three sub-components were dropped from late November 2001 to June 2002, with these resources to be reallocated to the SMS effort.¹²⁵ However, the more significant change, in terms of content and process, concerned the CHB and the ultimate development of the SMS.

Initial meetings of the CHB held in late 2000 and early 2001 were poorly attended and the BiH representatives - all political appointees - were not proactive, productive or even committed to reform. As illustrated by the Sarajevo textbook review experience, as long as the politicians and majority constituencies in a region were satisfied with biased mono-perspective texts and content and were reluctant to seek common ground, a cooperative process of reform would be difficult. EC-TAER reported to the EC that the CHB "turned out to be mainly an instrument for political pressure to be exerted by the OHR and the COE, and has been, at least with its present composition,

¹²³ EC-TAER website at <http://www.ec-taer.org.ba/aboutus/indexe.htm>.

¹²⁴ The EC-TAER activities conducted from 2001-2002 consisted of the following elements: the SMS, the Standards and Assessment (SAA), support to Brčko district primary education and higher education support. The EC provided approximately EUR 19.3m for Education Sector support in BiH, of which 10m was allocated to the EC Tempus program. The SMS effort received approximately EUR 1.5m for 23 months of work. *Terms of Reference*, "An Evaluation of EC-financed Support to the Education Sector in BiH", 2002. The TEMPUS program, which focuses on higher education, is not managed through the BiH EC-TAER administration, but by the Brussels Office.

¹²⁵ Hugh Glanville, personal interview, Sarajevo, November 2002.

a dysfunctional body.”¹²⁶ While the international actors were committed to reform, if their local partners were not and reforms could or would not simply be imposed by the IC, progress would be difficult, if not impossible. The proposed work on curriculum harmonization illustrated that in spite of several years of work on the issue, sufficient progress had not been made and both political will and support for change – among BiH and international authorities – were lacking.

Reform efforts focusing on non-political change could potentially help to break the stalemate. The EC-TAER Inception Report proposed that the focus of the CHB should not be to strictly define a detailed curriculum, but to define ‘core competencies’ to ensure that all students complete schooling with the skill set required to become productive members of society. An additional emphasis was placed on replacing the traditional memorization approach with a system that placed a priority on ‘learning for understanding’. This approach, including learning and teaching methods and a wider curricular process, was suggested to avoid as much ‘political polarization’ as possible.¹²⁷ This was a tacit acknowledgement that previous efforts had focused too heavily on the political issues at the expense of more achievable (and vitally necessary) technical reform.

As it became increasingly evident that the work of the CHB, couched in politics and issues of curriculum and national identity, would not be a productive or viable approach, proposals for a broader primary and secondary reform initiative began to take shape. To replace the CHB initiative under a programme capable of addressing more than just curricular issues, EC-TAER proposed a programme of reform that would address five inter-related issues: curriculum reform, teacher training, educational administration and management, special and inclusive education and legal and structural reforms. A concept document outlining the proposal was drafted in April and May 2001 and reviewed by local and international actors.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Noted by Glanville, personal interview, Sarajevo, November 2002.

¹²⁷ Roeders and Glanville, *Inception Report*, 31 January 2001, 41.

¹²⁸ Prof. (hon.) Dr Paul Roeders, *Towards a Sector Development Program in BiH General Education: Proposal for the Elaboration of a ‘Shared Strategy’ for a Modernisation of Primary and General Secondary Education in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, EC Technical Assistance to Education Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina Concept Paper, 31 May 2001.

Highlights of the intent of the SMS programme, as outlined in the May 2001 proposal included the following:

- Realize education for all in BiH, with a system on par with European standards
- Encourage concerted input from the IC in support of the education sector through a sector-wide approach integrating all stakeholders
- Expectation of full ownership of the programme by local education authorities
- Support for a ‘curriculum framework’ rather than a prescriptive curriculum, to allow for regional adaptations¹²⁹

The time frame for the project was broken down into three phases – preparation, implementation and consolidation. In order to encourage a long-term outlook and lasting impact, the project was developed for a medium to long-term timeframe.¹³⁰

The May 2001 concept paper also noted a clearly defined need for “a well designed public information campaign”, to ensure that the public was aware of and would support the effort: “The whole process should be accompanied by an intensive public information campaign (to be prepared and accompanied by a special working group) to inform all stakeholders, but especially teachers and parents about the ongoing modernization, its necessity, advantages and consequences.”¹³¹ This had been lacking in the previous efforts to date. A more transparent process could help to avoid the potential misunderstandings of the goals and process and possibly make the issue less open to manipulation by the media and politicians.

EC TAER would administer the SMS programme in place of the CHB.¹³² The proposed working method would emphasize an inclusive approach to ensure local participation and include a coordination board, an advisory committee, five sub-committees and 12 working groups comprised of teachers and education specialists from BiH. Study tours designed to enable participants to visit countries in transition

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ The preparation phase was originally estimated to last from early 2001-mid 2002, the implementation phases planned for mid-2002 to mid-2004 and the consolidation phase from mid-2004 onwards.

¹³¹ Prof. (hon.) Dr. Paul Roeders, “Towards a Sector Development Program...”, concept paper, final version, 31 May 2001, 10. However, in personal interviews it was noted that EC-TAER’s plans for an information campaign conflicted with OHR’s own plans. No common approach emerged and there was no campaign until the OSCE assumed the mandate in 2002.

¹³² EC-TAER’s resources included a main office in Sarajevo with seven staff members (two international experts and five BiH staff), and an office in Banja Luka with two BiH staff members. Long- and short-term experts were brought in as necessary for specific support.

and witness first hand their approaches to education reform were suggested and the support of NGOs and project donors was recommended and requested. With this basic approach in mind, the project was presented to local and international authorities.

Although this was certainly the most comprehensive plan for reform, implementation and technical support in post-Dayton BiH to date, the SMS, and the role of EC-TAER in implementing the SMS, was burdened from its inception by a lack of support from the IC. Such support was critical, not only for practical implementation, but for the display of coordinated international effort needed to force reluctant BiH authorities to make changes. The disbandment of the CHB, which had been created by OHR and supported by the COE, set the scene for interagency tensions and an often uncooperative working environment. This was demonstrated very early on by a letter sent by the COE with the support of the OHR in mid-June 2001 to EC-TAER suggesting that the SMS plan, to be signed and officially inaugurated on 27 June, was premature. The letter also noted that the CHB could not be dissolved by EC-TAER because the education mandate was in fact held by OHR.¹³³

Despite these disagreements, from 27-29 June 2001 the inaugural conference for the SMS effort was held in Jahorina near Sarajevo, and the SMS implementation plan was signed by Dr. Gojko Savanović (Minister of Education of the RS) and Dr. Mujo Demirović (Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport in the Federation of BiH). Officials from many of the IOs working on education activities made statements of support and signed the attendance book.¹³⁴ However, as the plan began to be implemented, the lack of cooperative spirit among the key international players was clear.

2. *Implementation*

In addition to the official inauguration and signature ceremony, the June Jahorina meeting provided time for the first working session of the SMS members. Working groups for the five main themes, with 20 to 30 people in each group, met to discuss their issue areas together with national and international facilitators, and develop a

¹³³ Personal interview, Hugh Glanville, Sarajevo, November 2002.

¹³⁴ Representative organizations included the EC, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, OHR, COE, the Open Society Fund and others.

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. Facilitators were considered to be a key element of the effort to ensure full local ownership and participation, and a group of national and international facilitators received basic training, which was later supplemented by more intensive facilitation skills training seminars. Facilitators were utilized to encourage brainstorming, focus discussions, mediate problems or debates and help groups to develop focused action-oriented tasks.

This meeting provided a first look at some of the challenges the project coordinators and participants faced. For example, while the five noted sub-committees facilitated the organized breakdown into working groups, the amount of overlap among the topics became clear from the start. Inclusive and special needs education and curriculum framework development would be affected by teacher training progress, educational management and teacher training would also be linked and everything would be affected by the results of legal and support system reform. Progress in one group would aid progress in another and difficulties in one group could reverberate and potentially impede progress in the others.

A post-conference debriefing of the working group facilitators revealed both positive and negative comments, as well as additional challenges:

What some facilitators did not like about the groups was that listening to each other was a problem, discussion should have been shorter, political issues obstructed productive work, and positions from the Republika Srpska were rigid. One of the groups was said to be divided in opinion, with huge differences between Entity representatives. For some facilitators the unfamiliar methods were obstacles.¹³⁵

Participatory and cooperative working methods were new to the participants and led to difficulties with basic workshop processes such as brainstorming.

The political and legal obstacles to effective implementation of technical reform also became clear from this inaugural meeting. In a very honest epilogue to the conference

¹³⁵ *A Shared Strategy for the Modernization of Primary and General Secondary Education in BiH, Report of the Inaugural Conference, 27-30 June 2001, Jahorina, BiH, 19.*

report, Paul Roeders addressed the difficulties of moving forward with technical reform in the absence of a suitable political environment and legal framework:

If this signifies that the modernization process of the education system has to be within the limits of the present laws in BiH, it is not an element to be taken into account, but a lethal threat to the process. In a democratic society, the law should be adapted to new, required developments in the systems that together form the society, and not the other way around.....If the SMS has to limit itself to stay within the limits of the present legal system, we better don't start the process at all, because it will never achieve its major objective.¹³⁶

A 'chicken and egg' scenario, in which technical solutions might not be proposed without confirmation of a legal framework and legal solutions might not be proposed based on needed reforms due to political imperatives, would often result in stalemate, particularly in terms of the detailed, implementation-oriented suggestions envisioned for the effort.

From November 2001 through June 2002, a total of six multi-day SMS workshops were held to define goals, suggest strategies and develop plans for implementation.¹³⁷ The plan was for all of this input and feedback to be developed into a final report of recommendations to be handed to the Entity MOEs for review and implementation. Over 100 working group participants from throughout BiH (including Brčko) were included among 12 working groups comprised of teachers, experts employed by the Entity or Cantonal Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes, Faculties, Teachers' Unions, Institutes for Special Education and others.¹³⁸

The EC-TAER SMS organizers charged with implementing this project wanted to ensure that the education ministers and authorities had full buy-in to, and ownership of the process to minimize potential obstruction or difficulties as the project progressed. In addition, this would ensure that the final results and recommendations were seen as the product of work by BiH experts, rather than externally imposed ideas. Therefore, selection of SMS project participants was an important first step.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 22.

