

When Do we Cross the Bridge? The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo



The Ibar River Bridge in Mitrovica: a symbol of Kosovo's ethnic division. Photograph by Author, taken in February 2019

Vesa Deva

Supervisor: Dr. Anne De Graaf

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Abstract

Ever since the end of war in 1999, Kosovo has found itself entrenched in deeply rooted antagonisms between the Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo. In order to officially avoid the possibility of further clashes between the two ethnic groups, local and international stakeholders settled for a segregated structure of the education system in the country. As a result, Kosovo Albanian students along with other non-Serb minorities attend schools run by state institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, whereas Kosovo Serb students are taught in schools managed by the Serbian government. Through the observation of experiences, perceptions, attitudes and factual knowledge of the participants, this phenomenological study scrutinizes the impact of the segregated education system on post-conflict interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, in the city of Mitrovica, a city that remains divided and polarized by post-war politics and strained interethnic relations. Furthermore, this thesis identifies potential openings for integrated education interventions that could pave the way for the reconciliation process. The study comprises thirty-eight in-depth interviews conducted with Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb secondary school principals, teachers, students and parents of students from both South and North Mitrovica. The empirical realities of the participants are described and conceptualized by means of ongoing research studies on social identity, intergroup contact, and peace education initiatives in deeply divided societies. The findings of this thesis identify the main complexities that are intertwined with being educated separately in the absence of institutional support and justice in Kosovo. These ranged from the maintenance of prejudices and contested attitudes between the Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian communities through national curricula, to the skepticism and hostility toward integration and the reconciliation process impacted by nationalistic and political ideologies. Ultimately, the findings of this study confirm that upon fulfilling the vital condition of the political settlement of the conflict, integrated education could be considered as a viable tool for reconciliation. The results of this study are conducive to discussions concerning education in post-conflict contexts, while providing insights and implications regarding potential education policy practices that could contribute to a peaceful coexistence and interethnic reconciliation in post-conflict Kosovo.

Keywords: post-conflict; Kosovo; segregated education; interethnic relations; contested curricula; social identity; peace & reconciliation

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List of Abbreviations

ACDC	Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture
EU	European Union
FRY	Former Republic of Yugoslavia
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HLC	Humanitarian Law Center
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kosovo
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RKS	Republic of Kosovo
SIT	Social Identity Theory
UN	United Nations
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
YIHR KS	Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo

Chapter I. Introduction

The division of society along ethnic lines in post-conflict Kosovo is very evident in schools. The youth of the two major ethnic communities is educated in separate schools, with two different curricula, and has no contact or interaction with each other. Kosovo Albanians and other ethnic communities are taught using the state curricula, while the Kosovo Serb community is taught in schools managed by Serbia (OSCE, 2009). Following the conflict in the 1990s, Kosovo Albanian students hardly experience any interactions with Kosovo Serb students, and the young generation on both sides is raised with an ideology, often carried out by families and education institutions, which sustains divisions along ethnic lines (Kostovicova 2005; Baliqi, 2017; Selenica, 2018). Being educated in such different and often conflicting educational surroundings stands in the way of improving ethnic relations and rebuilding a peaceful coexistence (Bush & Saltarelli 2000; Davies, 2005; Zembylas & Bekerman 2012). While existing academic literature have documented the negative consequences of segregated education systems in post-conflict interethnic relations in Kosovo through comprehensive analysis of the conflicting narratives transmitted via the national curricula, there has been little attention given to empirical evidence regarding the challenges of pedagogical practices that teachers face in addressing the past in classrooms. In addition, within the context of post-war Mitrovica, there is an absence of research on the experiences and opinions of those who actually inhabit in the reality of living and being educated separately. Particularly, due to the complicated and antagonistic sociopolitical climate between the two ethnicities in Kosovo, the voices of those directly involved in the educational practices and efforts, namely principals, teachers, students, and parents, are barely heard. Based on the accounts of thirty-eight Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb respondents, this thesis attempts to “decipher” this reality. Through the observation of perceptions, attitudes and factual knowledge of the participants, this study aims to scrutinize the role of the segregated education system in post-conflict interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, and identify potential lead-ins for education interventions that would bring the two communities together in the future. To further understand the foundations of this system, and the ways that it has been used throughout the years by both sides to promote certain ideological values, the following section provides a broad description of sociopolitical and historical circumstances in Kosovo that influenced this process.

1.1 The Socio-political and Historical Context of Kosovo Conflict

“One component which is normally not missing from any narrative of a nation’s history is that of a nation’s origin or foundation.” (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart). The numerous historical interpretations of the disputed territory of Kosovo represent the foundation for the present-day

nationalistic rhetoric in Serbia and Kosovo (Sommers & Buckland, 2004, p.20). With the purpose to remain objective, this thesis will explain the historical background of Kosovo's conflict in accordance to the literature of international scholars and organizations from both sides of the conflict. According to Bieber and Daskalovski (2003, p.20), Albanian Kosovars consider themselves to be Illyrian descendants who were the majority population in the territory since the 1st century AD. Slavs are believed to have populated the territory of Kosovo from the 6th century during the time of the Byzantine Empire (Judah, 2008). The collapse of the Byzantine Empire led to the creation of the popular belief that Kosovo is the cradle of the Serbian nation when Kosovo became the center of the Serbian Empire and was flooded with Serbian religious monuments (Bieber & Daskalovski, 2003). The great battle of the Kosovo Polje (the Field of Blackbirds) in 1389 represents the prodigious historical event that marks the Kosovo Myth, when the Serbian Empire crumbled as Serbian troops lost the battle to the Turkish Ottoman forces, who took over the territory for 500 years (Judah, 2008, p. 20-21). As a result, many Serbs emigrated from the area, while a significant number of Albanians and Turks settled in. The five centuries of being ruled by the Ottoman Empire were only the start of the Albanian fight for the preservation of national identity (Kostovicova, 2005).

Kosovo experienced its golden era in education in 1974, during the time of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) when a new constitution redefined Kosovo's status as an autonomous province (Judah, 2008). As a result of having remotely full control of territory, the education system went through an increased 'Albanization' (Sommers & Buckland, 2004, p. 42). Kosovo Albanians experienced a cultural and national rebirth in the education system as students were taught in their own mother tongue, and used their own curricula and textbooks (Kostovicova, 2005, p.51). Accordingly, education in the Albanian language represented independence for Kosovo Albanians during that era. Still, the longevity of being educated in the Albanian language was short, as in 1980, with the death of Josip Broz Tito, the founder of Yugoslavia, the system began to unravel. Serbia's new leader, Slobodan Milosevic issued a new constitution that revoked the autonomy of Kosovo, which resulted in the physical segregation of people based on their ethnicity in every sphere of the public sector (Kostovicova 2005, p. 52). From this point onwards, the events that happened in Kosovo played a fundamental role in shaping the history of the education system in Kosovo.

