

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## Political peace - educational war: the role played by international organisations in negotiating peace in the Balkans and its consequences for education

### Journal Item

How to cite:

Owen-Jackson, Gwyneth (2008). Political peace - educational war: the role played by international organisations in negotiating peace in the Balkans and its consequences for education. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 3(1) pp. 79–90.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2008 Research in Comparative and International Education

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:  
<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.2304/rcie.2008.3.1.79>

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

---

---

## Political Peace – Educational War: the role played by international organisations in negotiating peace in the Balkans and its consequences for education

GWYNETH OWEN-JACKSON

*Department of Education, The Open University,  
Milton Keynes, United Kingdom*

**ABSTRACT** The number of countries involved in conflict appears to be growing. Global awareness of these conflicts grows as the increasing use of weblogs and mobile phone videos, alongside traditional technologies, demonstrates the day-to-day effects of conflict on those caught up in it. International organisations are drawn into negotiating 'peace settlements' and into monitoring post-conflict developments due to this growing global awareness of conflict and due to the influences of globalisation, increasing economic interdependence and other factors. International organisations, including the World Bank and agencies of the United Nations, try to find common ground between opposing factions in conflict situations in order to broker peace. This is not an easy task and compromises often have to be made. Peace agreements and settlements also need to take account of how the parties will work together in the future, and therefore, these may include aspects of educational provision. This article describes the role played by international organisations in negotiating the peace agreement that brought about the end of the conflict in the countries of the former Yugoslavia in 1995. It goes on to illustrate the consequences for education of this peace agreement and suggests that, whilst international organisations may have brokered peace on the streets, the opposing factions are continuing their war in the terrain of continuing educational conflicts, due at least in part to structures for educational provision laid out in the Dayton Agreement. The article provides support for Bush & Saltarelli's claim that education has two faces, and argues that in this case, unfortunately, the negative one predominates.

### Introduction

There are at least 42 countries in which educational provision has been affected by conflict (UNESCO, 2003), and the number appears to be growing (World Bank, 2005). The increasing use of weblogs and mobile phones, alongside traditional technologies, has raised global awareness of these conflicts and their effects on those involved. The effects of globalisation mean that countries are increasingly economically and socially interdependent, such that what occurs in one part of the world has impacts in many other areas. For this reason, amongst others, international organisations have been drawn into the negotiations of peace settlements and the support and monitoring of post-conflict developments.

The study presented in this article focused on one recent conflict, that which occurred in the former Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1995, and on the effects of conflict on primary schooling there. The study was concerned with the development of primary education provision in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) [1] and with how a series of political and social changes had effected this provision. Therefore, while the findings presented here derive from research not initially focused solely on the role of international organisations in conflict resolution and educational provision,

they explore a theme that was identified as crucially important during research. It became apparent during the research process that the interventions of the international community in reaching a political peace settlement had created deep divisions within primary education provision; divisions which may have unintended long-term consequences. The divisions in primary provision created by the 1995 peace agreement – the Dayton Agreement – and what these have meant for students in BiH are explored.

The article identifies the ‘international organisations’ active in attempting to resolve the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and explores the role that they played in negotiating the peace settlement that ended the recent conflict in BiH. The field research presented in this article focused upon organisations based in Mostar – the site of the study – which included the World Bank, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Development Programme (UNDP), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and agencies of the European Union (EU). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were also working in the area but were not part of the study, as their role in negotiating the Dayton Agreement – and the model for educational provision mapped out within it – was not nearly as prominent as that of the international organisations. The impact on educational provision of the negotiated settlement is discussed and the deep divisions that it has fostered are presented. The ‘two faces of education’ (Bush & Salterelli, 2000) are considered in the context of BiH, as are the possibilities for ensuring opportunities for developing the ‘positive face’.

### **International Organisations: negotiating peace and reconstructing education**

The First World War gave rise to a period of international institution-building which saw the establishment of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in 1925 and the International Bureau of Education (IBE) in 1929. The purpose of the IBE was to ‘open the way to co-operation among governments in the field of education, hitherto regarded as a preserve of national sovereignty’ (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2003). Although these early organisations had little impact on educational provision, they laid the foundations for further institution-building following the Second World War. The OECD and UNESCO were both established during this later period, the latter with the purpose of trying to ensure peace through education.

Since the mid-twentieth century the number of international organisations has grown, and many are involved in conflict resolution and post-conflict development work. UNESCO, for example, states in its Constitution that the purpose of the organisation is ‘to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations’ (<http://www.unesco.org>, accessed 29 January 2008). How this is to be achieved is not stated, but peace negotiation is an increasing part of the organisation’s role. Over recent years UNESCO has participated in negotiating peace agreements in Angola (2002), Sudan (2005) and Nepal (2006) and has continued to work with these countries, amongst others, in post-conflict reconstruction work.