¹³⁷ The meetings were held in Neum (13-16 November 2001), Teslić (18-21 February 2002), Ilidza (13-16 March 2002), Banja Luka (21-24 April 2002), Teslić (22-25 May 2002), and Tuzla (15-18 June 2002).

¹³⁸ *Report of the First SMS Workshop*, November 12-15, Neum, 2001, 5.

The organizers had originally envisioned a participant selection process in which it would receive and review applications for working group members submitted by the professionals themselves (teachers, educational administrators, pedagogues, etc.) and then pass a list of recommended candidates to the Entity Ministries for review, comment and acceptance. Formal approval of the working group members by the Ministries was assumed to be a way of ensuring that working group members could participate and make decisions with the backing and support of the Ministries that would ultimately implement these ideas.

Ultimately, however, the MOEs insisted on a procedure whereby they simply appointed individuals for working group participation and EC-TAER was not in a position to challenge this demand. The appointment process was slow and driven by BiH politics, and the 12 working groups were not finally developed until October 2001. The selection procedure, unlike an application approach, also eliminated the quality controls of a more stringent screening process and made it less likely that professionals interested in applying to participate, yet not politically connected, would be selected.

The six workshops were well executed and provide a useful case study in workshop facilitation and encouraging local ownership of processes and methods, but they failed to have the desired results due to a lack of political will. The workshop environment included a mix of large and small group work, with small group work led by recently trained local facilitators. International and Bosnian experts presented working papers to guide the discussions of each of the five key areas. Study visits to Hungary, Slovenia and Romania provided first-hand experience and observation of best practices. Each workshop was structured according to daily goals outlined in worksheets and matrices, which the working group participants would work on together in order to develop ideas on paper, finalize them on computer and distribute this work to the five thematic sections for review, approval and adoption. Evaluations of each workshop ensured space for feedback and helped guide changes for subsequent meetings. However, in spite of this work plan and approach - something critical was missing.

3. *The Case of Working Group 4.3*

Working group 4.3, Integration of Minority Returnees (within the Inclusion and Special Needs Education theme), provides an interesting example of the limitations of this well-intended approach. While every working group was plagued by an element of politics, the group working on the issue of returnee integration was uniquely positioned to either make suggestions that would facilitate significant progress, or become bogged down in politics and narrow-minded nationalism. Return has been a key priority of the IC in BiH, as Annex 7 of the DPA guaranteed citizens the right to return to their pre-war homes. While this is regarded as a basic human rights protection by its supporters, this right to return was viewed by many as an attempt to reverse the ethnic cleansing that had sought to create homogenous regions throughout BiH. Opponents of the re-creation of a diverse country therefore sought to minimize the potential for successful return by obstructionist activities designed to cement division, rather than build bridges.

The working group was weakly staffed from the beginning which reflected either a lack of interest on behalf of the appointing MOEs, or a decision by MOEs to purposely adopt an approach designed to stifle progress on the politically charged issue of minority integration. The four participants (most other working groups had a standing membership of six to ten) included the Assistant Minister for Primary and Secondary Education of Tuzla Canton, the Deputy Principal of a primary school in Drvar, the Supervisor of the RS Pedagogical Institute Regional Unit in Bijeljina and a parent from Banja Luka. The participants were all over the age of 45 and all male, exhibiting a demographic composition that did not necessarily preclude, but certainly did not promote, highly innovative and creative work. The working group participant selection procedure unfortunately minimized the SMS project coordinator's room for protest as the MOE's demanded the right to appoint the participants they chose.

As a further setback, the expert discussion paper on inclusive education presented at the first workshop in Neum focused only on children with special needs, thus neglecting specific issues pertaining to returnees or minority inclusion.¹³⁹ This in some ways

¹³⁹ Mileva Mandić, "Overview of the Situation and Problems in the Education of Children and Young People with Special Needs", 2001, Prijedor.

illustrated that returnee issues, while certainly a part of inclusive education, would not receive the specific attention and profile needed for such a politicized topic, further illustrating the enormous gap among 4.3 and the other working groups. It was also an interesting test case for measuring the role of the EC-TAER personnel and the will of the IC as a whole in order to measure their commitment to substantive reform suggestions.

At the second SMS workshop in Teslić, the working group agreed on the need for a regulatory/legal framework, and suggested support for joint sports and competitions organized by the local community to facilitate informal friendships among children of different backgrounds. The group insisted that they could not do anything about regulations or legislation pertaining to returnee integration, as they felt that was the responsibility of the legal framework working groups. Rather than propose their own specific legal and regulatory recommendations, they chose to focus on activities that could support and encourage returnee children to socialize together. At the third workshop in March, recreational sporting activities and competitions were again discussed, together with the broad goal of educating the local community.

At the fourth workshop, held in Banja Luka in April, little had substantively changed since the initial proposals and discussions in Neum and Teslić and outside international observers and facilitators had been invited to join the group to introduce a new perspective.¹⁴⁰ When challenged to try to think of other solutions for returnee integration, the working group members insisted that recreational activities (primarily sports) would be the best solution as friendships would serve as the basis for inclusion (gender issues had not apparently been considered by the group). When asked to elaborate on their suggestions, perhaps by developing a plan for how such activities could be organized, how teachers and coaches could be recruited and trained to ensure participation of returnees and other details that were the purpose of the workshop, one of the members noted that such details “were the responsibility of the authorities”, illustrating the mindset that precluded real progress. At one point in the discussion significant time was devoted to issues concerning protection of the Croatian language, demon-

¹⁴⁰ An observer from the OSCE sat in on several of the sessions and the author provided input and suggestions. The general SMS coordinators sought to rotate through all of the working groups to provide encouragement and assess progress, and Dr. Roeders spent some time with working group 4.3.

strating that identity issues continued to permeate every aspect of reform and could effectively hijack concrete suggestions for progress. The female facilitator, while well-intentioned, was newly trained in the art of facilitation and unable to push recalcitrant participants towards meaningful goals and conclusions.

The recommendations finally proposed in the First Report presented on 27 June 2002 were general in theme and content and reflective of the Interim Agreement on Returnee Integration that had in the meantime been adopted in March 2002 (largely through the initiative of the OSCE). They also could have been articulated in the first SMS workshop as they reflected commonly held generalizations rather than specific implementation strategies:

- Education of the local community through workshops, lectures and the media
- Sport, science and ecological activities
- An analysis of the current status of returnee integration
- Entitlement to a curriculum that includes the ‘national subjects’
- Development of networks between NGOs, IOs and schools
- Encouragement of community involvement
- Employment of returnee teachers¹⁴¹

Other groups were more adequately staffed and had more success, though all faced their share of challenges. It has been noted that the most challenging working group was the legal framework group, which allowed itself to become bogged down in details rather than developing a general framework of norms and specifications. Instead of focusing on what would specifically *not* be allowed under a broad umbrella of human rights protections, preoccupation with minor details impeded progress.¹⁴² This was to a large extent caused by different interpretations of the purpose of the Shared Strategy as an effort that would cross entities, and reflected the concerns that reform efforts would seek to reduce entity competence in education in favour of increased state level control. Additionally, after a COE “Draft of the Legal Framework on Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina” was presented to the group for consideration, the groups’ activity slowed again as participants debated the details yet were unable to

¹⁴¹ *First Report to the Ministers of Education in BiH*, 27 June 2002, 19.

¹⁴² Personal interview, Paul Roeders, Sarajevo, June 2002.

make specific recommendations for consideration and adoption by the MOEs. Cooperation and coordination between the SMS working group and the COE/OHR legal effort was not always optimal during this process.

The curriculum working group realized some success as the group agreed to make compulsory education last nine years and supported a modernized approach based on learning outcomes and related reforms in teacher training. The curriculum reform effort was guided by a UNESCO education expert who helped to drive the process and who later served as a short-term interim education director at the OSCE after its receipt of the mandate. These were important steps forward, particularly on an issue that could have easily been sidelined by the debate over the ‘national subjects’ and provided a solid foundation for further work.

It is important to acknowledge that it is often an achievement to simply gather people together in a discussion forum and agree to broad norms, general suggestions and the need for future meetings. The reality of contemporary BiH is that steps must be made incrementally over time. However, the SMS framework provided resources, an opportunity for more specific and focused work, and a chance for the development of a detailed action plan for harmonized implementation of these ideas. It was unfortunate that the participants in 4.3 were not truly focused on change and progress and were not prepared or interested in challenging the current system. Rather than being motivated and forward-looking reformers, the participants were functionaries of the MOEs, unwilling to challenge the current policies and practices, and certainly reluctant to present the MOEs with bold initiatives designed to put pressure on politicians for action.

4. *Strengths and Weaknesses*

At the 27 June 2002 official presentation of the first SMS report in Sarajevo, Ambassador Robert Beecroft, Head of Mission of the OSCE MBiH said “if the SMS did not exist, it would have to be invented.” The SMS programme was successful in bringing together a large group of local participants over a sustained period of time to discuss the issue of large-scale education reform and modernization and begin to formulate recommendations and steps forward. This in itself is no small feat in BiH, where there is often little dialogue among communities. In a post-conflict society in need of small

steps towards understanding and reconciliation, sustained dialogues can lay the foundation for expanded future negotiations.

In terms of short- and long-term goals, this was a good step forward for the ‘preparation phase’ of the project and a good starting point for the envisioned four-year implementation and consolidation phases that would operationalize these recommendations from 2003 to 2006. While participants were often unschooled, unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the participatory processes at the heart of the workshops, commitment to a locally driven process ensured that ideas were generated from among BiH experts and participants, despite the fact that it often slowed down the pace of progress in the eyes of reformers seeking faster change. The process, including workshops, expert advice and study visits were all a part of a programme of activities designed to ensure maximum local understanding of the issue and space to consider potential solutions.

Perhaps the SMS’s biggest strength was its focus on *all* areas of education and reform, not just on issues of curricula and textbooks. This approach integrated the general transition needs of all post-Cold War countries, rather than solely focusing on reforms needed in the wake of the war. By expanding the dialogue to address broad areas of reform, the SMS helped to shape the current educational mandate. As the EC will continue to provide support to new working groups established by the OSCE, long-term implementation success should be viewed and assessed in the future based on this initial preparation phase.

The weaknesses of the effort can be broken down into mandate and politics, which themselves are closely intertwined. The lack of sincere buy-in to the SMS process among some members of the IC in BiH and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships among many of the players created an environment in which interagency cooperation was weak from the start. The dissolution of the Curriculum Harmonization Board and the assumption by EC-TAER of responsibilities that the OHR had previously held led to unfortunate ‘turf battles’ and competing agendas. Individual experts in every organization had an interest in promoting reform, but did not always agree on the methods selected or the roles assigned.