Sommers and Buckland (2004, p. 34) explain, "Kosovo lies at or near the core of the breakup of Yugoslavia, and education lies at the center of Kosovo's conflict." Thus, it is essential to note that Kosovo's struggle has been beyond a military and political battle between separatist-minded ethnic

Albanians and a Serbian-dominated government. It has been a battle deeply rooted in its social institutions, particularly schools (Kuhn & Dragidella, 2007). The education system in Kosovo has a prolonged history of going through difficulties. It starts from the rule of the Ottoman Empire, when Turks resisted education in the Albanian language as a way to prevent the rise of Albanian national identity (Judah, 2008 p.44). And it reaches its peak in the 1990s, during the regime of the Serbian ruler Slobodan Milosevic, when all teachers in Kosovo were told to teach the Serbian Curriculum which led to the dismissal of 21,000 teachers (ibid, p.73). The educational curriculum in Kosovo that had developed under ethnic Albanian control was dismantled by the Serbian parliament and replaced with a Serbia-wide program, which impeded Albanians from being educated in their own language (Sommers & Buckland, 2004).

Education in Kosovo contains a perpetual record of being used as a tool for communicating national ideologies. This reform aimed to weaken the Kosovo Albanian's student sense of national belonging in a discourse also known as "ethnocide" which, defined by Stevehagen (1990) means: "the process whereby a culturally distinct people loses its identity as a result of policies designed to erode its land and resource base, the use of its language, its own social and political institutions, as well as its traditions, art forms, religious practices and cultural values" (as cited in Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, p.10). Consequently, Kosovo-Albanians stopped attending state-run classes and instead formed a mass movement that came later to be known as the self-organized parallel education system in Kosovo (Kuhn & Dragidella, 2007). For the first time, Kosovo Albanians learned a different version of the history of Kosovo and the region, and Serbia did not have any say in the content that the students were taught (Judah, 2008). Around 386,511 Kosovo Albanian students started attending schools in the parallel system in 1995, either in existing school buildings, people's houses, or in cellars (Shahini, 2016). Many Kosovo Albanians termed the existence of the parallel system as their own "version of the Berlin Wall". The presence of this parallel system echoed the high value positioned upon education by Albanians in Kosovo. Peaceful and non-violent resistance of Kosovo Albanians ruled by Ibrahim Rugova's movement, the head of the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK) at that time, continued despite the repressive regime coming from Serbia (Bieber & Daskalovski, 2003). Nonetheless, disappointed with the international community after the Dayton Agreement¹ in 1997, radical Kosovo Albanians started an armed rebellion by organizing a military organization

¹ The Dayton Accords (or Dayton Agreement) was an agreement between the Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to bring peace and resolve conflict in the region. The agreement has been criticized for symbolically recognizing Serbia's control over Kosovo, and for the failure of the international community in addressing the ethnic tensions and struggles of Kosovo Albanians during that time.

called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (Judah, 2008). The latter established a mission to fight for the sovereignty of Kosovo against the Serbian institutions, which was followed by a mass supply of the weapons necessary to start the resistance (Carson, 2013). Not spontaneously, the creation of a clandestine military organization and the resistance through education provoked the Serbian military, and resulted in the expansion of violence that led to the systematic ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians in 1998-1999 (Sommers & Buckland, 2004).

1.1.1 Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs

The conflict ended in June 1999, with the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-headed air campaign followed by the launch of an international civil mission for peacekeeping known as the UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo). It is estimated that the conflict had the dreadful consequence of leaving around 10,000 people dead (Amnesty International, 2009). And presently, there are 1710 cases of missing people to the conflict, a fact that magnifies the instability of interethnic relations, and causes distrust on both sides (European Commission, 2014, p.21). Following the end of the armed conflict in 1999, roughly 230,000 Serbs and Roma emigrated from Kosovo (Demjaha, 2017). After the independence of Kosovo in 2008, the relations continued to be tense and fragile, leaving the legacy of deep mistrust and animosities between the two ethnicities that still exists. The recognition of Kosovo's independence and the governance by Kosovo authorities has been vigorously rejected by Kosovo Serbs since the very beginning. Eventually, the Serbian community who resides outside the north of Kosovo (so in the south) managed to become more cooperative and to progressively integrate within the present reality of Kosovo, while the Serbs living in the north remained an extremely contentious problem and the source of the ongoing ethnic tensions (Brand & Idrizi, 2012).

Consequently, the divided town of Mitrovica, in "northern Kosovo" has become a synonym for the unresolved interethnic conflict. Here, Serbs are vastly reluctant to give up their roots in Serbia. They reside on the north side of the Ibar River, divided from the rest of the country in their "mini-Serbia." Here the Serbian flag flies, the Serbian language is spoken and the currency of Serb dinar is used (Clark, 2014). While, Albanians who reside in the south of the Ibar Bridge in Mitrovica still act as a minority that needs protection. Both sides show no willingness to openly address the issue of

interethnic relations, as each side resides comfortably in its majority area while assuring their respective side that their own interpretation of the conflict in Kosovo is the truth (Strapacova, 2015). This situation, to this end, caused the context of Mitrovica to be of a high significance for the focus of this research, which will be further rationalized in the upcoming chapters.

The international community perceived the war in Kosovo as an ethnic conflict, thus the promotion of “multiethnicity” as an essential value in the society became the goal of the international presence in Kosovo. Demjaha (2017) explains that the means, by which UNMIK applied its strategy of asking for tolerance and mutual respect between the different communities in Kosovo, failed to adopt this value properly and led to further segregation between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. Many scholars and analysts blame the current state of the inter-ethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo on the inter-state relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The countless efforts of the international community to tackle this issue have not gone unnoticed. Several rounds of dialogues between the two parties have been held under the auspices of the EU since March 2011, concentrating on national collaboration, freedom of movement and the rule of law (Curri & Lloshi, 2013). The major historical achievement in the process of the normalization of interethnic relations between Kosovo and Serbia is considered to be the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations (known as the Brussels Agreement) signed on 19 April 2013² (European External Action Service, 2013). This agreement managed to tackle highly sensitive political areas, including the competencies of the local authorities in the areas inhabited by Serbs and the dissolution of the parallel structures in the northern part of Kosovo. The latter still remains the most prominent challenge of this agreement, as the presence of nationalist rhetoric has become increasingly common along both sides. Emini and Stakic (2018) offer an interesting analysis on the contradiction of the agreement’s narrative in paper and in practice. Accordingly, for the international audience, the narrative is crafted in a way that it reflects a full commitment for normalizing the interethnic relations, demonstrates a readiness for compromise and a pronounced concern for citizen’s welfare. Domestically, this narrative is of a nationalistic ideology, which keeps alive the paradigm of the victims of the “enemy other” on both sides (Emini & Stakic, 2018 p.2).

This reality has stonewalled the proper implementation of any external efforts that tried to

² Ten rounds of negotiations have been held at the European External Action Service in Brussels so far, which were mediated by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, followed by Frederica Mogherini.

normalize the relations between the two ethnicities. Attempts from local and international organizations are often overshadowed by the political divisions and media propaganda, which manipulate public opinion through the promotion of negative stereotypes of the opposing ethnicity (Philips, 2017). Another significant issue that affects the stabilization of the relations between the two ethnic groups is opposing viewpoints held by both sides regarding the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which serves as the body for the jurisdiction of Kosovo war crimes. Additionally, the denial of the responsibility for war crimes committed by the members of the accuser's own ethnic group affects the current state of interethnic relations between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs (Meernik, Golcevski, McKay, Feinberg, King & Krastev, 2016; Baliqi, 2017). This argument is also supported by a UNDP report conducted in 2012 on the perceptions on transitional justice in Kosovo, where the findings suggested that both ethnicities tend to identify their own ethnic group as the main victim of human rights violations during the war in Kosovo. More than 70% percent among Kosovo Albanians and 40% among Kosovo Serbs share these viewpoints (UNDP, 2012). Kabashi-Ramaj (2018), suggests that the younger generations in Kosovo remain the most skeptical about an optimistic future of relations between Kosovar Serbs and Albanians. In light of this, she adds that the importance of education plays a key role in changing the common narrative that is carried over from generation to generation, as it hinders the potential peaceful coexistence in the future (ibid).