Table I shows some of the major organisations involved in conflict resolution and post-conflict development work; these can be categorised as intergovernmental, where personnel are drawn from a number of countries, governmental, where one national government assumes responsibility, and non-governmental, often charitable organisations.

In addition to working towards conflict resolution, these organisations have been involved in a range of post-conflict development work, including educational reconstruction. Those most financially involved in education are the intergovernmental organisations, particularly the World Bank, which has become the largest funder of education programmes across the world. Although in its educational work the World Bank’s main focus is on education as a means to reduce poverty and support economic growth, it also promotes education for democracy and for peace and stability. Other international organisations involved in supporting post-conflict educational developments include the EU, UNESCO and OECD. These organisations work in a number of countries and were active in BiH both during and after the conflict.

Intergovernmental organisations	Governmental organisations	Non-governmental organisations
The World Bank Group	Norwegian government agency	Oxfam
European Union (EU)	Danish Refugee Council	Save the Children
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	Department for International Development (DFID) (Britain)	Red Cross
United Nations agencies:	US Agency for International Development (USAID)	Children in Crisis
UNESCO	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	Care International
UNHCR	GTZ (Germany)	The Open Society
UNDP	Etc.	Small independent charities, e.g. Nobody's Children
UNICEF		
Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)		
World Health Organisation (WHO)		

Table I. International organisations involved in conflict resolution and post-conflict development.

In addition to funding, international organisations provide resources – such as textbooks and stationery – personnel and training to assist with educational policy, strategy formulation and capacity-building in areas such as education management and teacher training. Many of these organisations regard education as an important contributor to the post-conflict reconstruction process and look to develop education systems which ‘avoid replication of education structures that may have contributed to conflict’ (<http://www.unesco.org/education>, accessed 21 October 2003). The OECD declares its interest in education as being due to the ‘private and social returns that accrue to investments in education’ and sees education as a means ‘for developing individuals’ productive and social capacity’ (<http://www.oecd.org>, accessed 21 October 2003). In post-conflict BiH, the work of the international organisations upon which this study focuses has concentrated on rebuilding the economy, the reconstruction of housing and infrastructure and the needs of refugee and returnee families. Their intervention in education has involved the provision of financial aid, personnel and technical assistance and support for refugee and returnee children in gaining access to education.

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia began slowly in 1991 and by April 1992 had erupted into a bloody civil war. International organisations and others made several attempts to broker peace between warring factions before they finally succeeded in December 1995. As part of the peace agreement, international forces remained in BiH, together with an international political presence in the form of the Office of the High Representative.

### **Research Methodology**

The research findings presented here are part of a larger study looking at the effects of social and political change on primary education in BiH. The full study used an interpretative historical approach, with the identification of ‘guiding themes’ (Kalberg, 1994), one of which was the role played by international organisations. Data was collected through documentary analysis and literature review – both historical and contemporary – field visits to BiH, interviews and observations. I had also had experience working in Mostar over a number of years and this provided some background knowledge. The literature studied included documents published by the international organisations working in BiH, including OECD, UNHCR and the World Bank, and government reports. It was recognised that documentary evidence may have contained biased information and, where possible, the information was tested out through the primary data obtained in interviews and observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of people, including personnel working for international organisations as well as government officials in Mostar, university staff, school teachers, parents and pupils. The international organisations selected were those based in Mostar during the period of the research: the World Bank, the UNHCR and UNDP, the OECD, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and agencies of the EU. Each organisation was contacted and visited, the research work explained and an appropriate member of staff approached for interview. The number of staff interviewed was

small (4) as there was not a large pool from which to draw. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and notes were checked back with the interviewee. Data collected was triangulated through cross-checking with other sources such as government officials in Mostar, university and school staff.

Analysis of the literature leads to the postulation that globalisation and the increase in world trade and international communications has led to international organisations increasingly being called upon to mediate in areas of conflict and to attempt to bring about resolution. However, the role played by these organisations in negotiating and maintaining peace could be perceived as conferring on them opportunity and influence in post-conflict policy and development. International organisations play an important role in resolving conflict, but questions could be asked about their 'neutrality' in this role. For example, Ball (in Fielding, 2001, p. 49) believes that international organisations are concerned with the 'establishment of a global policy paradigm in education'. Similarly, the World Bank has been criticised by Heyneman (2003) and Jones (1998), who believes that their involvement is 'an ideological stance [to] promoting an integrated world system along market lines'. The ability of international organisations to establish a 'global policy' or 'integrated world system' can only be benefited by presence in the political arena.

These concerns over the 'neutrality' of the international organisations have led a number of researchers (Dalin, 1978; Birzea, 1994; Olek, 1998; Heyneman, 2003) to question the appropriateness of their involvement in educational policy development, which seems to expect or require the adoption of Western educational practice, even in areas where the political and social context is different from that in the West. This promotion of Western ideals, whether appropriate or not, can be exacerbated in post-conflict countries where the new government may be politically inexperienced (Halasz, 1993), which gives leave to international organisations to set the agenda. Heyneman (2003, p. 315) claims that in some areas 'local policy makers have become passive recipients of the [World] Bank's agendas' and he argues further that in relation to education policies World Bank involvement has often been ineffective. It is important, therefore, to explore the role played by international organisations in post-conflict educational developments and the value of this to the country concerned.