The lack of agreement over who held the mandate for reform also had an impact. While the EC-TAER programme and SMS project were large-scale activities, the EC never held a firm mandate for educational reform and therefore had to depend on *ad hoc* agreements of support with the other players. Expectations (some might say hopes) that other stakeholders would provide assistance and support to the SMS effort went unfulfilled, as aside from the general Jahorina Agreement, there were no official agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) among the IOs stating that they would commit to the effort. Whether this was a result of reluctance among the EC-TAER team to integrate too many stakeholders or due to the political imperatives driving all of the IOs in BiH is difficult to measure. However, the impact, in terms of cooperation, support, funding and resources was clear, and the IC did not consistently present a unified front to the BiH reformers or the resolve to ensure that words and promises would be turned into real reform.

The lack of these formal arrangements resulted in a situation in which the SMS coordinators were authorized to provide technical assistance, but had no ability to push or force political decisions often needed to ensure implementation of technical reform. While technical solutions could be suggested, they could not be developed into viable implementation plans in an environment in which the local BiH partners were often reluctant participants in reform. EC-TAER could not single-handedly bridge the policy-practice gap and it lacked the political partnerships that might have made this possible. At one SMS support group meeting in early 2002, the EC-TAER representative was specifically told by a OSCE delegate that they should not be involved in politics as that was the domain of the OSCE and OHR.¹⁴³ However, in an environment and concerning an issue in which problems and politics cannot be separated, the effectiveness of such an arrangement must be questioned.

This arrangement led to a variety of problems. Recalcitrant entity ministry officials could not be compelled to work towards reform and therefore through their inaction or active obstruction could stall the process. Unproductive or poorly qualified working group members could not be removed or replaced, and potentially productive participants could not be selected and appointed to the working groups in their place. In the

¹⁴³ Personal observation by the author.

absence of an EC field-presence it was difficult for the SMS coordinators based in Sarajevo and Banja Luka to monitor the status of educational needs and reform attempts in communities throughout BiH. While the OSCE initiated a field-office education issue monitoring system in the months prior to its receipt of the education mandate, a more efficient field monitoring system should have been established from the beginning through the cultivation of working relationships and closer cooperation by EC-TAER with the OSCE field presence, SFOR civil-military units, or NGOs.

As a result of the lack of formal relationships among the agencies, some specific and necessary efforts slipped through the cracks. For instance, the need for an information or public awareness campaign on the theme of education had been long acknowledged by EC-TAER, but there was no budget to support such a project. A team from OHR was initially established to develop it, based in part on the compilation and inventory of innovative education projects throughout the country. However, while this effort began in early 2001, it was never formally implemented and launched, and there was no education campaign until autumn 2002 when it was finally implemented by the OSCE. This would have been a simple effort that could have increased transparency of the process and raised public awareness of the reform activities, yet because it was not the stated responsibility of any organization it went unaddressed.

Additionally, funding issues had an impact on the SMS initiative from the beginning of the effort as the initial budget allocated for the targeted CHB programme instead funded the much more substantial SMS. Promises to organize donor conferences to support educational reform were not fulfilled. Donations that were received came in piecemeal fashion and were designed for specific initiatives – funding for study tours, specific training initiatives, etc. - not to support overall coordination or reform in general. EC-TAER staff eventually became aware of the EC decision to cut funding for *all* of its social cohesion projects, including SMS, in August 2001.¹⁴⁴ This change occurred at approximately the same time that the EC announced that it would specifically focus its resources on those steps directly and specifically supporting BiH's efforts towards future EC membership. Although education would seem to be a basis

¹⁴⁴ This was a part of a policy change that shifted support from the PHARE programme to the CARDS funding structure. From 1998 to 2000 the EC funded education and health reform through its commitment to support “social cohesion and development.”

for development strategies in all areas related to future EU membership, continued support to SMS did not fall under this support framework.

In January 2002, the OSCE, which had been slowly becoming more involved in education issues (and which had recently both transferred its election work to BiH authorities and been overlooked for the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF) follow-on mission), suggested that if the EC did indeed cut EC-TAER funding, they would try to find a way to support the ongoing efforts. However, a surprise July 2002 EC decision to provide follow-on funding in spite of previous statements led the OSCE to take the contingency funding out of their own budget. Therefore, when it emerged that the EC follow-on funding would be available exclusively for specific initiatives rather than the broad SMS effort, there were still lingering concerns about project prioritization and continuation. Continuity and planning were impossible in such an atmosphere.

Some critics have noted that the SMS programme was weakened by failing to include sufficient local input. However, considering the amount of local input gathered throughout the process, this comment is difficult to justify. A case could be made that the input was not of the quality desired, but that is the risk that is run by letting a process unfold, of not being able to hand-select participants, and of having limited time to train facilitators and participants in the methods of participatory work. In addition, if local high-level politicians had continued to advocate BiH support, such an endorsement could have helped the pace of the reform process considerably. It has been noted that after the signing of the Jahorina Agreement, the Federation MOE developed its own reform strategy that was in many ways similar to the EC-TAER/SMS plan. However, the development of this plan was untimely as the SMS had already been signed by the Entities and work on the plan had already begun. Although the lower level working groups were serious and hardworking, this led to tensions between the Federation and EC-TAER and relationships were therefore often strained at the top levels.¹⁴⁵ This incident must also be viewed in light of the fact that it has been unfortunately common in the divided political environment in BiH for parties to sign agreements and plans only to later introduce their own ideas, more in an effort to slow

¹⁴⁵ Personal interview, Jill Zarchin, UNICEF, Sarajevo, October 2002.

reform than to substantively improve the process. It also reflected the continuing internal tensions among Bosniak and Bosnian Croat representatives within the Federation as both entity level and cantonal level officials wanted to be involved at every stage of the process to ensure that the constitutionally-proscribed responsibility for education continued to be held by the cantons.

Finally, it has been noted that the goals of the SMS team were good but too ambitious.¹⁴⁶ When the CHB was replaced by the SMS, the resources needed to implement such an expanded programme of activities did not match the new responsibilities. Staff became responsible for planning, administration and implementation, as well as the obligatory diplomatic manoeuvring among BiH and IC politicians. The fact that SMS also lacked a support structure capable of managing the significant amount of information and the complex network of participants was particularly detrimental as the issue reached into every community.

Any assessment of the SMS project to date must be formative rather than summative in nature, focusing on the processes involved in the first, preparatory stage of the proposed multistage effort. It would be difficult to evaluate the developed set of recommendations in the absence of any knowledge of how these suggestions will ultimately be implemented. The effectiveness of the first stage of the EC-TAER will best be measured as the proposed reforms are operationalized. However, understanding the organizational processes that drove the effort, the strengths and weaknesses of the project and the interagency relationships that contributed to the overall initiative, could help to advance inform the IC's future cooperative efforts on primary and secondary educational reform. It could also provide lessons for interagency cooperation and local ownership processes for other reform efforts in regions in transition.

D. Other Reform Activities

A number of other educational reform and improvement initiatives were implemented before, or in parallel with the OHR and EC-TAER SMS efforts. The following summarizes some highlights, but is not a thorough review of all activities. This review

¹⁴⁶ Personal interview, Jadranka Ruvić, European Commission Sarajevo Office, November 2002.

illustrates that while a formal mandate may have been lacking for educational reform, a wide variety of actors have contributed to reform activities at many different levels.

1. *Standards and Assessment Agency*

The World Bank has worked with EC-TAER on an effort to develop a state-level Standards and Assessment Agency (SAA). This Agency will define and measure standards and achievement throughout BiH to ensure the quality of both the teachers and the schools who deliver education, as well as of the students receiving an education. Until recently, there has been no way to assess achievement and therefore no way to compare student achievement in BiH with students in other countries. This is imperative if BiH's students are to be able to receive accredited diplomas, transferable to other universities and eventually enter into a wider European educational space through the Bologna Agreement.

This reform need was initially recommended by the COE in 1999, and the SAA was formally established by the Entities on 10 March 2000. The project was funded by the Entities and the World Bank, with EC-TAER providing technical support and training. The project started slowly as SAA staff appointments were slow. Ultimately, two pilot tests were developed in mathematics and 'mother tongue' language and administered to approximately 1500 students from 56 schools in May 2002. Results of the test were compiled in summer 2002, with a technical report reviewing the assessment procedure completed in the autumn. In general the pilot tests were well received. Students believed they had sufficient time to complete the exam and were quickly able to overcome anticipated fears. While approximately 80 per cent of polled teachers agree that these tests are a good way of gathering information, 20 per cent (mainly elderly) viewed them as an "unnecessary burden" on the students and believed that they do not improve assessment quality.¹⁴⁷ Key procedural challenges include the lack of an SAA presence outside of Sarajevo, the future logistics related to organizing much larger testing efforts involving more students and the fact that support among the Entities' MOEs for an expanded programme of testing is not guaranteed. However, the devel-

¹⁴⁷ Standards and Assessment Agency in Education for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, "The External Assessment of Pupils' Achievements: Technical Report", October 2002.

opment of testing and assessment is slated to continue through expanded pilot tests in 2003.

2. *Vocational Education*

Both the EU and EC have supported reform in vocational education through the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Programme and other efforts. The EC was involved in vocational education reform as early as 1996, through the Obnova Vocational Training Programme,¹⁴⁸ which targeted demobilized soldiers, returnees, war-widows and handicapped persons. The broader PHARE-funded 1997 VET programme supported policy and strategy development, curricula development, teacher training and networking with European vocational schools and education and training measures for reintegration of refugees and other returnees.¹⁴⁹ In Sarajevo in 1997, a specific vocational programme aimed at assisting demobilized soldiers was implemented and successfully helped 30% of the soldiers who went through the programme to find jobs.¹⁵⁰ Another EC vocational programme was started in 1999 and is slated to last through 2006. Working in 36 pilot schools in both entities, the EC is supporting a programme of occupation-specific curriculum development and technical training. A complementary programme, lasting from 2002 to 2004 will seek to address the educational needs of the labour market, involving small businesses, incorporating adult learning and encouraging continuing education.