1.1.2 Post-Conflict Education System in Kosovo

With respect to the arguments presented in the fragment above, it is indeed important to note that education after the war has played a predominant role in determining the nature of the interethnic relations between the two communities in Kosovo. As a consequence, the focus of this thesis, which will be more specifically addressed in the following section, attempts to unravel this knotty role. Nowadays, Kosovo is predominantly recognized as an independent country, which is landlocked in the central Balkan Peninsula, and bordered by Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. In terms of demographics, according to the latest census of Kosovo's Agency of Statistics (2011), the country is made up of ethnic Albanians as a majority, which equals 92.9% of the population. Due to the excessive boycott of the national census by Serbs, the alternative source of OSCE data on community profiles in Kosovo, estimates that around 146,128 Serbs live in Kosovo, which make up 7.8% of the population (ECMI, 2013). In addition, around 354,454 students are enrolled in pre-university education in Kosovo. The latest data publications of education statistics in Kosovo shows that 96% of students enrolled in pre-university education are

Albanians, while 4% are from other ethnic groups (EMIS, 2016). However, the data does not include any education statistics on Serbian schools in the northern part of Kosovo³. This determiner is presumably due to the politically motivated divisions in the education sector that are continuously bringing about obstacles towards the process of reconciliation and social cohesion.

It has been broadly discussed that the situation of the segregated education system in Kosovo was sustained under the UNMIK administration after the conflict (Center for Balkan Strategies, 2019). The UNMIK administration did not eradicate the notion of spatial separation between Albanians and Serbs. On the contrary, the separation continued at the same pace, but this time with the occurrence of a reversal segregation of education as the two communities exchanged places (Kostovicova, 2005). The fact that Kosovo's status was ambiguous under UNMIK administration, gave UNMIK the authority and leadership position to implement educational reforms. However, the top-down approach of the UNMIK and its lack of practical application of the principles were important elements that led to separate schooling becoming a de facto reality. The limitations of the "rapid educational reform implementation" by UNMIK are connected to the failure of using the adequate educational model to apply it to the post-conflict Kosovo (Pierre, 2015). The main objectives of the UNMIK regarding education were to democratize and to modernize the education system in Kosovo, in order to reflect the international guidelines on education. An incremental strategy of reunifying the existing separated systems, Serb and Albanian was also one of the main goals. The reforms actually did offer free schooling, lengthening the duration of compulsory education and support of the inclusion of children from minorities (Sommers and Buckland, 2004). Additionally, UNMIK involved local experts in revising the existing Kosovo curriculum and rewriting textbooks. Nonetheless the modifications made particularly in history and cultural subjects included a strong focus on Kosovo Albanian interpretations that caused the physical separation in the educational system to be further enhanced by interpretations of recent history in post-war textbooks (ibid, p.81-86). Likewise, teachers who were using the existing curriculum and available textbooks failed in avoiding teaching content that would not inflame the conflict, as most of the teachers were those who also had taught in the parallel system and experienced suffering during war.

Although UNMIK's main objective was to achieve a unified education system, the failure to achieve this is linked with prioritizing security, as there were indeed regular reports of terrorization of students just for moving through another community to reach their schools (ibid). By using a

³ Data on education statistics of the Serbian Community in Kosovo include only the pre-university institutions in Gjilan, Novoberde, Peje, Istog, Shterpce, Kllokot, Ranillug and Partesh

security-first approach, UNMIK was focused on providing stability in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, thus providing shortcomings in the implementation of a transformational agenda that would affect the peacebuilding process in a longer timespan. On that account, numerous attempts by international institutions and later by local ones to develop interethnic cooperation in education experienced failure on the verge of their initiation (ibid). This failure of UNMIK and of The Republic of Kosovo itself to implement policies for a unified education system, and inclusion of all students regardless of their ethnicity resulted in outcomes of stagnation towards a sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation process (Picciano & Elbasani, 2019).

In April 2007, the UN Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, submitted a plan⁴ directed to Kosovo Albanians, which focused on protecting the rights, identity, and culture of the majority and minorities in Kosovo (U.S Department of State, 2008). Kosovo made a binding commitment to the implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan upon the declaration of independence on February 17, 2008 (Bojovic & Burazer, 2018). In line with Ahtisaari's recommendations, the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo⁵ today guarantees education in the Serbian language for Kosovo Serbs and allows the usage of textbooks and teaching materials from the Republic of Serbia. This process was foreseen to be done through a mutual agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, according to which the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology reviews the curriculum and textbooks for their conformity with the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the applicable legislation (ECMI, 2018). However, in practice this does not happen, as the agreement was never concluded and the Serbian schools do not report to the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Popova & Morina, 2018). Consequently, the two conflicting education systems with ethnic character prevail without any interaction with each other. The dominant education system is one organized and operated by Kosovo's institutions, and is attended by the Albanian majority alongside non-Serbian minorities. While the other education system is funded by the Serbian Government and attended by Serbian students (Aliu, 2019).

⁴ See Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement. Access online: <https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/Comprehensive%20Proposal%20.pdf>

⁵ See: Law on Education in Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo. Chapter V, Article 12: *Education in Serbian Language* Access online: <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/09-2008-03-l068-en.pdf>

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

Given the current sociopolitical situation in Kosovo and the educational practices that come along with it, this thesis seeks

- 1) To address and explore participants' experiences and understanding of living and being educated separately;
- 2) To investigate how the current educational practices, with a focus on teachers' agency and the national curricula, shape the attitudes towards the opposing ethnic group; and
- 3) To identify possible openings for educational initiatives that would integrate the two ethnic communities and facilitate the interethnic reconciliation process.

Moreover, the empirical evidence from the dichotomous contexts of education systems in South and North Mitrovica allow this research;

- 4) To scrutinize the construction of a contested social identity in education institutions that are influenced by similar sociopolitical ideologies. In this way, the research helps identify where participants' attitudes, opinions and experiences also overlap with each other.

Guided by the qualitative research method in the shape of semi-structured interviews, this thesis aims to provide a better understanding of how students, parents of the students, teachers, and school principals experience the segregated education system in North and South Mitrovica in post-conflict Kosovo.

The main research question addressed in this thesis is as follows:

How do school principals, teachers, parents and students in South and North Mitrovica perceive the current segregated education system in Kosovo and how it affects the interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, and how does this shape their attitudes toward a potential integrated education policy intervention?

In addition, four sub-questions were developed in an attempt to answer the main research question:

1. How do participants' experiences of being segregated in schools and their everyday lives affect their willingness to interact with the other group?

2. What are the opinions of participants on their current national curriculum, including pedagogical practices and the question of how textbooks address the issue of conflict and dealing with the past?
3. How do participants perceive the possibility for an integrated education in Kosovo in the near future?
4. What are participants' attitudes on reconciliation and to what extent do they perceive that education affects this process?