### **The Role Played by International Organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Consequences for Education**

Bosnia's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia, in April 1992, marked the beginning of the war between BiH, Serbia and Croatia. The war was a bloody conflict that has been well documented (for example, see Silber & Little, 1995; Malcolm, 1996; Berman, 2001) in which the United Nations deployed units, for example UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR). Peace negotiations were led by American politicians and representatives of the EU, UN and the UN Security Council. However, it proved difficult to reach a settlement that would accommodate the demands of the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Croats, the Bosniaks [2], and the neighbouring Croat and Serb politicians. The peace settlement finally agreed to in 1995, known as the Dayton Agreement, divided Bosnian territory between the three ethnic groups (see Figure 1) and created a new political structure which allowed for power sharing (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 shows that within the state of BiH 49% of the land mass, Republika Srpska, is governed by the Serbs, under the authority of the Serbian Government. The remaining 51%, the Muslim-Croat Federation (the Federation) is divided between Croats and Bosniaks. Of the 10 cantons in the Federation, five are Bosniak majority, three are Croat majority and two are ethnically mixed, including the canton in which Mostar is located. This land division has served to further divide the ethnic communities in BiH as political, financial, social and educational resources are defined within each of the ethnically delineated cantons. The majority of Serbs in BiH now reside in Republika Srpska, the majority of Bosnian Croats reside in cantons that are politically controlled by Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks reside in cantons controlled by Bosniaks.

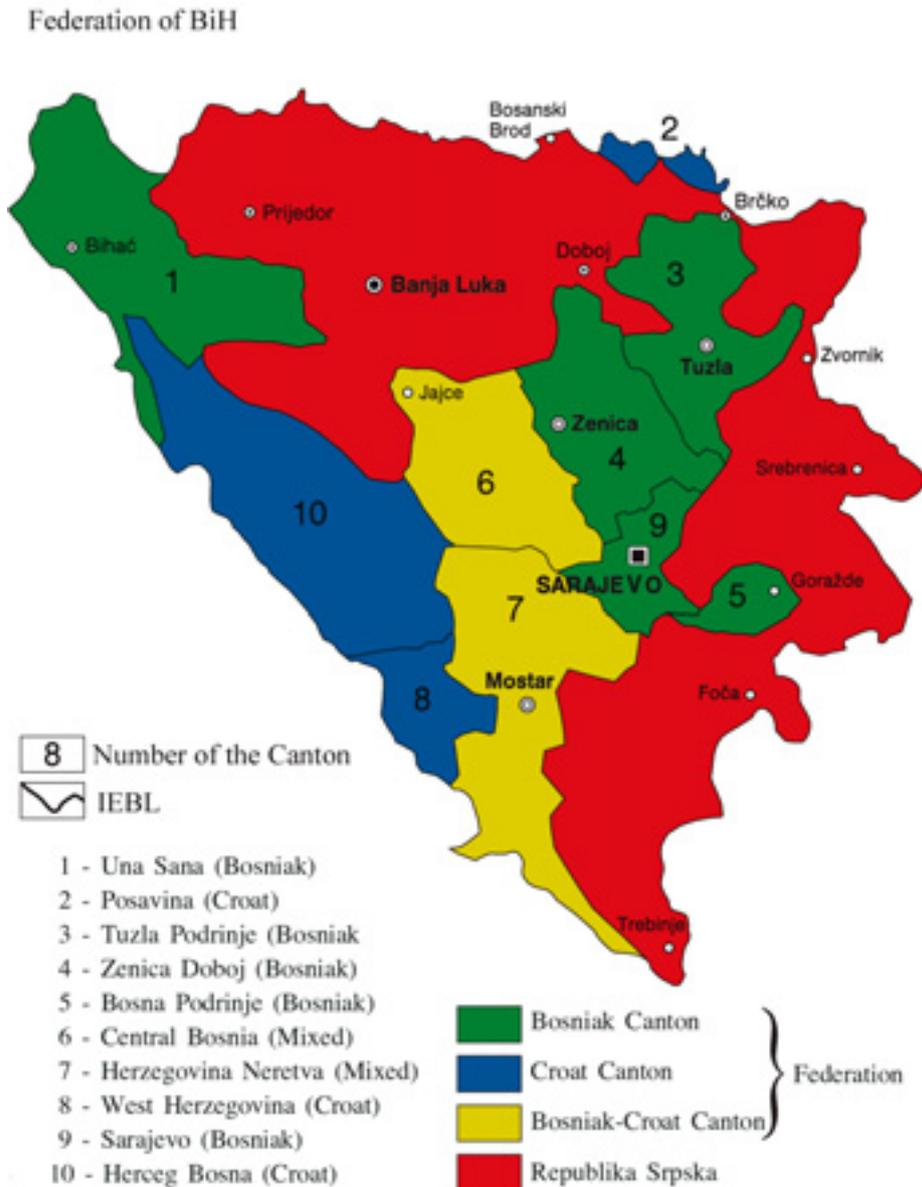


Figure 1. Map of post-war Bosnia (1995).

