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**ISSUES IN TEACHER TRAINING  
IN THE FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

The current academic 1996/1997 school year in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina began in somewhat different circumstances than the previous ones. These circumstances could be, in general, described as more favorable, since the armed conflict had stopped a year ago. Despite many difficulties, it could be asserted that the overall conditions for education improved. In the meantime, Bosnia and Herzegovina struggled with its agreed upon framework under the stipulations of the Dayton Accords. The country was supposed to undergo the gradual process of re-integration with the heavy presence of the IFOR troops, and a host of international organizations responsible for the implementation of the Accords in the civil sector. Without going into necessary details, it could be said that many basic preconditions for the improvement of living did not take place. Some major results were accomplished in terms of ending the military aspects of the war. Once the hostilities stopped on October 12, 1995 there was no further, even sporadic fighting. In the late December 1995, 60,000 highly trained soldiers began to come into the country. They managed subsequently to prevent any armed clashes between the armed forces of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. Heavy arms were taken out from the demarcation zones and placed in the previously designated depots. A large number of soldiers was discharged from the armed forces, thus enabling an impressive labor force to become available for new jobs.

The political process was often blocked from various sides representing sometimes totally opposed interests. There was no major return of refugees ensured, the persons accused of war crimes are still mostly at large, the pledged for amounts of international assistance are either not ready and available for the reconstruction purposes, and the ever growing international bureaucracy and technocracy sets up its own pace of rebuilding the most immediate facilities and buildings. Many dates, terms and events were not met as agreed. It is true that Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite such a situation, had its first post-war elections in mid-September 1996,

mostly under the strong US pressure. USA proved to be the key player in the past year with its strong presence and visible efforts in all the relevant sectors. It also influence most of the donor countries to pledge their commitment for the reconstruction on two conferences held in Brussels in December 1995 and April 1996. The international community was not ready to respond in the way it had promised during the Dayton Peace Talks and the Paris Conference at the end of 1995. Excuses and not real funds were given as to justify the lack of proper reaction to the enormous need in the country.

However, the international aid and assistance in reconstruction produced its first effects, and most schools began with classes in early September 1996. Although most of the education facilities were badly devastated and years would be necessary before the entire pre-war potential was to be operational (in terms of buildings, labs, gyms, school libraries and equipment in general), the education process gradually but steadily found its way towards the overall normalization.

Currently, at the Federation territory, there are about 280,000 pupils in primary schools , about 92,000 in the secondary schools, and 18,000 students at Universities. This huge number of students (390,000) shows a constant increase, since there is a constant (if somewhat slow) return of refugees and displaced persons to the Federation controlled territories. For the time being, the largest percentage number of returnees seems to be coming back to the Bihac, Travnik and Sarajevo cantons, respectively. Some teachers also come back but their numbers are comparatively small to the actual needs. According to the latest estimates, there are about 10,500 teachers in primary schools, 6,000 in secondary schools, and about 2,000 at Universities - 18,500. Not all of them happen to be certified teachers, but there was a strong tendency in some cantons to apply stricter rules towards the teaching staff in their schools once the education process entered into the post-war stage. Some war-time temporary teachers without proper certification lost their jobs, but their places were not always filled with the new graduates. Although there is a number of teacher training establishments throughout the Federation, the number of graduates in them ready to start teaching is still rather limited. Certain spacializations among them remained to be in great demand, particularly foreign languages teachers. There is also a tendency of teachers concentrating in larger urban centers whereas the rural areas lag behind even more so than before the war. In some cantons, this creates a real problem because the

cantonal educational authorities could not supply enough teachers for all the schools, or to provide an equal distribution of those currently available for work.