By means of a literature review presented in [Chapter 2](#), the research connects the aforementioned research questions with literature that sheds light on understanding the complexity of education in a post-conflict context, thereby embedding this thesis in already existing research. These fields are specifically, research on: social identity, conflict and collective memory, the negative face of education in ethnic conflict, inter-group contact hypothesis, and peace and integrated education initiatives in conflicted societies.

1.3 Significance of the Research

In the midst of the ongoing political turmoil in Kosovo, this thesis is of high relevance in demonstrating how the current sociopolitical and educational practices from both sides affect the ongoing interethnic reconciliation process in Kosovo. This study is also appropriate for international and local stakeholders who work on promoting peace, multi-ethnicity and intercultural dialogue as it provides additional knowledge for the consideration of advocating for co-education policy interventions in the sector of public education in Kosovo. Moreover, the results of this thesis endeavor to inform the governing institutions about the challenges that might be encountered on the ground if such interventions were to take place. Finally, this study expects to have academic and societal significance through its suggestions for policy and practices on using education as an approach to disseminate values. These are attitudes and knowledge that could pave the way for a more peaceful coexistence and interethnic reconciliation.

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1.4 Theoretical Framework

This research is interpreted using social constructivism as a theoretical framework. This is known as a theory of knowledge, focused on the role of social processes in creating knowledge (Milutinović, 2011). Moreover, the aim of this theoretical framework is to explore the history of ideas communicated and interpreted through the means of education. Accordingly, social constructivism, applied to the case of Kosovo, enhances understanding of the shared versions of the knowledge that have been constructed in regards to social identity, and how this, in turn, affects interethnic relations within this context. The aim is to understand the narratives of both sides as a result of social relationships and their need to remain coherent with the expectations and demands of society. From a social constructivist lens, it may be argued that the learning process and the construction of meaning are collaborative with school systems, communities, teachers, students, and families (McDermott & Gospodinoff, 1981). With the aim of further understanding the process of how ideas of dichotomous narratives are developed in segregated education systems and implemented and experienced by education employees and students in practice, the constructivism that serves as the theoretical framework for this research was described by Bentley, Fleury, and Garrison (2007) as a process of understanding the provisional nature of knowledge in order to induce a more critical reflection about various educational institutions and practices.

Dewey (1916) and Piaget (1977) state that construction and reconstruction of knowledge is based upon prior experiences and understanding, thus it is a continuous process that develops over time. Social constructivism, however, employs a more flexible, culturally relativistic, and contemplative perspective, where knowledge is constructed based on personal and social experience. This relativistic perspective encompasses the belief that knowledge is always dependent upon, or relative to, personal, cultural, or historical perspectives. Suitably, the reality is constructed namely by our own activities, whereby people as members of a society invent the properties of the world (Kukla, 2000). Accordingly, constructivism will help explain how contradictory education systems become a living reality in a post-conflict setting.

Theorized by Schwandt (1994), the fundamental concern of social constructivism lies on the lived experiences, namely how social actors experience and understand the world (as cited by Au, 1998). According to Spivey (1997), themes in constructivist work include active engagement in processes of meaning-making and knowledge construction, especially those developed as a consequence of being a member of a given social group (as cited in Au, 1998). This idea is significant for this thesis because of the creation of different unilateral narratives in the segregated education systems, as a result of belonging to disputing ethnic groups that have a history of hostility between one another. Additionally, Spivey (1997) highlights the importance of the issue of agency that perpetuates those ideas and this knowledge, especially in cases where the focus is on a societal or community level. This research aims to explain how the role of teachers, peers, and family members are important in mediating ideologies in a separate organized system. The social is seen to encompass a wide range of phenomena, from historical, political, and cultural trends to face-to-face interactions, which when employed in education can have both intended and unintended consequences. Accordingly, reality is created through processes of social exchange that in most cases are historically situated and thus create a collective generation of meaning among people. Conferring to Vygotsky (1978), the Russian theorist of social constructivism, knowledge is always a human construction. Most importantly the process of constructing knowledge is often done through social groups, thus the intersubjectivity is established through the interactions of the group (ibid). Applying this viewpoint to the case of Kosovo would conclude that the knowledge constructed due to social, cultural and historical factors by each ethnic group in the separated education systems generates a subjective knowledge about each group respectively. Kukla (2000) illustrates remarkably the problem of two different societies in knowledge construction from a social constructivist viewpoint as follows:

Suppose that society S1 constructs a world in which the planets and stars are enormous spheres located at unimaginably great distances from us, and that society S2 constructs a world in which the heavenly bodies are immaterial lights in the sky placed directly overhead for our convenience by a solicitous deity. Then, if constructivists are right, there will be propositions X such that X is true on account of certain facts having been constructed by S1, and not-X is true on account of certain contrary facts having been constructed by S2. (p.99)

This example is very relevant in illustrating the incompatible knowledge that is produced in the two different societies and education systems, Serbian and Kosovo Albanian respectively, where students learn about different facts in different worlds, but ironically about the same historical events (see previous sections). This leads us to Goodman's (1978) argument that "different people or groups may—and frequently do—construct and inhabit different worlds" (as cited in Kukla, 2000). Nonetheless, this proves to be an issue when these different groups have a history of enmity between each other and still inhabit the same area, as it threatens a peaceful coexistence. In the defense of the segregated education system in Kosovo, Goodman (1978) would say that 'contradiction is avoided by segregation' (as cited in Kukla, 2000). As the establishment of two different logics by two different societies binds Kosovo, it is problematic to recognize which one is valid as they both are led by different governing beliefs that generate different conclusions, which in turn are risky for a stable and peaceful future in Kosovo.

As identity construction is an important concept discussed in this research, it is also important to discuss Vygotsky's idea of how the mental functioning of an individual has socio-cultural origins. William and Wertsch (1995), emphasize how ideologies, which often times are generated and maintained by educational institutions, play an important mediating role in identity development as adolescents or students start making commitments to those ideas, and to people who share those ideas. In this sense, cultural and historical resources that are provided in educational institutions are integral for identity formation. The historical and sociocultural dimension is an inevitable factor when it comes to knowledge construction, as it serves as a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language and so forth. According to Vygotsky (1934), the role of language and culture in cognitive development and in the way of how individuals perceive the world is of high importance, as it serves as a framework through which these individuals experience, communicate and understand the reality.

In a post-conflict context, promoting different cultural and historical ideologies between two groups that participated in a conflict against each other creates complications in terms of how reality is constructed and understood by them. The promotion of antagonistic ideologies risks a prolongation of conflict between the opposing two groups. William and Wertsch (1995) argue that identity formation involves an encounter between the cultural resources for identity and individual choices with respect to fidelity, and ideology that takes place in human action. Through Vygotsky's theoretical framework, this research aims to stress the fundamental role of social interaction and society in the development of cognition and in the process of 'making meaning' Education is known to produce sociocultural values and knowledge, thus it is important to analyze the extent to which those shape and affect identity formation, especially in a post-conflict environment, as it can lead to the creation and reproduction of binary identities. In Kosovo's case, the research tends to analyze the production of the binary identity narrative of "them vs. us" in educational systems that function in isolation to one another and that uphold contradicting historical and socio-cultural ideologies. The knowledge obtained in those institutions, of course, is practiced through human action, which according to Vygotsky (1934) provides the unit of analysis for considering how the individuals' intentions are realized through different cultural means. In conclusion, this research is based on describing the lived experiences of the participants in the phenomena of the segregated education system by analyzing how the human mental functioning is socio-culturally, historically, and institutionally situated, and how when this takes place in a sensitive post-conflict setting, it can risk the stability of a society. Building up from the idea of interpreting the lived experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomena of the segregated education, this thesis also employs a phenomenological approach, in order to further enhance its understanding, which will be exemplified more thoroughly in the forthcoming [chapter of Methodology](#).