The importance of this land division is woven into the history of the region; the histories of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia have been intertwined since the Middle Ages, with borders constantly changing. The region was first settled by Slavic tribes; from these emerged the first ethnic identities in the region, Serbs and Croats. However, like today, in the Middle Ages ethnic identity was not a simple issue. West (1994, p. 7) reports how all Roman Catholic Slavs who spoke Serbo-Croat came to be considered as Croats, and Serbs, who were Orthodox Christians, identified themselves through their religious and political tendencies rather than their language or kinship (West, 1994, p. 22). Bosnia (later Bosnia-Herzegovina) appeared to have been populated by Slavic peoples who considered themselves as Serbs or Croats (Malcolm, 1996).

In the fifteenth century, the Ottomans conquered most of the region and for 400 years Muslims ruled Serbia and Bosnia whilst Croatia remained part of western Europe. During the period of Ottoman rule it is claimed that many Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs converted to Islam because of the 'social advancement' it brought (Djilas, 1991, p. 9) and a new ethnic identity, that of Bosnian Muslim, emerged. By the mid-eighteenth century there were sufficient converts for the term 'Bosniak' to be in common use in both Bosnia and Istanbul (Glenny, 1999, p. 78).

Although this term later dropped out of use, it was reclaimed by the Bosnian Muslims during the conflict.

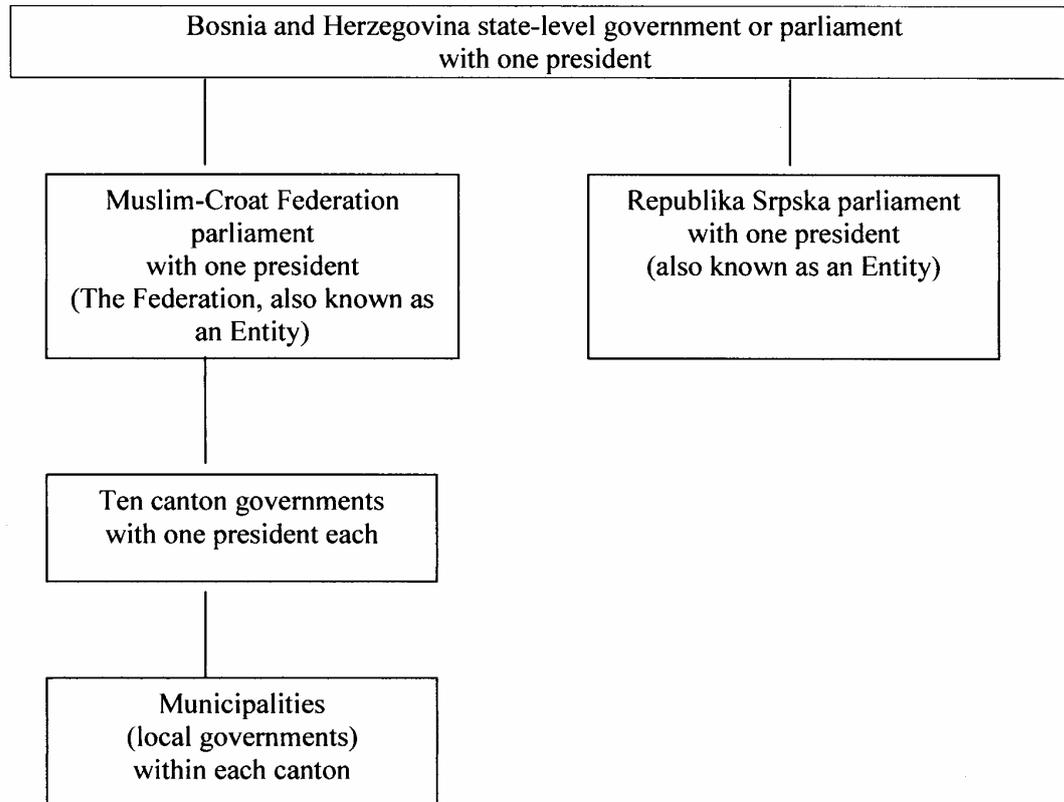


Figure 2. The political structure of post-war Bosnia (1995), created by the Dayton Agreement.