Teachers' salaries, standard of living and the general working conditions would be the perpetuating burning issues in the future, since there is no viable economic system that could support even this limited number of teachers. The economic assistance from the international donors, such as EU, the World Bank, USA, Japan, Canada and some Islamic countries enabled the Federation authorities to intervene several times in the sector in order to raise the monthly salaries to approximately average 300-450 DEM, but this must be understood only as the short term injection. Without more stable revenues, both at the cantonal and Federal levels, there could be no stable future for the teacher population, and, consequently, for the education system as a whole. Possible new teachers would not be accessible since they would, most likely, turn to other, more profitable or lucrative professions. This includes both in-service teachers and those who could "trade off" their present positions in the number of other sectors - ranging from the Army or police to financial and banking institutions. School leaving graduates could possibly face the same dilemma, and the number of new students entering teacher training institutions even in the near future could soon drop dramatically. All this could seriously endanger the process of the teacher training reconstruction.

This brings us to several issues which need to be addressed here. One has to deal with the system as the whole. It is highly likely that the present framework within the system of pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education would remain in effect in the future. In the course of the war, there were certain opinions that such a system did not suit the needs of our people. Some educators, probably under the war stress and the possible donors from other parts of the world, advocated the education system which never corresponded to the public education in Bosnia and Herzegovina since its real beginnings in 1878. Such voices called for traditional education as prevailed in some Islamic countries, but, in the end, they proved to be rather isolated cases. The general framework was discussed on several occasions and nobody really offered anything drastically different which could change the type of education known in our parts. It was agreed that we could not experiment once again and become the special case in the family of nations that had accepted and developed the system of public education in 19th and

20th century respectively. Such a system relies on a few basic principles:

1. Education is seen as one of the most fundamental human rights and must be understood in such a context. In a normal democracy, which Bosnia and Herzegovina strives to finally become, it must encompass the largest number of potential student population. Education for all as an open principle must be emphasized as the strategic imperative in the country struggling to go back to normalcy in all its aspects. Children must be given a fair chance to be educated regardless of ethnic, religious, sexual, racial, social status, cultural or any other distinctive feature or characteristic. The education environment must be freed from any strictly applied ideological concepts and premises that favor only one way of thinking and exclude the right to express different, even if sometimes totally opposing views. At this moment, it is not necessary to describe such an open concept of education as either 'liberal', 'progressive', 'advanced', or 'mildly or positively conservative', although such views had been heard even in the recent past. It should suffice to say that it should not be different from the prevailing education systems in the countries of free market economy and parliamentary democracies. This does not mean that the previous system, heavily influenced by the Communist ideology, should be entirely dismantled and broken apart. In a manner of speaking, some of its key premises had been lost even a few years before the war in the former Yugoslavia. Bosnia and Herzegovina and its educators had been aware of the necessary change. Most documents discussed in the late Eighties and early Nineties recognized the need for change. Some of the postulates written in them could become our points of departure, only now under the different circumstances in the post-war society.

2. The war consequences could not and should not be ignored in defining the new framework of our education system. It is obvious that the war wounds are still fresh and that they could not heal easily. One could not afford to repeat the prevailing approach under the Communist regime after 1945 that the existing differences could be solved out under the pretext of political slogans such as 'brotherhood and unity', 'self-management and non-alignment' or "scientific and Marxist outlook". It would be equally wrong to adopt and affirm a new kind of dominant ideology, regardless of its potential values in promoting reconciliation among the nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The process of reconciliation must take

place at all levels, but in schools it must not become an empty phrase. One should speak, instead, about the affirmation of every individual and his/her right to retain and express its own specific features in terms of its humane, social, economic ethnic, religious, cultural existence as a human being and the member of larger groups - either national, professional, religious, cultural or even minority one. This should take place within the multiethnic, multireligious and multireligious context of a complex and mixed country. Bosnia and Herzegovina has always been such a country. Its current status has been distinctly re-affirmed under the Dayton Peace Accords and the recent political development after the September 1996 elections. It means that our education must not promote any ideas that jeopardize such a status, like intolerance, hatred, national or religious exclusivity or any other feature that could again act as a catalyst for the armed conflict similar to the most recent one in our history. This might sound an idealistic reasoning, but we have no other option but to be humane and idealistic in the efforts of rebuilding our society on the principles of mutual respect and equality and guaranteeing to all of us, and most particularly our children a sound prospect for future.