1.5 Positionality

"Interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher" (Denzin 1986, p.12). In line with Denzin's quote, in this section, I provide honest disclosure by exposing my positionality to show how, and where I believe I might have influenced the research. As a novice researcher, it is necessary to delve deeper into my positioning, especially within the context in which my research was evolving. The sensitivity of the research topic required me to reflect upon my own identity, in order to suspend the conventional boundaries between the "researcher" and the "subject", and to involve community members more fully in the research process (Stringer, 2007).

My aspects of positionality were both culturally ascribed in terms of my ethnic background as a Kosovo Albanian, and subjective in terms of my personal life and history in relation to the conflict in Kosovo. Ethnically, I identify myself as a Kosovo Albanian, who grew up and was educated in Prishtina, the capital city of Kosovo. My background belongs to that of a refugee in terms of how I was affected by the conflict in Kosovo during 1998-1999. I was 4 years old when my family was forced to flee to Croatia to escape from the outburst of violence in 1998. It is important also to mention that since then, I have been surrounded by and exposed to stories about how my ancestors resisted the Serbian regime, how they struggled to be educated in the Albanian language and how they were imprisoned for preserving their national and ethnic identity. The education that I received during both elementary and high school, and the textbooks from which I studied the history of my country are comprised of a 'Them vs. Us' narrative and the demonization of those who threatened the territory of Kosovo and violated the rights of Albanian people living in Kosovo. The collective trauma of war was quite persistent during my upbringing and it can be rightly avowed that I carried the emotional burden that comes along with conflicts. Despite struggling with being raised in a country where the binary identities of these two ethnicities are prominent, my advanced studies abroad and travel experiences helped me to develop a critical viewpoint towards the dominant conflict discourse.

Kosovar young people are one of the most isolated youth populations who, ironically, inhabit the heart of Europe. Due to a lack of visa liberalization, they can travel only to a few countries (without visas), fewer than most countries in the world. This poses a huge issue for the Kosovar youth as it prevents them from acquiring new experiences and broadening their horizons outside of the standard dichotomous narrative. I therefore consider my having lived in Croatia both as a calamity and as a fortunate occurrence. It is a misfortune indeed because of the circumstances that led me and my family to take refuge there, and it is an opportunity because it offered me the privilege of having EU citizenship through my Croatian passport, which allowed me to pursue my advanced studies in countries known for their high quality education systems, without any issues. My schooling abroad proved to become a formative influence in acquiring a new viewpoint regarding education in conflict-affected societies. It fueled my interest in the topic of peace education and the impact of education on reconciliation processes. Although my interest is inseparable from my identity and the narratives that I grew up with, it indeed underwent a significant transformation by shifting my subjective stance on this topic.

In the past years, I was involved directly and indirectly in the professional and academic worlds that discuss the legacy of the negative face of education in relation to stirring up post-conflict intergroup relations. Therefore, my eagerness to proceed with this research study stems from my academic and professional transformation throughout the years. I recognize that my positionality bounded to my ethnic background, my upbringing and early educational experience could be considered as a shortcoming as it might affect the interpretations of the findings of this study. Still, I consider that my latterly academic and professional experiences have equipped me with the necessary skills to distance myself from the biases by welcoming multiple perspectives in order to comprehend why such conflicting narratives are constructed, maintained and very rarely challenged by people who experience them. My belief is that this research will aid me in grasping a better understanding of the divergent ways of being educated in a post-conflict setting. It is my deep hope that this research may shed light on how this phenomenon affects the relationships of the two ethnicities and potentially contribute toward future research on educational solutions for a peaceful multiethnic coexistence for the youth of both the Albanian and Serbian ethnicities in Kosovo.

Chapter II. Literature Review

2.1 Social Identity and Conflict

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is grounded on the thought that individuals tend to classify their identity according to their social groups (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The main principle of this theory is that individuals outline their identities firstly along the social dimension that mirrors their social group, and secondly on the attributes that distinguish the individual from the others. Apart from representing an important feature of sense of belonging, such creation of group identities, often leads to the categorization of one's "in-group" with a more positive bias compared to an "out-group" (Tajfel; 1970; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Agreeing to Nedelcu, Iucu and Ciolan (2011), the extent to which individuals identify to their group members, predicts the dynamics of intergroup perceptions and prejudices. Applied in the context of social groups categorized on ethnic and national basis, this principle could help explain the presence of biased and exaggerated perceptions between the Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian groups in Kosovo. Moreover, the process of self-categorization tends to depersonalize the concept of self and the others in terms of different stereotypes (Hogg, Abrams, Otten & Hinkle, 2004). The end is that people start viewing

themselves as group members rather than individuals – therefore “I” becomes “We”, and “me” against “you”, becomes “us” against “them” (ibid). In contexts such as Kosovo, where social identity is salient, people stress prototypical resemblances between themselves and their in-group members, while also highlighting the prototypical differences between their in-group and out-group members. Consequently, identities in Kosovo are constructed in confrontational collective bases, which add up to the replication of stereotypes regarding the incompatibility between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs (Sartori, 2016).

According to Maloku, Van Laar, Derks and Ellemers (2016), Albanian and Serb identities are embedded in the differences in terms of religion and language. However, there are clashes on which characteristic is the prime identity definer for the two communities. Serbs put a more distinctive emphasis on their religious background of the Orthodox Christian, while Albanians think of their language and culture as the basis of their identity identification (ibid). Nonetheless, these characteristics are all used as underlying principles of ethnic identification, which is the most powerful determinant of the social identity profile in Kosovo. The central rhetoric of social identity in Kosovo evolves around continuous references to ethnic belonging while fostering negative images of the “ethnic other” by conveying continuous messages of mutual distrust and cementing prejudices to the young generation (Sartori, 2016). Rendering Strapacova’s argument (2015), the construction of social identity in Kosovo is done through the lens of primordialism as “ethnic identity is claimed as a natural, objective feature of human identity traceable to indelible bonds whose basis is genetic” (p.4). The fact that ethnic roots in Kosovo are perceived as natural is often times used as a manipulative strategy for state building by the political elite, which in turn intensifies the tension of interethnic relations between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs (Strapacova, 2015).