Both Serbs and Croats each claimed that Bosniaks belonged to their ethnic group and they therefore regarded Bosnian lands as their own territory. This claim was perpetuated throughout history, including through the education systems, for example, in Serbian textbooks pupils read about 'the beautiful Serbian lands of Bosnia, Hercegovina ... Croatia' (Jelavich, 1990, p. 72), whilst Croatian textbooks referred to the Serbian cities of Novi Sad and Belgrade as Croatian cities (p. 50). In both Serbia and Croatia, BiH was presented as 'a South Slav land with inhabitants who were Serbs or Croats of three religious faiths' (Jelavich, 1990, p. 135). This was an influential factor in the recent conflict, with both Serbia and Croatia having designs on Bosnian land.

Since the end of Ottoman rule in 1878, Bosnia has been under the governorship of the Austro-Hungarians, the Yugoslavian (Serbian) monarchy and communist governments. Despite several attempts at unity none of these governments has been able to dispel the ethnic identities of the Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs or Bosniaks. The 1992-95 war, although originating over control of land, became rooted in ethnic identity.

The divided political structure created under the Dayton Agreement served to reinforce the separation of ethnic groups. The Serbs have near autonomy in the mono-ethnic Republika Srpska, although they contribute to the three-person presidency of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the Muslim-Croat Federation part of BiH the cantons are divided along ethnic lines, with each canton being designated as either Muslim or Croat; only two of the 10 cantons contain substantially mixed populations.

In terms of the administration of education, under the Dayton Agreement, the role of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport is only that of supervising the canton ministries of education and coordinating educational provision; the Federal Ministry has no power or control over educational provision. The responsibility for the government and provision of

education lies within each of the canton governments. This creates difficulties as each canton has elected governing politicians of the dominant nationalist group, i.e. Croat-majority cantons are governed by Bosnian Croats and Bosniak cantons by Bosniaks. These nationalist politicians appear to be making decisions about education provision on the basis of nationalist politics rather than educational policies.

These political decisions have led to the situation that in the mono-ethnic cantons in the Muslim-Croat Federation education is now provided according to the ethnicity of the majority population. Baranovic (2001, p. 14) reported that in some areas of BiH education provision is organised in ways 'identical to their counterparts in Croatia'. This means that in Croat-majority areas the curriculum and textbooks emanate from Zagreb and that Bosnian Croat pupils receive an education as if they were living in Croatia. A similar situation exists with Bosnian Serb pupils in Republika Srpska. In Bosniak-majority areas the curriculum and textbooks emanate from Sarajevo. The programmes and textbooks, of course, provide pupils with 'an understanding of the world from their respective national viewpoints' (Donia 2000, p. 42) so across BiH there are three separate education systems operating. This creates major difficulties as many pupils are being taught a national viewpoint that does not reflect the nation in which they live. Where Croat and Serb pupils living in BiH are learning about the world as if they lived in Croatia or Serbia, this only serves to further separate them from the Bosniak population.

Further, despite being labelled as mono-ethnic by the Dayton Agreement boundaries, the cantons do have minority populations from 'the other' ethnic groups and little educational provision is made for these children. If they wish to attend school then they must attend a school whose curriculum is designed for the majority ethnic population, so a Bosniak child living in a Croat-majority canton would receive a Croatian education. As a result, these minority ethnic children are denied their right to learn about their cultural identity and language, as provided for in the constitution of the Dayton Agreement.

The greatest difficulties, however, are to be found in the two ethnically-mixed cantons of the Federation, Central Bosnia and Herzegovina Neretva, where educational provision and policy are presenting serious problems. Mostar is located in the canton of Herzegovina Neretva and is representative of many mixed areas in that there are two parallel education systems, one for Bosniaks and one for Croats. Mostar is a geographically divided town, with Bosniaks located in east Mostar and Bosnian Croats in west Mostar. The primary schools in the east use the curriculum and textbooks issued from Sarajevo, they train their own teachers and use their own language, Bosnian. In west Mostar the curriculum and textbooks come from Zagreb, the teachers are trained in the university in west Mostar or in Croatia and they teach in the medium of Croatian.

The languages of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are almost the same, as they all derive from Serbo-Croat, but since the war each has introduced new words into the language or reverted to old words in order to use language to further separate themselves from their neighbours. The distinct educations provided by each of these parallel systems builds and develops the pupils' apposite ethnic identity. In the canton Ministry of Education in Mostar there exists a Minister and a Deputy Minister for education; a respondent in the research study reported that 'the Minister and Deputy must be Croat and Bosnian [*sic*], they rotate each year but in reality each speaks to and for their own group'. At the time of the study the Minister was Croatian and had responsibility only for schools in west Mostar, including their curriculum, resources and budgets. The Deputy Minister had the same responsibilities for schools in east Mostar. As well as differences in curriculum, the separation of responsibilities also led to disparity in resources and teachers' salaries. West Mostar was more economically active and received financial support from the Croatian Government so was able to pay higher salaries than those paid in east Mostar, which was economically poorer. It was also apparent whilst conducting the research that the two Ministers, who work from the same building, each had their own offices and staff, and that there was no communication between them. During interviews with the Minister and Deputy Minister each was able only to speak for the part of the town that they represented.