3. Education in such an environment should be based upon the principle of equal competition of ownership of the institutions which engage in education process. The former so called 'social' or 'public owned' sector need to be gradually supplemented by a variety of offers - ranging from private and corporate to mixed and international. This is in line with both the principle of decentralization throughout the Federation, and the principle of equal opportunities given to anyone interested in securing the education process within appropriate legal, financial, expertise, staff and physical capabilities and potentials. It implies all levels of education - from pre-school to higher education, religious, adult, special, occasional, pre-service or in-service types of education. Naturally, it is not likely that there would be too many initiatives other than so called 'public or state supported' ones for quite some time, due to the overall limited potentials in the country. Nevertheless, the process of privatization and transition towards various forms of education institutions should be encouraged. It should not be seen as contrary to the current prevailing situation, but as its complementary advancement and much needed change. We should not be afraid that various form of ownership over the educational institutions and premises would result in a poor education in what is usually labeled state owned or government

supported school system. The appropriate system of taxation and public expenditures, within the flexible and viable legal framework, could reduce the previous discrepancies. A sound competition could be seen as a challenge to the complacent and outdated approaches to education under the strict control of a state, party or anybody else who wishes to exert control over it as its own exclusive right. Such a right could not be granted to anyone since we adhere to the principle of the education for all, and of all types of education prevailing in the countries with similar social, economic and political structures.

This brings us now to the other related issues. When teacher training is concerned, it must reflect these transition changes. At the moment, our teacher training system suffers from many deficiencies. It is mostly fragmented and it could not provide the much desired quality one would naturally want under similar circumstances. The system of teacher training needs to be seriously rethought in order to pass through several stages towards the more balanced and viable situation. One of the main purposes of this project is exactly in defining such a framework. The current situation resulted from the traditional organization, which did not differ much from any other country around us, or in Central and Eastern Europe for that matter. In the last thirty or so years, the efforts to influence the teacher training process revolved mostly around the issue of secondary teacher training schools and pedagogical academies. The world trend to increase the number of years spent in training for the teaching profession ended secondary teacher training schools in the early Seventies. Pedagogical academies did not obtain proper status in that period. One of the consequences was the decrease of interest for teaching professions in terms of the best students available.

At the same time, there was no 4-years long University institutions which would be the real establishments for educating the new teachers. Due to the political slogans in the seventies for 'directed' (*usmjereni*) education, and the everlasting call for technological training at the expense of the humanistic ones, there is no a single institution of a kind in the Federation which could meet the criteria in other parts of the world we would like to compare ourselves with. In 1992, there were no secondary teacher training schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but Pedagogical Academies in Mostar, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Banja Luka. Future teachers had been trained at the Faculties of Philosophy, Natural Sciences, Physical Education, Political Sciences and the Academies of Fine Arts and Music Academy (all in Sarajevo). It is true that there is a Pedagogical

Faculty opened in the course of the war in Mostar West, and that the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Defectology also opened at Tuzla University, along with the Pedagogical academies in Zenica and Bihac, and two Islamic Pedagogic academies in the same places, but the issue remains - what happens to all these institutions? Do we need them all, and to what extent? Could a country as economically weak as ours afford such a fragmented and diversified network of teacher training establishments? It is very likely that the number of teachers necessary to fill in the missing posts would be accomplished in a few years time, and then what? Are we going to close certain departments, as it had almost happened in the past, and what are we going to do with a number of graduates and/or students who want to enter the teaching profession?

It is our task to try to find answers to such issues within this group and with the assistance of our colleagues from the university of Pittsburgh. We need to address the wider context of education in order to understand the more focused set of issues related to the teacher training reconstruction and reform. As a matter of fact, what we ought to attain is both the revival and re-shaping of our teacher training system. We should not aim at cosmetic modifications, or even to some minor plastic surgeries, but to comprehensive and far ranging changes. They would take place within the terms of immediate reconstruction and strengthening of the parts of the system, and finally, within the overall transition efforts, as the stable and well developed system of a small but highly complex country seeking to return again to its peaceful and prosperous future.