In light of Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory (1978), socio-historical and sociocultural surroundings play an important role in the construction of identity as they serve as an area where symbolic tools are created and fed by history, memory, and ideological values (as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). In those cases, Hammack (2010) refers to identity as a ‘burden’ for youth due to their innocent and blind participation on reproduction of certain status quos and narratives. Kostovicova (2005) explains how the construction of social identity in Kosovo was aided by a number of surroundings, ranging from politics, education and media, which over the years sustained the feeling of a national belonging. In his attempts to analyze nationalism through his timeless concept

of nation being an “imagined community”⁶, Anderson (2006) also emphasizes how the education system is one of the most effective fields used for the construction of a national community. According to Kastrati (2016) solely the history of education in Kosovo, which included the existence of a parallel education system endorses the national identity as being a natural alternative to the young generation. As such, the current education system in Kosovo serves as a showground where the national and ethnic identity is institutionalized through ideologies fueled by prejudices toward the ethnic other (Sartori, 2016). On this note, Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) elaborate on the radical influence of the ideological structures such as “nationalism” in the education field in post conflict societies, and the failure of educational institutions to halt the dissemination of such values.

Research has specified that one’s social identification plays an important role in outlining the outcomes of intergroup conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). There is a substantial correlation between in-group identification and negative attitudes toward the out-group in cases when prejudices are rooted on historical and structural factors (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Brewer and Brown (1998), conclude that as individuals seek a positive social identity while defining themselves predominantly in terms of their group membership, the emphasis that they put on the differences between their group in comparison to other groups, poses a risk for intergroup conflict (as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). Further on, Brewer (1999) elaborates on how intergroup hostility is more apparent in cases when the groups are in competition over political power or physical resources. For instance, Wodak et al., (2009) note that the concept of identity in the context of ex-Yugoslavia has always been understood as a solid and unchanging collective unit due to the sociopolitical circumstances. Subsequently, the historical and political component of the in-group identity created a feeling of obligation among individuals to act and react as a group in times of threats (ibid). A noteworthy idea posited by McGlynn, Niens, Cairns and Hewstone (2004) suggests that when social identity is associated with ethnic, religious or political components people express strong emotional investment as members of a given social group. As both groups identify highly with their ethnic identity, the threat creates reluctance for interaction and is associated with fear and hostility (Maloku et al., 2016). On this note, the existence of such distinct identity-based groups represents an inherent prospective for conflict and often times impedes any effort at reconciliation.

⁶ Benedict Anderson (2006) pictures a nation as a community, which is abstract and socially constructed by individuals who consider themselves a part of that group, although most of them never meet or hear from their “co-members” of the community.

2.1.1 The Entanglement of Memory, Identity and Conflict

Hunt (2010) underlines that war memorialization and traumatic experiences such as loss of family members, witnessing atrocities, displacements, etc. play an essential role in shaping identity in postwar societies (as cited in Baliqi, 2017). Collective memory is interlinked with identity as the historical narratives that surround this notion, among others, aim to solidify one's sense of belonging (Ross, 2014; Strapacova, 2015). According to Bekerman and Zembylas (2012), collective memories are based in society and do not reside in the individual self-consciousness but rather in social practices coming from institutions such as families, schools, professions, etc. The process of collective memory begins in early age when children first learn about the historical figures and events, songs, stories that produce narratives and ideological constructions that set the foundation of the feeling of belonging (Strapacova, 2015). Parents' recollection of displacement, loss, and other war events also play an important role in maintaining the cycle of prejudices among generations (Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017). Besides, Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) emphasize that the political and emotional value of collective memories should not be underestimated, as the memory is created in interactions between and among people in social and political contexts (ibid). In that sense, the concrete memory of one's own collective strengthens the social identity and encourages a perception of unity.

In Kosovo, nearly 20 years after the war, contested memories persist and are sustained through the political attitude, media landscape, and education system (Baliqi, 2017). While in the process of state building, the reconstruction of the past in Kosovo is highly influenced by political actors and other social agents. There are different aspects that play a role in articulating war memories; the leading narrative discourses, socio-political arenas, and agencies, which habitually complement to state institutions (ibid). According to Sweeny (2015), Kosovo applies an ethno-nationalist approach when reflecting about the past, as numerous historical monuments are representative of national identity, legendary tales of victory, and great merits of individual martyrs. For Serbs (both in Kosovo and in Serbia), the comprising memory is in view of the legend of the Battle of Kosovo of 1389 (Kostovicova, 2015). While for Kosovo Albanians, the dominant narrative of memorialization surrounds KLA's fight for freedom and the sacrifice of Adem Jashari⁷, which represent resistance and

⁷Adem Jashari was one of the founders of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who was killed by the Serbian force along with his 50 family members in 1998. Posthumously, Jashari is recognized by most Kosovo Albanians as the "Hero of Kosovo". Access online: <https://ademjashari.rks-gov.net/en/adem-jashari>

act as a reminder to not be forgetful about those who contributed to the liberation of Kosovo (Sweeney, 2015). The dominant narrative of remembrance of both communities in Kosovo is that of the victimhood, as both ethnic groups compete for the status of the “real” victim (Strapacova, 2015). Consequently, the exclusive and divisive emotions of war are kept alive through this version of collective memory.

Sicurella (2008) argues that collective memory could be considered as a source of conflict due to its repetitive emphasis on the suffering and wrongdoings from the so-called ‘the others’: “a common narrative pattern is that of lingering over memories of collective wrongs and cruelties suffered from another national or ethnic groups, which loads present-day clashes with resentment and makes them appear as a redress” (p.16). Memorialization of the violent past that helps in remembering historical events is also used as a means of gaining power and promoting a particular political order (Ashplant, Dawson, & Roper, 2000). In this instance, the manipulation of collective memory done for the purpose of reaching nationalistic aims could establish conditions for the resurgence of old conflicts. Baumeister and Hastings (1997) give insights regarding the common societal beliefs on collective memory in relation to conflict, which include the justification on the outbreak of conflict and its course of development while presenting a positive image of the in-group and delegitimizing the out-group (as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012).

During their research on post-conflict education in the Greek-Turkish Cypriot context, Zembylas, Charalambous C., and Charalmbous P., (2016) shed light on the importance of the local historical, emotional and cultural resources on the development of educational practices in a postwar context. According to them, schools are viewed as a prime site in which the traumatic experiences, shaped around collective memory narratives are passed on and reinforce the dichotomies of ‘Us Vs. Them’ narratives (Zembylas et al., .2016). Applying it to the educational context in Kosovo, one can state that teachers and students remain stuck between balancing self-identification and collective memory, which creates serious obstacles for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. In addition, schools represent an important arena for cultivating and representing the past through emotions bounded to the events of the conflict (Zembylas et al., 2016). In relation to the struggles of representing the past and transmitting conflict remembrance in schools, Worsham (1998) presents the term “schooling of emotion” according to which schools perform certain pedagogies of emotion, which could determine, proclaim or challenge ‘emotional hegemonies’ about what students should feel. While, Bar-Tal (2004) stresses that the predicament of involving emotions and memory in

conflict-affected classrooms determines what kind of emotional ethos is being transmitted to students in relation to the memorialization of war events (as cited in Zembylas et al., 2016).

An important aspect to be considered within the frame of collective memory is the generational legacy of war recollection from the personal experience of survivors to the memory of the offspring. Marianne Hirsch introduces the notion of 'postmemory' to describe this sensation more accurately. Accordingly, 'postmemory' refers to the memory of those who have experienced an event and afterwards pass on these 'second hand' memories to the young generation, those who were too young to experience the said events (as cited in Baliqi, 2017). This notion is relevant to Kosovo, as the 90's generation in Kosovo has little personal experiences of the war, yet war remembrance is transmitted through the narratives of family, friends, education system and the general political discourse, which affects their political attitude and their identity formation in significant ways (Baliqi, 2017).