Many schools serve mono-ethnic pupils; however, there are some areas where families from minority ethnic groups have returned to live, and require an education for their children. This has led to the setting up of 'dual schools' or 'two schools under one roof', where pupils and teachers from different ethnic groups occupy different parts of the same building or attend at different times

of the day; for example, Croat pupils and teachers attend in the morning and Bosniak ones in the afternoon.

These 'dual schools' are among the educational consequences of the decisions made by international organisations during peace negotiations. The constitution created under the Dayton Agreement, and the redrawing of internal boundaries along ethnic lines, created a complex government structure in which there are 13 Presidents, one for the state, one for the Federation, one for Republika Srpska and one for each of the 10 canton governments. This governing structure has had major consequences for educational provision as described above. It is difficult to know, however, whether the negotiators considered these or whether they considered the Agreement and its strict divisions to be an interim measure. Nor can we be party to the rationale for allocating responsibility for education to canton governments, with little or no influence from either the state or Federation governments, although it can be guessed that this was a compromise in the interests of obtaining a political settlement. The implications of this decision, however, enable a highly divided administration of education that allows for parallel systems and entrenched ethnic difference. As will be seen below, the current provision of education in BiH epitomises the potentially 'negative face' of education as described by Bush & Saltarelli (2000).

The international organisations which negotiated the Dayton Agreement now appear to be powerless to change the educational situation that the agreement has fostered. In an effort to ensure educational provision for a minority ethnic group of Bosniak pupils in a Croatian-majority area, an international organisation officer invited me to visit a school where the school director, a Croat, was claiming that there was no space in the school for the relatively few returnee Bosniak pupils and teachers in the locality. Data were obtained about the number of pupils, teachers, classrooms and teaching hours and, when analysed, a solution was found which would have accommodated the Bosniak pupils. It had been hoped that the presence of an external expert outsider, presenting objective evidence, would have persuaded the school director to change his position. However, despite the evidence, the director continued to maintain there was no space and refused entry to the Bosniak pupils. The international organisation had no power or authority to take any further action and the situation remained unchanged.

Another international organisation officer reported that canton ministries were refusing to cooperate with the Federal Minister for Education, rendering him ineffective. Evidence was also found in a European Training Foundation research report which noted that schools were being 'exploited by political parties as a means of achieving their own ends' (2000, p. 25). Political parties are organised along nationalist lines; there have been five elections in BiH since 1995 and all but one have returned nationalist politicians to office. These politicians appear to be using schools to promote their nationalist/ethnic agenda, through their use of mono-ethnic, nationalist curricula and their refusal to participate in discussions to change the current educational provision.

In 1998 the Federation government, with the agreement of the canton ministries, issued a new teaching programme based on the principle that education should provide the same opportunities for all, irrespective of national identity (Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, 1998). Despite giving their agreement to this, however, the programme was not implemented by canton governments in Croat-majority areas.

Growing awareness of the stalemate within the education system in BiH led the international organisations to take further measures to intervene. In 1998, the Office of the High Representative in BiH convened an Education Working Group comprised of representatives from a range of international organisations. This group made recommendations regarding school textbooks, including that there be no references to the recent conflict and that passages considered offensive to one or more ethnic groups be deleted. However, the Bosniaks objected to these recommendations as they applied only to Bosnian textbooks, as the group only had authority to comment on these, not those of Croatia or Serbia, so the recommendations were not implemented. In 2000 the UNHCR and UNDP, as part of their human and civil rights agenda, expressed concern over the difficulty of access to education for some minority ethnic returnee children.

The Federal Government took some responsibility for educational provision and modernisation and, with the agreement of the canton ministries in 2001 published a discussion document on education policy and strategic development (Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, 2001). This document included the principles that education should respect both

'diversity' and the 'specific needs of the canton and the school', and should have regard for individual human rights, including those of ethnicity and religion. It also acknowledged that textbook supply should be opened up to the market and that textbooks should endeavour to 'promote human rights and peace through ethnic, cultural and religious differences in Bosnia and Herzegovina' (p. 19). There was no overt international involvement in this initiative but it is likely that the thinking had grown out of the previous involvement of international organisations, and that these organisations were supportive of the proposals as they marked a way forward for educational provision. It is noteworthy, however, that the international organisations were not directly involved in the development of this document. Also in 2001, funding from the EU allowed for the establishment of working groups, comprised of members from all three ethnic backgrounds, to make recommendations for the modernisation of the education system in BiH. Their recommendations were published in 2002 but, as yet, have still to be implemented.

In addition to the interventions of the Federal Government, international organisations and NGOs ran sporadic educational projects in BiH with various goals and intended beneficiaries. The Office of the High Representative intervened again in 2002, asking the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to coordinate and bring cohesion to international efforts at educational reform in BiH. The OSCE created an Education Department and constituted the Education Group of International Organisations. This group produced a Framework Law for education, recommending the right of pupils to use any of the three ethnic languages in school and that schools teach the use of both scripts, Latin and Cyrillic. It also recommended that schools should not display religious symbols.