One of the primary goals of vocational education reform efforts is to reduce the number of specialty occupations (approximately 130). The goal is to develop “occupational families” or clusters, such as food processing, agriculture, electric power, etc., so that students leave training with a broader package of skills that they can utilize in many different types of jobs.¹⁵¹ A 2000 World Bank report noted that while the EU was significantly investing in and implementing a major programme on vocation education, the programmes being developed are “far too occupationally-specific to meet the flexible labour needs of an emerging market economy.”¹⁵² Signs of progress are

¹⁴⁸ This effort had a budget of EUR 1.3m.

¹⁴⁹ This programme had a budget of EUR 3.4m. For more information, see The European Community (EC) Social Cohesion and Development Programme, at <http://www.seerecon.org/Bosnia/Bosnia-DonorPrograms/Bosnia-Donors-EC/Sectors/social.htm>.

¹⁵⁰ Personal interview, Jadranka Ruvić, European Commission Sarajevo Office, November 2002.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *World Bank Project Appraisal Document for an Education Development Project*, 19 April 2000.

visible, as new curricula have been developed for six occupations and implemented in 30 schools.¹⁵³ While the EC continues to organize workshops and meetings to ensure local participation in the development of vocational reforms, the World Bank and other organizations have not been satisfied with the pace of reform. In 2003 this remains an issue that will necessitate cooperation between BiH officials reluctant to introduce changes to a long-standing system and reformers interested in strengthening this sector of education.

3. *University Education*

There have also been a range of initiatives to reform university education in BiH, including programmes by EC-TAER, the COE, WUS Austria, the Phare Multi-Country Programme in Higher Education, SEED, CIVITAS and others. Beginning in 1996, the COE has worked with OHR and UNESCO to develop a Co-ordination Board for Higher Education (eventually known as the Higher Education Co-ordination Board, or HECEB), which first met on 15 June 2000 and which continues to provide a forum for higher education discussions.¹⁵⁴ A number of issues have been identified for reform including standardized quality assurance throughout BiH, reform of the legal structure of universities and faculties, reform of university funding legislation and practices, data collection and support for library resources and research.¹⁵⁵ The issue of university accreditation and recognition of BiH diplomas outside of BiH will be particularly important if university graduates are to be assured credentials that are valued throughout Europe. Other more specific projects have addressed issues of distance learning and the development of specific technical curricula (such as accounting or business studies).

Higher education reform has been slow and has not attracted the attention that primary/secondary reform has in the past year. There continues to be strong resistance to changes in the legal structures of the universities, as professors who have benefited financially from their significant autonomy and from the independent faculty arrangement are loathe to lose these perks. To date, only the university in Tuzla has

¹⁵³ OSCE Mission to BiH, *Education Reform Agenda: An Update*, June 2002, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Hugh Glanville, "Towards an IC Strategy in Support of Higher Education in BiH", unpublished paper, EC-TAER, January 2002.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

made substantive reform in its university. However, the crucial role that higher education plays in economic development and reducing the impact of ‘brain drain’ should ensure that the focus on higher education reform by the BiH and IC authorities intensifies.

4. *Structural Reform Initiatives*

The COE has assisted in the development of action plans to address structural reform (including legislative reform), curricula, standards, teaching methods and regional cooperation with a focus on policy development rather than technical assistance.¹⁵⁶ COE initiatives tend to be broad and high-level, with a regional focus seeking general agreement and adherence to European norms rather than implementing specific solutions in the field. The COE worked with local authorities to draft educational legislation, including the State Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education that was adopted by the Parliament in June 2003 and the Law on Higher Education released for public review in May 2003. The COE has also provided support for the development and adoption of European history textbooks. In addition to these COE efforts, UNESCO and the UNDP, with World Bank support, have cooperated on an effort to develop an Education Management Information System to collect and analyze data pertaining to education in BiH more systematically. Together, these reforms are building the necessary educational ‘infrastructure’ necessary for any modern education system.

5. *Teacher Training*

UNICEF has focused on providing technical and practical support to pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, including teacher training and the development of “Child Friendly Schools”. Their projects, while not specifically driven by a peace-oriented curriculum, seek to mainstream respect for diversity, tolerance and critical thinking into the overall curriculum in order to help students develop these skills. In contrast to the teacher-focused instruction strategies traditionally used in the average

¹⁵⁶ A “Framework Programme of Co-operation” for 2002-2004, and an “Action Plan of Activities” for July-December 2002 were agreed upon between the Council of Europe Secretariat (Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education) and the Entity Ministers of Education of BiH in July 2002.

BiH classroom, UNICEF's training workshops instruct teachers about the benefits of a democratic classroom in which children experience an interactive learning environment that encourages independent analysis and creativity. UNICEF is also supporting a programme called "Foundations for Democracy", a three-year, \$1.3 million programme similar to the Child Friendly Schools effort which will continue to support classroom reform through child-centred teacher training and introducing more modern pedagogical approaches.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, the Teacher Education and Professional Development Program (TEPD), a cooperative programme between the governments of Finland and BiH, has provided specific training on inclusive education and published an anthology of inclusive education theory and best practices in May 2003.¹⁵⁸

6. NGO Initiatives

Several non-governmental initiatives have also made contributions to the reform effort.

In cooperation with the Cantonal MOE, the Open Society Fund (OSF) in BiH supported an educational reform project in 14 schools in the Tuzla Canton entitled "Model for System Change in Secondary Education". In March 2001 OSF BiH signed Letters of Agreement with the 14 schools to ensure formal commitment to participation in the three-year project. The goals of this model network include the introduction of continual in-service teacher training, increased community involvement through parent and student associations and democratization of the teaching and learning process. OSF support touches on several different aspects of education including: school organization and management, teacher training, curriculum, textbooks materials, non-formal learning/community and youth activities and canton education policy development.

The Education for Peace (EFP) Institute of the Balkans has been involved in education reform through its emphasis on peace-focused conflict resolution and diversity promotion programmes.¹⁵⁹ The EFP model integrates the tenets of peace education

¹⁵⁷ Since 2002, more than 1200 teachers have attended child-centred teaching training workshops organized jointly by UNICEF, the Open Society Foundation and the Centre for Education Initiatives 'Step by Step'. *OSCE Statement, Coalition Press Information Centre Press Conference, Sarajevo, 26 August 2003.*

¹⁵⁸ See <http://www.hcg.helsinki.fi/projects> for more information on the TEPD programme.

¹⁵⁹ See the Education for Peace Year I Report and <http://www.landegg.edu> for more information.

throughout the curriculum to aid in trauma recovery and development of a culture of tolerance, peace and healing. Beginning in 2000, EFP launched a pilot programme, working in six schools in BiH.¹⁶⁰ Their inclusive and broad approach integrates teachers, educational support staff, parents, children and the community at large, and EFP estimates they have involved 18,000 people in their work.¹⁶¹ In addition to working with these specific schools, EFP started to develop a curriculum reflective of interethnic life and understanding, which promotes civic responsibility and awareness through community service. The EFP programme is expanding, with plans to integrate the approach into 100 schools and introduce a professional teacher certification programme. EFP will also begin working with ‘special situation schools’ in need of intensive help and support, beginning with two schools in Mostar.¹⁶² The organisation’s presence in Sarajevo will become a Regional Centre for other initiatives in the Balkans, allowing the programme to become one in which BiH can offer examples of best practices and training resources. EFP has communicated with OHR, EC-TAER and the BiH ministries since the beginning of its efforts to ensure broad awareness and understanding of their approach to reform. Their initiatives have been widely praised.

BiH NGOs involved in reform include Education Builds BiH, Be My Friend and Duga, among others. These groups tend to have a specific focus, such as scholarship aid to students in need, or provision of special education to support students with special needs or the socially marginalized (particularly the Roma). These efforts are good examples of how community organizations can complement a public social service, which can only strengthen education in BiH in the long-term.

E. The Case of Brčko

Brčko District, as an autonomous district that exists apart from the legal structures of the two entities, is always an exception to politics as usual in BiH. The district has been run more or less as a protectorate under the Brčko District Supervisor, who has

¹⁶⁰ In Travnik, Sarajevo and Banja Luka.

¹⁶¹ See <http://www.landeegg.edu>.

¹⁶² Funding for these initiatives has been provided by the Swiss Rotary Club and the Japanese Embassy in BiH.

the authority to impose laws and remove obstructionists.¹⁶³ While the High Representative has the power to impose laws deemed necessary to ensure Dayton implementation, the Brčko Supervisor has been able to do so more freely as he does not have to negotiate compromises with the two entities and operates in a district that has been locally governed by a transitional administration rather than elected officials. This unique arrangement, together with intense international involvement and funding, has enabled it to move from the ‘make or break’ issue that it was at the Dayton negotiations to a system often pointed to as a model for reform in the entities. However, its unique status in BiH also makes it a very specific case that may hold limited applicable best practices for the rest of the country. In the case of educational reform, at least one observer has suggested using the term “Brčko experience” rather than “Brčko model”, due to its unique approach and circumstances that may not be duplicable throughout BiH.

Brčko was the site of terrible violence during the war as its position in the northeast corner of BiH places it in a strategic location, connecting the two parts of the RS, bordering Serbia on the east and Croatia on the north. Before reform efforts began, schools in Brčko were segregated according to ethnicity, with children of different ethnic groups attending school during different shifts. Post-war intransigence in Brčko created a climate inhospitable to refugee return. On 14 February 1997 the Brčko Arbitration Tribunal¹⁶⁴ mandated the establishment of a Special Representative of the OHR, the Brčko Supervisor, to supervise implementation of the DPA in the region. The 15 March 1999 arbitration decision to establish Brčko as a District independent from both entities - a compromise solution that was accepted relatively peacefully despite claims from both Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks that it would lead to mass protests - solidified the unique position of Brčko within BiH.

After the Brčko arbitration decision, the pace of reform accelerated in all areas of life: demilitarization, economic development and education. The Brčko Supervisor

¹⁶³ There have been three Supervisors (all from the United States): Robert Farrand, who served from 1997 to May 2000, Gary Matthews (June 2000-March 2001), and Henry Clarke, who began in April 2001 and continues in this capacity. Gerhard Sondheim served as Acting Supervisor from March to April 2001.

¹⁶⁴ The status of Brčko as a part of either the FBiH or the RS could not be decided at Dayton and an arbitration solution was agreed upon to determine its final status at a later date.

established an Education Department within his office in July 1999, and an Annex to the Final Award (18 August 18 1999) confirmed the intent to integrate the education system: “According to that Annex to the Decision, the Supervisor shall carry out the integration of the education system of the District, harmonize curricula and ensure the removal of teaching material which he finds not to be consistent to the goals of (the) creation of a multiethnic societies of the District.”¹⁶⁵ This provided the Supervisor with a clear mandate for reform.