2.2 The Negative Face of Education in Ethnic Conflict

Education is recognized as one of the strongest tools of bringing about change in society as well as one of the main contributors towards social prosperity, economic development and political stability (Pierre, 2014). Good education plays an important role in post-conflict settings for conflict prevention and the establishment of the peacebuilding process. Education is imperative in distributing and acquiring values, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors that contribute toward sustainable living in a multi-cultural society (ibid). There are a myriad of cases where the contribution of education to the prevention of conflict backfired and led to the reproduction of inequalities and exclusion through the perpetuation of division based on ethnicity, religion, gender or race (Davies, 2005). This paradigm is renowned, as the negative face of education and it is known for producing the counter-effect of education's aim to bring communities together, by exacerbating intergroup hostilities due to ethnic tensions (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Tawil and Harley (2004) highlight that educational policy reforms in settings affected by identity-based conflict, sometimes serve as potential catalysts of violent conflict when developing and delivering the new educational contents in the spirit of the negative face of education. The latter is shaped by a range of attributes such as the usage of education as a weapon for cultural repression, denial of education as a weapon of war and manipulation of textbooks and history for political purposes (ibid). Bush and Saltarelli (2000) drew an interesting conclusion on how education alone does not stand a chance in

preventing future conflicts when they investigated the process of ethnic socialization in children using the social identity theory. Nonetheless, they highlighted that the education system indeed affects the way that conflict and ethnic identities are managed and observed (ibid). In newly established countries such as Kosovo, the habitual intent to build national identity through education while maintaining peace within the borders and promoting tolerance towards their divergent ethnic habitants produces significant challenges.

2.2.1 Role of Teachers

A vital contributor towards influencing the conflict-affected educational surroundings is the teacher's agency. Their agency plays a vital role in 'developing values of mutual respect and tolerance in a post-war context characterized by persisting divisions and mistrust' (Lopez Cordozo and Shah 2016). Nonetheless, the way that teachers develop the methods of instruction, pedagogical practices and deliver curriculum affect the peace-building process in a conflict-affected context. According to Lopez Cardozo and Shah (2016), it is crucial to consider how teachers' past experiences of the conflict influence their agency. In Kosovo, teachers' sense of agency during the post-war period was acutely affected by economic/material, political, social and cultural conditions such as repressions, loss of status, financial crisis, and loss of family members (European Stability Initiative, 2014). Some of the teachers had also taught within the parallel system in Kosovo and for most of them, the after war period happened to provide their first time of entering a proper lecture hall (Kostovicova, 2005). Such facts have significantly influenced the extent to which they draw their lived experiences and personal narratives in the instruction process and curriculum planning. Bearing in mind the background of teachers in Kosovo, their agency in promoting values such as peace and social harmony is often assimilated on transmitting the nationalistic ideology of curriculum. As Horner, Kadiwal, Saved, Barret, Durrani & Novelli (2015) note, it is difficult for the content of the educational materials not to be affected by the cultural and political contexts in which they are produced and used, and the engagement with them is definitely not isolated by these factors as well. A complex issue for Kosovo teachers to apply practices and ideas, such as peace education and social harmony, is the lack of awareness for these educational practices in the absence of institutional support (Rexhaj, Mula & Hima, 2010). Most of the practices in terms of engagement with textbooks by teachers in Kosovo pertain to the agreement and submission to the information and facts provided in the textbooks in a very non-critical way towards the dominant narrative (ibid). Such application of teaching, Halai and Durrani (2017) argue that it fails to recognize

diversity within the social system and impede efforts towards reconciliation, this way reinforcing and reproducing the ideological narrative that textbooks contain.

2.2.2 Role of Curricula

A. Language of Instruction

Language is not only a tool for communication and knowledge but also a fundamental attribute of cultural identity and empowerment, both for the individual and the group. Respect for the languages of persons belonging to different linguistic communities, therefore, is essential to peaceful cohabitation. (King, 2003, p.16)

One of the most critical and challenging issues of an education system affected by ethnic conflict is that of curricula development, including the language of instruction. As noted by Halai and Durrani (2017), language and ethnicity play an important function as contributing factors to social conflict. Teaching a language other than the first aids young people in empathizing with and understanding other societies, in terms of their culture and their worldview (Hashmi, 2014). Countries that have been able to celebrate their linguistic diversity are consequently a step forward in respecting differences and promoting peace and tolerance (ibid). Thus, it is incumbent to give an equal position to all languages, especially in countries with multilingual diversity such as Kosovo. Reflecting on Kosovo's history of ethnic conflict, and the function of language as a vital marker of division and discrimination, the challenge of enhancing and promoting a multiethnic and multilingual character in Kosovo becomes more pressing. The official Serbian position remained dutifully firm in being committed to mother tongue teaching (Sommers & Buckland, 2004). On the other hand, the Albanian language is highly valued by Kosovo Albanians as an element which has endured in spite of all the hardships to promote national values and ideologies, and the presence of Serbian language within Kosovo's education institutions would still be considered as a threat to national identity and independence (ibid). Although the Law on the Use of Languages in Kosovo⁸ recognizes both Albanian and Serbian as official languages, in practice, there are serious challenges for its implementation due to lack of support and commitment of government, and the current political disputes (Radonjic,

⁸ See the document on Law on the Use of Language in Kosovo. Access online: http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/ligjet/2006_02-L37_en.pdf

2018). The latest research on bilingualism in Kosovo's municipalities showed a decrease in bilingualism by noting the lack of professional language courses as one of the main indicators (ECMI, 2016). Educational programs that propose a strengthening of public awareness about language use rights and introduction of Kosovo's official languages in both elementary and high schools are still delayed on their implementation due to lack of funds (Radonjic, 2018). This occurrence is strongly affiliated to the characteristics of the negative face of education according to the work of Bush and Saltarelli (2000) who evaluate that in contexts that have experienced ethnic conflicts the imposition of a common language on a linguistically diverse society (inside and outside formal education system) is considered as a culturally repressive act and it contributes to creating more barriers and ethnic- segregation.

B. Textbooks

Kostovicova (2005, p.23) notes that the school curriculum adds to the arsenal of the cultural reproduction, political vision and national identity of a state, and it has been far down related to the creation of historical awareness through the teaching of history to construct a collective sense of the nationhood. Bellino and Williams (2017) refer to textbooks as tools that offer an endless source of information through which one can detect "a nation's deeper or hidden social and political agenda" (p.7). In addition they emphasize that textbooks play an important role in educating young people about the past, which in turn influences youth's political actions, identity belonging and ethical thinking (ibid). According to the publication of European Stability Initiative (2014), some textbooks still used nowadays in Kosovo are very outdated and have been used in classrooms for decades by transmitting imprecise information to students, failing to encourage and promote critical thinking and basic democratic standards and human rights⁹. The dominant narratives in Kosovo's national curriculum specifically in terms of textbooks content such as history, geography, and civic education have been proven to play a role in the demonization of the 'Other' ethnicity and in consolidating further divisions. Sicurella (2008) emphasizes that contents of history teaching in post-conflict societies are usually rearranged according to ethnocentric perspectives where the reformulation of past events complies with a new national narrative that often endorses stereotyping. Similarly, Bush and Saltarelli (2000, p.13) highlight the use of textbooks as means of manipulation adding to the promotion of negative face of education. Accordingly, the history of inter-group relations is uniformly attached to the process of conflict, which means that textbooks in these contexts fall