In October 2002, political elections again returned nationalist politicians to all levels of government – state, Federation and canton – and caused all of these documents to be shelved. Since then, nationalist politics have continued to dominate and decisions about educational provision continue to be made on the basis of nationalist/ethnic politics rather than recommended educational policy. These nationalist politics support the teaching of language, history, literature and religion along ethnic lines, deepening the sense of separate ethnic identity within the communities and creating barriers to ethnic integration.

Research findings show that whilst the intervention of international organisations was able to bring about political peace, it has contributed to continued conflict in the educational sector. The Dayton Agreement, which was designed by the international community to bring about a cease to violent conflict created a political situation that supports the ethnic division of education provision. This goes against the UNESCO claim that conflict mediation should 'avoid replication of educational structures that may have contributed to conflict' (<http://www.unesco.org/education>, accessed 21 October 2003). Neither the government of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina nor the government of the Muslim-Croat Federation within BiH (see Figure 2) has much real control over education, and the canton ministries who do are content with the nationalist teaching currently found in their schools. The international organisations have attempted to address this dilemma, but have had little success so far as division is politically justified within the Dayton Agreement. The ethnic division of educational provision has had serious consequences in the country, not only in hindering the development of peacebuilding education and the integration of the ethnic groups, but also in hindering the social and economic development of the country.

### **The Two Faces of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Bush & Salterelli (2000) identify the two faces of education in areas of ethnic conflict as potentially negative or positive. In BiH it is easy to identify the negative aspects of education in the post-conflict environment:

- the uneven distribution of provision and segregated access;
- the use of ethnically-based language;
- the use of ethnically-based textbooks, some of which distort the facts;
- the intransigence of nationalist politicians.

The role played by international organisations in bringing an end to the conflict in BiH has contributed to and entrenched these negative aspects by giving them political legitimacy. The geographical and political structure that was created by the Dayton Agreement served to reinforce

ethnic boundaries, which led to segregated educational provision and a deepening of separate ethnic identities. The research study found that whilst the fighting had ended, the ethnic conflict had not; it had merely moved to different arenas, including education. As Bush & Salterelli (2000, p. 33) note, there is a need to dismantle these 'destructive educational practices'.

The positive face of education in BiH is less obvious. There is 'peace' in that violence has ceased, but it is a peace based on separation rather than on integration and acceptance. As the findings presented here show, the educational sector contributes to maintaining and entrenching division rather than to engaging with difference to build a cohesive peace. Despite these dismal realities, there are attempts at integrative work (Groman, 2007) and it would appear that in some quarters there is dissatisfaction with the current situation. A UNDP survey found that many young Bosniaks wanted to leave the country, citing an outdated education system as one of their reasons (<http://uk.new.yahoo.com>, accessed 11 November 2002).

The research reported here supports the observations made by Bush & Salterelli (2000), that:

- historically, education has been part of the problem of ethnic division and conflict in BiH;
- both formal and informal education have contributed to this;
- not only the content of the education system need reform, but also the pedagogy and process.

So, is there a way forward towards 'peacebuilding education for children' (Bush & Salterelli, 2000)? Bush & Salterelli suggest that the development of the positive face of education requires that there be 'shared values'. It is not clear that these exist in BiH. There are, of course, shared values within each of the mono-ethnic communities but they are less visible in multi-ethnic ones. Nationalism has a long history in the Balkans (Latawski, 1995; Kohn, in Sugar, 1999), and many post-communist countries are reverting to pre-communist teaching of national heritage, despite this often being a barrier to modern reform (Pastuovic, 1993; Beresford-Hill, 1998). This reversion to pre-communist nationalistic teachings makes it likely that change will neither be easy nor quick.

It could be argued that one role for the education system(s) in BiH is to begin to foster shared values, to engage in 'education for social change' (Plonski, 2005, p. 398). This would involve challenging the dominant, nationalist/ethnic paradigm and encouraging young people to look for alternatives to the segregation that characterises BiH. However, this would require political will and this essential element is currently absent. Importantly, the involvement of international organisations has failed to foster the development of the political will to build education for social change in BiH.

If the way forward is through the existence of shared values, what can be done to develop these? Bush & Salterelli (2000) suggest that there is a need to 'create the conditions' that would allow shared values to develop, so how might this happen in BiH? One of the essential conditions would be to create a political climate not dominated by nationalist politicians. It is suggested that nationalism asserts itself when there is a feeling of national/ethnic insecurity, a situation that appears to have existed for some time in BiH. The new nation-states that have emerged from the former Yugoslavia are fledgling states, still developing and building their national identity. It is possible that once there is an increased sense of ethnic identity and security there will be a reduction in the sense of threat and fear felt towards other ethnic groups, which may open up opportunities for dialogue.