The need for reform became very clear in the riots of October 2000 as over 1,000 Bosnian Serb students (widely assumed to have been incited by nationalist Serb agitators) protested and demanded separate schools, rather than the already segregated morning/afternoon shift system in place. Bosniak students were injured in the melee and demanded better protection from the local and international authorities working to mediate the situation. This was not a riot based simply on educational issues; rather this incident reflected the opposition among hardliners to integration in the district and the animosity that lingered after the decision to make Brčko a special autonomous district.

Until reform began, in addition to three different curricula, RS law, the Tuzla canton law and the Posavina canton law were all in use in Brčko district, thus creating a very complex system. Educational reform in Brčko was guided by several laws including the 10 May 2000 agreement signed by the Ministers of Education. On 13 February 2001 the Brčko Supervisor mandated the development of the Education Collegium as a coordinating body for secondary education and the Board for the Quality of Primary Education. The education law was drafted by the Brčko Law Review Commission and approximately 25 public forums on the issue were held to raise awareness of the issue.¹⁶⁶ When the District government failed to pass a new, unitary law with an emphasis on desegregation, Supervisor Clarke imposed a single Law on Education and a harmonized curriculum on 5 July 2001.

¹⁶⁵ Government of the Brčko District, Summary Review (English version), “Key Elements of the Education Model in the Brčko District of BiH”, 24 December 2001.

¹⁶⁶ The author would like to thank Ken Palmer for his insight on this issue.

The new curriculum was implemented at the start of the 2001 school year and considering the concerns lingering after the October 2000 riots, was implemented peacefully. In the autumn of 2002, “the international administration in Brčko consolidated four Bosniak schools, three Serb schools, and one Croat school into four premises.” While the former ‘school’ class remained segregated within the newly organized premises, the first-year students were integrated, with plans to similarly integrate the new class each autumn. Through this incremental approach, “by 2005, all of the schools will be integrated.”¹⁶⁷ The Supervisor worked through the education department, cooperating with local professionals and authorities, IOs and NGOs to implement this change. Civitas and the COE were involved in the curriculum harmonization and other reform processes and EC-TAER provided technical support with the awareness campaign and workshops for the local coordinating board assigned to implement these reforms. An information campaign was developed and implemented to ensure transparency regarding the reforms to generate public understanding and acceptance.

The unitary law took great care to ensure that national identity issues such as language were protected for all residents of Brčko. Four general principles of the law are applicable to all grade levels:

1. Freedom of pupils to express themselves in their own language
2. Issuance of school documents in the language and alphabet as requested by a pupil
3. Appropriate ethnic composition of teachers for the instruction of national group subjects
4. Use of existing textbooks in line with the harmonized curriculum.

Additional, more specific requirements were also addressed:

- From third grade the equal use of both alphabets is guaranteed through a system of weekly rotation
- Language and cultural instruction will be carried out in separate classes
- The instruction of ‘non-national subjects’, such as mathematics, science, physical education and art are to be carried out in joint classes.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Viola Gienger, “Bosnia’s Learning Curves”, *Transitions Online*, July 2002 at <http://www.tol.cz>.

¹⁶⁸ “Key Elements of the education model in the Brčko District of BiH”, Government of the Brčko District, 24 December 2001.

In practice, the result of these laws and guidelines is that children spend the majority of their time together in mixed classes. Observers point out that while some politicians continue to complain in an attempt to gain political capital, the children are happy to go to school together. Additionally, the lack of riots, protests or violence illustrates that Brčko's system of carefully mandated inclusiveness works. Individual objections or problems have been resolved through contacts and communication between students, parents, teachers and administrators.

The "Brčko experience" while an appropriate solution to the special status and situation of the District, may, by its very uniqueness, be limited in its potential applicability as a state-wide model. First, the Brčko Supervisor's powers have in many ways made the district an internal protectorate; an American 'fiefdom' that has managed its affairs in a very different environment than that of the rest of the country. It bears repeating that the law paving the way for these reforms was *imposed* by the Brčko Supervisor, not adopted by reform-minded politicians.

Second, several experts note that success to date has been a result of a high concentration of IC money, effort, attention and technical assistance, which would be impossible to duplicate throughout the entire territory of BiH. When the law was imposed by the IC, all teachers in the district were fired, and a selection of teachers rehired under new contracts and at a salary much higher than average in BiH. While there has been praise for the teachers involved as they have been professional, enthusiastic and ready and willing to work together, these higher salaries have served as an incentive and discouraged potential protest or obstruction.

Third, while some have encouraged the entities to consider using the Brčko curriculum, others will point out that the Brčko curricula does not go far enough in integrating students as classes in the national subjects are not held together. Similarly, while the basic curricular reforms in Brčko were imposed and implemented sooner than reform in the rest of BiH, its reform process is not over. It is recognized that integration was a necessary first step and that general modernization is needed to make the educational system more effective. Despite Brčko's special status, teachers and educators from Brčko have participated in the SMS programme and the Brčko District govern-

ment will be included in future general modernization and reform efforts. Therefore, while progress to date cannot be minimized, the status quo in Brčko should be viewed as the floor and not the ceiling, as there is still room for improvement and reform.

In summary, educational reform in Brčko cannot be considered in isolation from other reforms in the district or its unique status as an autonomous district within BiH. However, while these circumstances may limit applicability of some best practices in the rest of BiH, it does demonstrate the political circumstances that can facilitate reform, the potential for change when hardliners or obstructionists are marginalized from the process and the willingness of average citizens – particularly students, parents and teachers – to work and study together when given the chance.¹⁶⁹

F. The OSCE's Reform Effort

1. *The Mandate*

At first glance, the OSCE was not a natural or obvious candidate to receive the mandate to lead educational reform in BiH. Prior to 2002, despite its general mandate to support human rights, the Mission in BiH was not interested in education as evidenced by its lack of participation in other ongoing efforts, its absence at the May 2001 SMS project launch and its lack of education support activities.¹⁷⁰ The OSCE Mission in BiH (MBiH) had started to support EC-TAER's SMS efforts by paying for workshop participant transport, a minimal step that put the issue of education on the radar screens of a few members of the human rights staff. The first direct participation of the OSCE in the SMS effort began at the workshop in February 2002, when OSCE staff participated in the development of the post-workshop report. The Organization played a crucial role in developing and pushing the parties to adopt the Interim Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children in March 2002, demonstrating its increasing interest in the subject, as well as its existing mandate in human rights.

¹⁶⁹ In the OSCE Permanent Council discussion concerning the MBiH's assumption of the education mandate, the US delegation stated that "the Brčko school district's recent integration was deemed a very positive example." *OSCE Permanent Council Notes*, July 2002.

¹⁷⁰ Educational issues were addressed through work on Roma empowerment and capacity building, but within the framework of Roma inclusion, not educational reform.

Still, within the greater OSCE structure there was no deep experience in educational reform. Training efforts in the area of democratization and electoral reform had been instituted in several countries, but these were simple skills and capacity-building exercises rather than educational reform efforts. The OSCE Secretariat in Vienna had no expert or staff dedicated to the issue and the democratization arm of the OSCE, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), focused on election and democratization awareness and training. There was discussion within the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna regarding this new and significant responsibility, with participating states generally welcoming the opportunity to participate in this area of reform.

The OSCE mandate for education must also be considered in light of the general streamlining and reorganization of the IC in BiH as the OHR shifted responsibilities, such as human rights and military stabilization, over to the OSCE and the UN MIBH made plans to close down its operation. The OSCE, which has built much of its mission and field structure in BiH on its Annex 3 election mandate, had transferred election authority over to local authorities in 2002, considerably trimming down its responsibilities while maintaining its field presence. There had been speculation that the OSCE might assume the mandate for the UN IPTF follow-on police mission, but the EU in 2002 received the mandate and likely needed to make choices in other potential reform activities. While the EC, with its experience in education reform in BiH, may have seemed a natural candidate for the mandate, it has been noted that the EC *implements projects*, rather than approaches reform from a political/policy oriented point of view. It would not therefore be able to play the crucial, necessary role in policy reform. Therefore, the OSCE, with its experience and infrastructure in BiH, completion of its election mandate and strong field-presence became the candidate of choice in 2002.

2. *Implementation Strategy*

The OSCE formally received the mandate to facilitate and coordinate the educational reform effort on 4 July 2002, though there had been speculation that they would take on this responsibility several months prior to this date. An Education Department was established within the mission HQ, regional education coordinators were established in Mostar, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Banja Luka, and educational contact points were as-

signed in regional and field offices. A field office reporting structure was created in early 2002 to ensure information flow on educational developments from the field.

A “Consultation Paper” was released in July 2002 to describe the proposed structure of the education reform effort.¹⁷¹ The paper proposed the adoption of an approach organized according to the Task Force structure that was introduced by the OHR to coordinate efforts that necessitate interagency cooperation.¹⁷² On 21 November a strategy paper entitled “Reforming Education to Give BiH a Better Future” was delivered to the PIC, explaining the objectives of the education reform effort including actions, pledges and timeframes.¹⁷³

The Education Issue Set Steering Group (EISSG) was established within the Institution Building Task Force, consisting of agency heads from the OSCE, OHR, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, COE, EC, World Bank and others as appropriate or necessary. Six working groups were proposed with relevant chairs and actors identified:

- Education Access and Non-Discrimination (OSCE/UNHCR)
- Quality and Modernization of Primary and General Secondary Education (UNICEF, UNESCO, EC TAER)
- Quality and Modernization of Vocational Education (EC/EU VET)
- Quality and Modernization of Higher Education (EC TAER)
- Education Financing and Management (World Bank/OSCE)
- Reform of Education Legislation (COE/OSCE)

These steering groups share many similarities with the SMS Working Groups. In fact, the OSCE noted its interest in adopting and building on work that had already been done through EC-TAER’s effort. A comparison of the SMS working group participants as noted in the First Report to the Ministers of Education in BiH and the OSCE’s education working group and reference group contact list reveals a mix of old and new names. For example, while only one representative of working group 4.3 was

¹⁷¹ *Consultation Paper 1 - Proposed Consultation and Co-ordination Structures for Stakeholders Involved in Education Reform*, July 2002. This document was developed by the OSCE Mission to BiH.

¹⁷² The Return and Reconstruction Task Force (RRTF) has been identified as a good example of the success of the task force approach. In the restructuring exercises of 2001 and 2002, additional task forces were set up for rule of law, institution building and economic development.

¹⁷³ “OSCE Applauds Education Strategy Presentation”, *OSCE Press Release*, 21 November 2002. While developed substantially by the OSCE, the paper was presented to the PIC by relevant BiH authorities.

transitioned into the Access and Non-Discrimination Working Group, four of the six members of the SMS working group on Elaboration of a Framework for a General Education Law continued to participate in either the working group or reference group on legislation.

The working groups are the main driver for reform and are supported by larger Reference Groups that are not closely involved in the project drafting process, but can provide additional input and recommendations. A series of large “education forums” have been organized to provide an opportunity for all interested stakeholders, observers and the media to come together to discuss the process and progress to date.

3. *Returnee and Minority Access*

The fact that the OSCE is placing a greater emphasis on issues of returnee and minority access through its Education Access and Non-discrimination Working Group and associated Reference Group demonstrates a clear change in approach. This group has a specific focus on Roma and national minorities and a higher profile than the returnee inclusion working group (4.3) in the SMS, where returnee issues were bundled with special needs education. This prioritization reflects both the OSCE’s work on human rights and Roma capacity-building initiatives, as well as its possession of a solid mandate for reform and the political weight such a mandate carries in terms of its ability to push the parties towards reform on difficult issues such as returnee integration.

The OSCE had been instrumental in developing the 5 March 2002 Interim Agreement on the Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children¹⁷⁴ and aims to both implement this interim agreement and seek long-term solutions to ensure education access in a non-discriminatory environment. The most important element of the agreement stipulates that children will be taught all general subjects on the basis of the local curriculum in use in a given community, but may choose to follow the curriculum they prefer for the national group of subjects. For example, a Bosnian Croat family returning to a Bosnian Serb majority area could choose to have their

¹⁷⁴ Signed by the Entity Ministers of Education and the Cantonal Ministries of Education, Science Culture and Sport.

children receive courses for literature, history and religion from the Bosnian Croat curricula.

As a part of the implementation of this agreement, there is also a strategy to more broadly address the issue of the ‘national group’ of subjects. Draft implementation plans call for these subjects to be taught according to standards provided in the official curriculum. In schools in which 18 or more students in a grade request that national subjects be taught according to a different accepted curricula than the primary one in use at that school, the schools will be required to organize additional classes. If fewer than 18 students request an alternate curriculum for the national subjects, the school must organize extra-curricular classes.¹⁷⁵ The implementation plan for this agreement also emphasizes the need to hire returnee teachers to ensure a diverse teaching staff, ethnically diverse school boards reflective of a community and a formal and systematic monitoring system to ensure implementation at the local level.

The first meeting of the Co-ordination Board for the implementation of this agreement was held on 21 January.¹⁷⁶ The Board supported the proposal to reestablish the Textbook Commission to ensure that books teaching the national subjects are not objectionable, and the entity and cantonal MOEs signed an MOU to reestablish the Commission on 5 March 2003, with the goal of removing all inappropriate content from textbooks by the next school year.¹⁷⁷ The OSCE is also taking steps to ensure that schools do not display offensive or exclusive symbols and do not have names that could be offensive to any group, particularly returnees.

In May 2003, the OSCE published statistics on the implementation of the Interim Agreement to date, measuring the percentage of returnee students and teachers in each of the cantons in the Federation and in the RS. In terms of returnee students, Central

¹⁷⁵ *Implementation Plan for the Interim Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children*, draft, November 2002. This document was developed by the OSCE Mission to BiH.

¹⁷⁶ The Board is co-chaired by Mustafa Demir, Assistant Minister of the Federation Ministry for Education, Science, Culture and Sport, and Ranko Savanović, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Education in the RS.

¹⁷⁷ “Important Step towards Implementing Agreement on Education of Returnee Children”, *OSCE Press Release*, 22 January 2003, and “Ministers Sign MoU Re-establishing Textbook Review Commission”, *OSCE Press Release*, 5 March 2003.

Bosnia canton and Sarajevo canton lead (17.21% and 13.63%, respectively), while Posavina canton, Zenica-Doboj canton and West Herzegovina canton demonstrate the lowest percentage of returnee students (0.47%, 0.04% and 0.44% respectively). In the RS, 3.21% of students are returnees. In terms of returnee teachers, Central Bosnia canton and Sarajevo canton lead in the Federation (15.08% and 14.52%), while Posavina and Zenica-Doboj cantons have zero returnee teachers. The RS has 1.41% of returnee teachers among its educators.¹⁷⁸ There is clearly much progress to be made, but the compilation of such data for the first time is an important first step in identifying problems areas.

In addition to ensuring the rights of returnee children, the Education Access and Non-discrimination working group is addressing more general access issues among national minorities with the goal of ensuring “that all children who are members of national minorities (particularly Romani children) are appropriately included in the education system throughout the country.” The OSCE proposes that this be done by having the national minorities define their own needs and establish an implementation plan. The OSCE also acknowledges that it will be important for BiH’s non-Roma national minorities (not as socially marginalized as the Roma, but due to their small numbers often forgotten) to become engaged in the reform process. While access issues are key, inclusion of all national minorities in the curriculum is also important to ensure compliance with European norms regarding minority rights, as well as to ensure that their contributions to BiH’s culture and society are not forgotten.¹⁷⁹

4. *Information Campaign*

After years of acknowledging the need for, and benefits of an educational public awareness effort, the OSCE launched an education campaign on 28 October 2002 to highlight model schools and best practices and to encourage open discussion on the

¹⁷⁸ “Preliminary Statistics on the Implementation of the Interim Agreement on the Accommodation of Special Needs and Rights of Returnee Children”, Co-ordination Board for the Implementation of the March 5 2002 Interim Agreement on Returnee Children, 19 May 2003, at <http://www.oscebih.org> for report.

¹⁷⁹ ECMI sponsored a workshop on the topic of national minorities and educational reform in BiH on 22 November 2002 in Sarajevo. Representatives of Albanian, Czech, Hungarian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Jewish, Ukrainian and Roma associations attended this first seminar on the topic. The workshop report is available on the ECMI web site, <http://www.ecmi.de>.

reform process.¹⁸⁰ The launch was inaugurated at six schools that have “set a good example, introducing innovative techniques and promoting inclusive education.”¹⁸¹ As a part of the information campaign, an extensive ‘education dictionary’ was published in mid-March, which includes information about schools using modern techniques and approaches to illustrate best practices and encourage similar reform by others. Competitions and contests to invite school children to propose reform activities have added to the visibility of the effort.¹⁸² The campaign was planned to continue through the end of the 2002 to 2003 school year and has been supplemented by a “This Year to School Together” campaign that marked the beginning of the 2003 to 2004 school year.

5. *Preliminary Assessment*

The goals of the OSCE-facilitated initiative are ambitious and fall within an aggressive timeline. As the 2003 to 2004 school year begins, work is proceeding in each of the working groups and there are initial signs of progress. The first meeting of the Common Core Curriculum Steering Board and Working Groups was held in Banja Luka on 8 May and the goal of adopting a country-wide core curriculum before the new school year was accomplished.¹⁸³ The common core curriculum adopted on 8 August provides a framework that will be incorporated into the entity and cantonal curricula. This core harmonized framework will make it easier for students and teachers to transfer schools throughout BiH, and will ensure that students to spend more time together in general non-national subject courses. While a step forward, there is still much work to be done, as this framework is “based on the common elements of the existing curricula”, and therefore does not include the ‘national subjects’.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, teachers in *any* country would recognize the challenges of creating lesson

¹⁸⁰ OHR had planned to initiate a public awareness campaign to help gain support for the education reform effort. However, after the OSCE received the education mandate the campaign was delayed until after the elections. While some could argue that ensuring that education was an issue discussed in the November 2002 elections would be an idea worth promoting, in the political climate in BiH there was more concern that it would be used as a nationalist rallying card to protect national interests.

¹⁸¹ “Promoting Experience and Vision for Education Reform in BiH”, *OSCE Press Release*, 28 October 2002.

¹⁸² See “OSCE Praises Students for their Plans to Reform Education”, *OSCE Press Release*, 23 April 2003.

¹⁸³ A goal reiterated at the 8 April Education Forum. See “Education Forum Supports Implementation Priorities”, *OSCE Press Release*, 8 April 2003.

¹⁸⁴ “Education Ministers Adopt Common Core Curriculum for September School Start”, *OSCE Press Release*, 8 August 2003.

plans based on a new curriculum in such a short preparatory time frame, and the teachers of BiH will ultimately bear much of the burden of responding to changing requirements.

The Textbook Commission agreed on the revision of national subject textbooks in July. Agreement was reached on removing offensive materials and terminology and maps were revised to reflect BiH's existence as a state. Rather than beginning the difficult task of providing accounts of the history of the region over the past ten years, events will be listed in simple chronological order.¹⁸⁵ This reflects the realisation that the writing and teaching of history will continue to be a major challenge, and the preference for an incremental approach to this aspect of reform. In addition to these substantive content issues, there is continuing controversy over the printing of new textbooks that could delay the delivery of texts, as BiH must implement cost-effective reform while reducing dependence on outside publishers and supporting its own publishing industry.

There has also been progress made in the development of relevant legislation, though all people involved in the reform are aware of the limits of legislation in the absence of serious implementation. In spite of initial concerns about the nationalist governments established after the October 2002 elections, there is cautious optimism that the experts involved in the process will be able to propose technically-appropriate, non-political recommendations for reform implementation.¹⁸⁶ While the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education was adopted in June, additional legislative development will be needed to ensure that the tenets of the law are integrated into the entity and canton level laws, resulting in harmonized legislation state-wide.¹⁸⁷ It is expected that these laws will be adopted by the end of this calendar year. On 13 May a 'green paper' developed by BiH education experts with EC-TAER support was pre-

¹⁸⁵ Julie Geshakova, "Officials Taking Steps to End Ethnic Divisions", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 29 August 2003.

¹⁸⁶ It should be noted that following the establishment of the new BiH Council of Ministers, education was moved from the portfolio of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees to the Ministry for Civil Affairs. The potential impact of this reorganization will likely become clear in the 2003-2004 school year.