Economic security would also contribute to national confidence and, possibly, to increasing chances for peace (Davies, 2004). Whilst the conflict was not solely based on economics, Bosnia and Serbia were, and remain, the 'poor relations' in the region. Improved economic performance would strengthen national confidence and may lead to an improvement in social relations.

The EU also can bring its influence to bear. Croatia and BiH both desire EU membership, but in order to gain this they have to meet specified criteria. It may be that gaining access to the EU is the necessary 'carrot' that is needed to bring about political and educational reform. If this were to be case, it would be ironic that reform of educational provision intended to bring about social integration, long sought by a number of international organisations working in BiH, would finally be introduced as a result of the intervention of yet another international organisation.

## Notes

- [1] The full name of the country is Bosnia and Herzegovina, and this is important particularly to the Bosnian Croats who regard Herzegovina as Croat. However, the acceptable shortened version, BiH, is used throughout this article. Where 'Bosnia' is referred to this is historical and represents the name of the land mass at given points in history.
- [2] Bosniaks is a name for Bosnian Muslims, first used in the mid-eighteenth century and re-used following the recent conflict. Some Bosnian Muslims prefer this term, others do not.

## References

- Baranovic, B. (2001) *Slika zena u udbenicima književnosti*. Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja.
- Beresford-Hill, P. (Ed.) (1998) *Education and Privatisation in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Republics*. Wallingford: Triangle Books.
- Berman, D.M. (2001) *The Heroes of Treca Gimnazija: a war school in Sarajevo 1992-1995*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Birzea, C. (1994) *Educational Policies of the Countries in Transition*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press.
- Bush, K. & Saltarelli, D. (Eds) (2000) *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: towards a peacebuilding education for children*. Florence: UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre.
- Dalin, P. (1978) *Limits to Educational Change*. London: Macmillan.
- Davies, L. (2004) *Conflict and Education: complexity and chaos*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Djilas, A. (1991) *The Contested Country: Yugoslav unity and Communist revolution, 1919-1953*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Donia, R.J. (2000) A Quest for Tolerance in Sarajevo's Textbooks, *Human Rights Review*, 1(2), 38-55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12142-000-1003-1>
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (1998) *Nastavni Plan I Program Osnovne Skole*. Sarajevo: Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (2001) *Basis for the Educational Policy and Strategic Development of Education in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.
- Fielding, M. (Ed.) (2001) *Taking Education Really Seriously: four years' hard labour*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Glenny, M. (1999) *The Balkans 1804-1999: nationalism, war and the great powers*. London: Granta.
- Groman, P. (2007) Bard for the Balkans, *Times Educational Supplement*, 21 September.
- Halasz, G. (1993) The Policy of School Autonomy and the Reform of Educational Administration: Hungarian changes in an East European perspective, *International Review of Education*, 39(6), 489-497. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF01261531>
- Heyneman, S.P. (2003) The History and Problems in the Making of Education Policy at the World Bank 1960-2000, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23, 315-337. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(02\)00053-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(02)00053-6)
- Jelavich, C. (1990) *South Slav Nationalisms – textbooks and Yugoslav union before 1914*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Jones, P.W. (1998) Globalisation and Internationalism: democratic prospects for world education, *Comparative Education*, 34(2), 143-155. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03050069828243>
- Kalberg, (1994) *Max Weber's Comparative-Historical Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Latawski, P. (Ed.) (1995) *Contemporary Nationalism in East Central Europe* Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Malcolm, N. (1996) *Bosnia: a short history*. London: Macmillan.
- Olek, H. (1998) *Teachers in Poland – the intersection of life histories and the history of a society in transition*. Ljubljana: European Conference on Educational Research.
- Pastuovic, N. (1993) Problems of Reforming Educational Systems in Post-Communist Countries, *International Review of Education*, 39(5), 405-418. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF01261591>
- Plonski, S. (2005) Developing Agency through Peacebuilding in the Midst of Intractable Conflict: the case of Israel and Palestine, *Compare*, 35(4), 393-409. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057920500331454>
- Silber, L. & Little, A. (1995) *Death of Yugoslavia*. London: Penguin.
- Sugar, P.F. (1999) *East European Nationalism, Politics and Religion*. Aldershot: Variorum.

Gwyneth Owen-Jackson

UNESCO (2003) <http://www.unesco.org> (accessed 21 October 2003).

World Bank (2005) *Reshaping the Future: education and postconflict reconstruction*. Washington DC: World Bank.

---

**GWYNETH OWEN-JACKSON** is Senior Lecturer in Education at the Open University with responsibility for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education in Design & Technology. Her research interests include the developing professional knowledge of student teachers, and education in areas of conflict. Correspondence: Dr Gwyneth Owen-Jackson, Department of Education, The Open University, Stuart Hall Building, Level 3, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, United Kingdom ([g.a.owen-jackson@open.ac.uk](mailto:g.a.owen-jackson@open.ac.uk)).