¹⁸⁷ Highlights of the draft law include a single system of accreditation, certificates and diplomas to ease mobility of students throughout BiH, a common core curriculum and an article that makes religious classes optional and ungraded. See Daniela Valenta, "Educating Bosnia", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) Balkan Crisis Report*, 2 May 2003.

sented which includes recommendations for primary and secondary reform, including the development of a framework curriculum and the elimination of the practice of requiring extra exams for students changing school and residence.¹⁸⁸ In addition to the development of a draft Law on Higher Education, on 25 April the entity Education Ministers signed a joint letter to the Greek EU Presidency to affirm their commitment to, and to outline steps towards signing the Bologna Declaration.¹⁸⁹ A law on higher education has not yet been passed, but this is in part reflective of the slower pace of reform in the field of higher education in general. The impact of these legal reforms will begin to be felt as implementation proceeds in the 2003 to 2004 school year.

There have been practical and tangible signs of progress, that while not necessarily representative of the state of reform throughout the country, provide interesting snapshots of reform. On the first day of the 2003 to 2004 school year eight Bosniak students began their schooling in Višegrad for the first time in 11 years. The municipal authorities in Višegrad have committed to ensuring funds for transportation and textbooks for the children, and the first returnee teacher has started to work in the school system.¹⁹⁰ Efforts have begun to more widely advertise teacher vacancies, to ensure that returnee teachers are aware of these opportunities and welcomed to apply. Additionally, as a part of the broader IC effort to integrate structures in Mostar, Mostar schools are being specially targeted for modernisation and integration.

Similarly, many challenges remain. On 25 August High Representative Paddy Ashdown fined the ruling nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) political party 20,000 Euro for their failure to issue instructions on the administrative unification of the “two schools under one roof” in the Srednja-Bosna and Herzegovina-Neretva cantons. While the IC views this inaction as an act of obstruction, the politicians in these cantons claim concern over the protection of the Croatian language in unified schools.¹⁹¹ The integration of schools in the municipality of Žepče continues to be

¹⁸⁸ A follow-on ‘white paper’ is intended to be completed in October 2003.

¹⁸⁹ “OSCE, OHR and COE Welcome Important Steps towards Signing of Bologna Declaration by BiH”, *OSCE Press Release*, 25 April 2003.

¹⁹⁰ “Bosniak Pupils in Schools in Višegrad”, *Dnevni List*, 1 September 2003, 5.

¹⁹¹ Anes Alić, “Bosnia: Doing Away with Segregation – Ashdown Hits Leading Bosnian Croat Party with a Heavy Fine for Obstructing Education Reform”, *Transitions Online*, 1 September 2003, at www.tol.cz.

problematic.¹⁹² Teachers waiting for payment of salaries from the previous school year have gone on strike to demand payment.¹⁹³ More generally, problems similar to those found in any cash-strapped school system will necessitate difficult choices and actions. OSCE officials estimate that 90 per cent of education funds in BiH are spent on personnel costs alone, leaving little for upkeep of schools, purchase of supplies or even basic needs such as electricity. On the micro- and macro levels, reform will necessitate painful and controversial choices in the short-term, if reform is to be successful in the long-term.

It is too early to provide a summative/results-oriented evaluation of the OSCE's progress. The 2003 to 2004 school year will be crucial, as goals outlined in the OSCE implementation plans are operationalized and legislation and harmonized curricula are drafted, adopted and integrated into schools throughout BiH. A preliminary formative, process-oriented evaluation of the OSCE's approach to education reform to date reveals a strong start-up effort bolstered by its mandate, a high profile information campaign and a visible commitment to reform. Whether this considerable activity translates into real accomplishment remains to be seen. Additionally, it must be emphasised that while the OSCE has the mandate and means to serve as the primary coordinator of the effort, it lacks the funds to implement specific technical assistance projects itself, and is therefore dependent on the various implementing agencies involved as partners in reform. The dynamics and ultimate effect of this approach, separating coordination and implementation roles, should be closely assessed in the future, as it could provide interesting organisational development lessons to be learned.

However, the speed with which the OSCE has moved forward the reform initiative reflects both the culmination of previous reform efforts that provided a foundation for further reform work and the OSCE's own organizational evolution and maturity after seven plus years in BiH. Additionally, the role of individual personalities cannot be underestimated in this effort. OSCE MBiH Head of Mission, Ambassador Robert

¹⁹² On the first day of school there were some attempts to prevent approximately 300 Bosnian Croat children from attending school in Maglaj. There have been ongoing political disagreements on the issue of integrated schooling in this area. See "OHR and OSCE Mission Condemn Efforts to Prevent Children from Attending School in Maglaj", *OSCE Press Release*, 2 September 2003. "Head of OSCE Mission Concerned with Ethnic Segregation of Students in Žepče", *OSCE Press Release*, 30 August 2003.

¹⁹³ The strike occurred in the Herzegovina-Neretva canton, in primary and secondary schools.

Beecroft, not only received the mandate to push ahead with reform, but has the personal interest and experience as a former schoolteacher to drive the issue.¹⁹⁴ As an American representative, it is likely that his access to key contemporary players such as US Ambassador Clifford Bond and PDHR Hays has facilitated the diplomatic process and created an atmosphere in which both political and practical reforms are more achievable. The efforts of the OSCE, together with other key actors such as the World Bank and the EC will be worthy of further observation and study as reforms on paper are turned into changes in the schools themselves.

¹⁹⁴ Ambassador Beecroft began serving as OSCE MBiH Head of Mission in July 2001.

VI. Lessons Learned – For BiH and Elsewhere

There are a number of lessons to be learned from BiH's educational reform odyssey. First, basic necessary changes in the educational system have often been stymied by politically charged issues such as curriculum reform and history textbooks. The attention to these and other controversial themes such as school segregation, while raising the issues to the level of discussion, has paradoxically minimized room for manoeuvre and reform as identity-focused issues have been seized upon by authorities interested in continued division. This has been recognized for some time, as a World Bank report in the spring of 2000 suggested that "the recent emphasis given by UNESCO and OHR to shared curriculum programs has led to an increasing entrenchment of political positions on this issue."¹⁹⁵ Unfortunately, this early recognition of the problem did not initially change the reform approach.

It was easy for reformers to focus exclusively on these identity-focused issues. Among local actors, these issues are key to progress for the reformers and central to continued division among obstructionists. For outside reformers they are often the most obvious necessary changes, particularly to the non-educators. The need to purge a book of racial slurs and factual distortions is much easier to see than the need for modern teaching methods or a Standards and Assessment Agency.

This is not to suggest that divisive and inflammable curricula and textbooks should be tolerated. Objectionable content must be removed with the support of progressive, reform-minded local or external actors (the Georg Eckert Institute and other textbook experts are involved in this process in BiH). Similarly, segregation in schools must be stopped if an integrated community is a future goal. In the absence of local authorities willing to make these changes, external pressure may be necessary, and intervening countries can use a combination of carrots and sticks to force compliance. In the case of BiH and other conflict regions, kin-states should also be pressured so that they do not support ongoing tensions beyond their borders.¹⁹⁶ Textbooks from Zagreb and

¹⁹⁵ World Bank Project Appraisal Document, April 2000, 10.

¹⁹⁶ During the OSCE Permanent Council discussion on the education mandate, the Head of the Croatia delegation expressed support for reform, but insisted on respect for the constituent rights of all people in BiH and on "the active preservation of their national, political and religious identities". *OSCE Permanent Council Notes*, July 2002. While this is a reasonable goal for a kin-state interested in protecting

Belgrade cannot serve as the primary textbooks in BiH if BiH is to be a sovereign state, and locally published texts must meet professional standards of objectivity.

Approaching educational reform from the standpoint of technical assistance and systemic modernization, rather than just the revision of texts and curriculum, can provide an environment in which necessary steps can help to lay the ground for addressing the more controversial subjects in the future. Bringing experts together to discuss non-political reform as professionals can provide a basis for future, more difficult work on issues of identity and history.

A second lesson that is quite closely related to the first is that it is important not to confuse post-war and more general transitional reform agendas.¹⁹⁷ The education reform agenda in BiH would have been necessary even in the absence of the war in the early 1990s. The multiple transitions BiH is facing necessitate a specially tailored approach that addresses all of BiH's needs. Connecting educational reform with the IC's exit strategy from its involvement in BiH's post-war peace implementation fails to differentiate between the problems caused by the war and the problems that are a legacy of the old system.

Third, a lesson demonstrated through the BiH experience is that committed educational reform needs committed and dedicated support. Until the OSCE received a mandate to work on this issue, the IC did not have a comprehensive idea of how to approach education and educational reform. More importantly, they did not know how to secure the needed resources to make changes. Without top-level leaders pushing for reform in *any* area, it will not be a priority.

Addressing the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on 4 July 2002, HR Paddy Ashdown noted: "No organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina other than the OSCE has the mandate and therefore is in a position to take the lead on education."¹⁹⁸ It is unfor-

its people across borders, the assertion of one's right to an identity must not detract from a state identity, or result in prejudices or lasting divisions.

¹⁹⁷ Personal interview, Hugh Glanville, Sarajevo, November 2002.

¹⁹⁸ "Bosnia High Representative Urges OSCE to take Lead on Education", *OSCE Press Release*, 4 July 2002.

tunate that it took six years for a statement of such force to be made. While the lack of centralized control of educational reform has its benefits and ensures that different organizations can utilize their various strengths and experiences, it also leaves open the possibility for redundancies or competing initiatives. An effective interagency framework and approach can seek to bring together unitary coordination with the skills and talents of multiple actors. Education and educational reform, together with more traditional democratization reform tasks, should therefore be viewed as a key part of peace agreements and state-building plans. Including educational reform as an integral part of peace-building and state-building will give the topic clout and force, enable the assignment of a mandate and make real reform much more likely than if treated as an *ad hoc* 'option'.

A fourth lesson is that a balance must be maintained between the external catalysts for reform on the one hand, and internal dynamics, participation and implementation on the other. Ideally, local actors will be dedicated to reform and will participate in the modernization process, with external support limited to technical training, funding and guidance. There is no doubt that local initiatives are better for long-term implementation and sustainability. Imposition of reforms from external forces is also inconsistent with the development and consolidation of a democracy. Even during the post-WWII German occupation as the debate over the role of the occupiers and German citizens in the reform process continued, it was noted that: "Such an interference, even if the intention to democratize education is given for a reason, would be absolutely contradictory to the spirit of true democracy, destroy faith in democracy and, therefore, have an effect exactly contrary to its intended purpose."¹⁹⁹ In an ideal world, democracies will be built through democratic means.

However, in the case of BiH and other post-conflict societies, the key question must be how to create the conditions for reform and how to marginalize and disenfranchise the spoilers who benefit from the status quo, obstruct progress and stoke the politics of fear and division. In virtually every society in conflict there exists a cadre of politicians, criminals or military/paramilitary leaders who personally stand to gain from the spoils of continued conflict and division. Operating outside of the rule of law, one

¹⁹⁹ Tent, *Mission on the Rhine...*, 155.

grenade thrown at a school, mosque or church can in minutes destroy the efforts taken over months or years to rebuild a community. If the spoilers can be marginalized and removed from the reform arena, progress can begin. In weak states still struggling to build the institutions and procedures necessary for a democracy, external forces are often in a better position to marginalise such elites than internal actors.

The case of Brčko is interesting in this respect. After the arbitration decision, spoilers claimed that riots and ethnic violence would spread throughout BiH. That did not happen. Throughout the demilitarization of the District in early 2000 spoilers claimed that security would be compromised and civil unrest would ensue. That did not happen. Upon the imposition and implementation of educational reform in 2001, politicians claimed that they and ‘theirs’ would not succumb to multiethnic schools with ‘the other’. To the contrary, the majority of people were willing to learn about the reforms and were comfortable enough with the changes to send their children to the newly reconstituted schools. Marginalizing the spoilers, whether through elections, removal from office or temporary establishment of a transitional authority, can provide space in which the peace and progress that the average people want can begin to take root.²⁰⁰

A fifth lesson is that innovative solutions should be a key part of seeking reform and negotiating compromise. In response to Bosnian Croat concerns that they are being ‘overshadowed’ as the smallest of the three constituent peoples in BiH and therefore need ‘their own’ university in Mostar, a possible suggestion could be the establishment of an Institute of Croatian Studies. Other innovative solutions could be the establishment of a multicultural research centre, or in the case of BiH’s national minorities, the creation of an Institute for the Study of National Minorities to demonstrate commitment to full inclusion and multiethnicity and possibly even become a regional centre of scholarship. Such approaches would help to change the debate from being one framed as a win-lose issue, to one in which all parties see

²⁰⁰ It has been noted, regarding education and other reform issues, that while there is often consensus by the politicians on the need for reform, there is a natural inclination among the political parties to not be seen agreeing with one another. In BiH, this can lead to a progression through contentious debate, stalemate, OHR imposition, public indignation by politicians for the media, and ultimately, quiet acceptance and implementation – a repeat of the ‘IC as arbiter’ role that was seen in the debate on constitutional reform.

one framed as a win-lose issue, to one in which all parties see themselves as gaining through reform.

Sixth, initiatives that specifically and openly support the development of a culture of peace should be further studied and evaluated. Education for Peace's project described above, and other initiatives, such as UNESCO's "Culture of Peace" concept and their Associated Schools programme, developed in the 1990s, can bring together students, parents, politicians and communities to ensure that education is a force for progress and development.²⁰¹ Project DiaCom, organized by the US-based Karuna Center, seeks to bring educators from different parts of regions in conflict together to share experiences and understand how the war affected people in different ways, through open and shared conversations.²⁰² It is important to emphasize that peace education and educational reform in general is needed in the *entire* Balkan region if it is to have a future impact on regional politics and development, as the area's shared history will affect its common future.²⁰³

Finally, regional considerations are needed more generally as education reform progresses in the entire space of the Balkans.²⁰⁴ This is particularly relevant to higher education. Economies of scale dictate that it is not economically feasible for every country, let alone every region of every country, to support its own specialised faculties or institutes. Medical faculties, technical institutes and schools of advanced business studies should be developed on a regional level, so that high quality faculty and resources can be brought together to ensure a stronger standard of excellence rather than being cloistered in small provincial locations. In addition to the immediate practical and economic benefits of such resource-sharing, a regional approach will provide students and faculty alike with exposure to people and ideas from throughout the region, and potentially attract scholars from Europe as well.

²⁰¹ See <http://www.unesco.org/education/emergency/unesco/knowledge.shtml>. The 1994 UNESCO International Conference on Education also addressed education for peace and the teaching of human rights and democracy.

²⁰² Arie Farnam, "The Hard Work of Getting Along", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 August 2001.

²⁰³ For an informative review of peace education in Serbia, see Ruzica Rosandić, "Grappling with Peace Education in Serbia", US Institute of Peace, April 2000.

²⁰⁴ Thanks to Hugh Glanville for his insight on this issue.

These lessons are not necessarily new, but because they are difficult and require a dedicated, proactive effort, they are in danger of being ignored in future post-conflict situations. Unfortunately, these efforts do not always receive the attention or resources they deserve from development agencies, as they are long-term in focus and impact and therefore cannot demonstrate concrete results in short six- to twelve-month contractual timeframes. A more realistic approach to educational reform must ultimately be accompanied by a more realistic understanding of the long-term nature of peace-building and democratisation processes, and of the substantive differences between the reconstruction of bricks and mortar and the gradual transformation of mindsets, perceptions and beliefs.

As noted earlier in this report, the problem in BiH was never lack of understanding of the problem or potential solutions, but lack of will – among the BiH authorities to relinquish national agendas in exchange for reform and among the countries that comprise the international community to become involved in such a difficult process. Rather than being disregarded as a ‘soft’ topic, education should be viewed as a priority in post-conflict societies because of the direct impact that education has not only on peace-building, but on economic growth and development. The link between education and the economy in BiH is seen both in today’s all-too-real ‘brain-drain’ of tomorrow’s potential entrepreneurs. A strong state cannot exist with a weak economy, and education and the economic benefits of education must be viewed as aspects of a country’s security and stability.

VII. Conclusions

This report provides only an overview of the issues involved in this complex topic, and there continues to be a real need for future research. There are numerous other areas of research that could contribute to greater understanding of educational reform in BiH, such as educational reform in Kosovo, Serbia or Croatia, or specific studies of the state of reform in BiH cities such as Mostar, Banja Luka or Sarajevo. It would prove interesting to follow one or two schools in BiH as they reform over several years to determine which processes work and how local solutions are developed.²⁰⁵ In-depth studies of the attitudes and perceptions of students, teachers and parents in these schools could contribute to our understanding of the impact of education on post-conflict opinions. More research on the quality of university and vocational education reform, with a focus on student outcome and professional placement, would also be interesting topics for future research, and could strengthen understanding of the link between post-conflict education and economic development.

It is likely that primary and secondary education reform will continue to command attention in BiH and elsewhere as it impacts the largest number of people and reaches into every home with school-age children. Although there have been several successful reforms, as evidenced by the OSCE's best practice reference guide, and although policy changes are gradually being adopted, there are still many challenges ahead.

One of the most important steps facing BiH will be the adoption and implementation of harmonized legislation and curriculum at all levels of government. The adoption of the state-level framework law is an important first step. However, while harmonization is necessary to ensure progress and cohesion as a state, the goals of quality educational reform and the IC's effort to strengthen BiH's state-level institutions should not be confused. For instance, except for the economic costs of parallelism, it is not inevitable that BiH should have a single Ministry of Education.²⁰⁶ As in many aspects of political life in BiH, education will likely remain decentralized. Strong opposition

²⁰⁵ Melita Čukur of the Department of Social Anthropology at Göteborg University in Sweden has studied issues of education and national identities in Sarajevo and central Bosnia in 2001. Further work in these and other areas could greatly increase understanding of this issue in post-conflict societies.

²⁰⁶ Federal states such as the United States and Germany have decentralized education systems. Ministers from both Belgium's French and Flemish communities have signed the Bologna Declaration. See <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/erasmus/bologna.pdf>.

remains among politicians and Bosnian Serb citizens in the RS against the creation of state-level institutions and laws not mandated by Dayton, as such moves are seen as a threat to the existence of the RS entity itself.²⁰⁷ In contrast to competencies such as defence and security, however, which are traditionally associated with a state, the educational system in BiH can still be a largely decentralized system as long it adheres to harmonized standards, provides equal educational access and opportunities to all and is accountable to every level of government and the citizenry as a whole. While a state-level Ministry of Education may not be in the country's short or long-term future, harmonized principles can be applied at the state level and implemented at the entity and cantonal levels. A 1999 COE/World Bank report acknowledged this, noting: "Ultimately, the long run goal for education in BiH will almost inevitably be a decentralized education system where primary control over education inputs – curricula, books, teacher training, etc. – is taken at lower levels of the system, as is the trend in many Western European countries today."²⁰⁸

Additionally, the instinct to support reconciliation should not lead to the development of new mono-perspective histories to replace the old mono-perspective histories. Students will be best served by a learning environment in which they are encouraged to analyze and criticize the facts themselves and one in which they learn that single events can have many different interpretations. The mono-perspective approach to learning used in Yugoslavia did not help to create a population of critical thinkers, but instead fostered an environment of competing mono-perspectives, where there was little view for different views or interpretations: "Scripturalism must give way to democratic methods and multiple viewpoints. Tolerance might be encouraged if pupils came to understand that the same story could be told in different ways, and that some of those who would tell it differently could be their next-door neighbors."²⁰⁹ While texts promoting hatred should not be tolerated, an appreciation for the nuances of history and culture could help BiH's civil society and democracy to mature.

²⁰⁷ There is also strong opposition against development of a state-level Ministry of Defence, a state-level customs agency and other proposals to centralize powers in state-level bodies.

²⁰⁸ *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration*, 4.

²⁰⁹ Donia, *The Quest for Tolerance*.

A 1999 World Bank/EC report admits that these changes will not occur quickly: “It will take time before parties to the conflict accept the role education can and should play in promoting reconciliation.”²¹⁰ The people of BiH must grow to recognize the need for these changes and must demonstrate to politicians that they are tired of paying for parallel, inefficient systems that offer a sub-standard quality education.

The ultimate success of educational reform in BiH unfortunately cannot be separated from the larger political issues and uncertainties in BiH and in the region. Continuing internal and external debates on the political structures in BiH and regional border issues continue to breed uncertainty among supporters and opponents alike. BiH’s future will be tied to the extent to which a person’s cultural and political/civic identities can be held as two distinctive parts of one’s overall identity; with cultural loyalties and traditions directed towards one’s culture or religion, and one’s political and civic loyalty placed in the state of BiH.²¹¹ The success of educational reform in BiH will in large part reflect the extent to which education serves as a building block for a common citizenship and shared experience, so the country that can be successfully integrated into European and global structures.

²¹⁰ Prepared for the May 1999 Donor’s Conference co-hosted by the European Commission and the World Bank.

²¹¹ This is similar to the problem facing Greek and Turkish Cypriots. See Maria Hadjupavlou-Trigeorgis, *A Partnership Between Peace Education...*, *passim*.