⁹ The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) - a regional media organization published a study in 2010 of the analysis of 16 textbooks in Kosovo that covered biology, geography, history and civic education from grades six to nine

victims of nationalist minds, who manipulate facts in order to illustrate historical wrongdoings, humiliation, and exploitation (ibid). Likewise, Barton and McCully (2005) through their research efforts highlight that in history education narratives about the past are continuously constructed and maintained in a way that they justify the existence of a nation's state. Adwan and Bar-On (2004) on their research in the context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict found that historical narratives in textbooks and curricula in post-conflict surroundings lack the complexity and criticality of presenting multilayered events that caused the conflict (as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). Similarly, Palestinians were presented through a stereotypical lens, while Jews were identified with heroism and victimization, which causes for the curricula to support an ethos of continuity of the present conflict (ibid). Zembylas's (2008) extensive research in Greek-Cypriot schools also accumulates pieces of evidence on how the national curricula, civic textbooks, and pedagogical practices establish and perpetuate stereotypes of the ethnic other, the case in point, Turkish Cypriots (as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). The guiding ideological principles of representing the history of conflict and division are likewise constructed around the narrative of "victims" and "perpetrators" (ibid), grounded on the assumption that one side has always been victimized by the acts of the other and acknowledging only one side of the narrative of the conflict.

Because one of the central themes of this thesis is concerned with the interpretation of the past in both education systems, this section provides empirical pieces of evidence on how textbooks in Kosovo and Serbia portray both the historical events of the conflict and the opposing ethnic group. Kostovicova (2015) provides a comparative analysis of Albanian and Serbian geography textbooks, where the portrayal of the territory of Kosovo after the war differs significantly. Correspondingly in Kosovo textbooks, the borders of Kosovo are marked with full bold lines as borders, whereas in the Serbian textbooks, Kosovo is presented as a part unified with Serbian territory (ibid, p.26). Such illustration shows the ideology of land possession and claimed territory, which is intersected with the usage of textbooks as a means of building oppositional national identities. The enhancement of physical separation in the national education system in Kosovo is further strengthened by interpretations of recent historical events in post-war textbooks. Glorification, national heroism, and victimhood are some of the themes presented in history textbooks taught in primary and secondary level in Kosovo. Students are taught about the heroes, martyrs and 'bloody massacres' of Albanians, namely the case of Drenica when the conflict had started and that of Racak before the NATO intervention. Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) are described as 'martyrs for freedom for Kosovo' in their struggles against Serbian forces: "the KLA with arms in their hands after a long and unequal war

with the help of the US and NATO made the Serbian occupier leave Kosovo and brought freedom awaited for centuries¹⁰. Consequently, other expressions such as the “freedom was won with blood, that is why it is sacred”¹¹ are used within history textbooks. Zembylas and Bekerman (2008) underline that history curriculum in post-conflict societies often implores them to remember national glories, honor the leaders, warriors and gives rise to patriotic responsibilities and nationalistic values, this way creating room for ideological practices. Similarly, Lopez Cardozo (2008, p.24) highlights that a curriculum dominated by majority hinders the development of student’s realistic world-view and fails in cultivating critical societal awareness this way causing the students to view the dominant narrative as truth.

Likewise, in his comparative report, “The History of Kosovo in the History Textbooks of Kosovo, Albania,” Gashi (2016) notes the profound differences in ways that the historical past of Kosovo is treated in Serbian and Kosovo history textbooks. His findings show that textbooks in each side portray themselves as “victims” while highlighting only the crimes committed by the other side. Specifically, human rights abuses during the 1990s against Kosovo Albanians are presented extensively in Kosovo textbooks, while Serbian textbooks have no references to these crimes (Gashi, 2016, p.113-114). This only reaffirms how such distorted interpretations of the past transmit and sustain the antagonistic historical narrative to the young generation in Serbia and Kosovo. Adding to the empirical evidence, a recent report published in Kosovo by the local NGO- Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo (YIHR KS) once again confirmed the presence of bias in terms of ethnic exclusion and usage of hate language on upper-secondary textbooks in Kosovo. Findings suggest that textbooks contain glorification and exaggeration of the role, qualities and values of one ethnicity compared to the other, which contributes to the establishment of the conflicting narrative “Us” versus “Them” (YIHR KS, 2017). According to Davies (2004), this practice is common in societies that suffer, or have suffered from intractable conflicts, as such narratives are constructed and maintained with an attempt to justify the national self and denounce the narrative of the enemy. This is observed in these excerpts from textbooks regarding the recent war in Kosovo:

*Only during the months of NATO air bombing, the Serbian army killed about 15,000 Albanians...*¹²

¹⁰ F. Rexhepi, V. Kuri and B. Jahollari, Knowing the History of Our Nation, 2nd edn, Prishtinë: School Textbook Publishing House (Libri Shkollor, 2000), p. 85

¹¹ Pushkolli, Today’s History, p. 223.

¹² Bajraktari, Jusuf, Rexhepi, Fehmi and Demaj, Frashër. History 10. Prishtina: School Textbook Publishing House (Libri Shkollor), 2014 (p. 207, s. 1), Rexhepi, Fehmi and Demaj, Frashër. History 11. Prishtina: School Textbook Publishing House

It is significantly important to mention that the number of the victims has been exaggerated¹³ in these textbooks and no footnotes or sources are cited to make these numbers credible; additionally no victims from other ethnicities are mentioned especially acknowledging the fact that there were Serb civilians killed during the airstrike (ibid). In addition, hate language in Kosovo textbooks is identified during the description the wrongdoings of the Serbian force, which contributes to inciting abhorrence and hate in Kosovo Albanian students towards Serbs, as in the following example:

... the gruesome scenes of the barbarism of blood thirsty death squads...¹⁴, "In June and August 1944, they tortured, butchered and killed thousands of men, dishonored hundreds of women and girls."¹⁵

Reconciling the different narratives of the conflict becomes more of a pressing issue when an education system silences the past (Datzberger & Donovan, 2018). In the case of the Serbian education system, the committed war crimes by members of their ethnic group during the Kosovo conflict are kept distant from the school curricula (Ristić & Petrović, 2017). As stated by Datzberger and Donovan (2018), carefully calculated silences of the past during the transition period from conflict to peace, are often present in educational settings for the purpose of producing a single, official narrative that denounces any other alternative version of the past. This leaves room for the conventional nationalistic narrative and the surrounding stereotypes about 'the other' to be sustained across the young generation. Exemplifying this, in both Kosovo and Serbia, the institutional structures, particularly the one of public education arguably fail to fulfill the task of using education as space where youth is taught about the social truth and an objective narrative of the past.

(Libri Shkollor), 2016 (p. 221, s. 4), Bicaj, Isa and Ahmeti, Isuf. History 12. Prishtina: School Textbook Publishing House (Libri Shkollor), 2016 (p. 202, s. 5)

¹³ The Kosovo Memory Book 1998-2000 published by the Humanitarian Law Centre (HLC) provides a total figure of 7864 Albanian civilians killed in the period January 1998 – December 2000, including the 78 days of NATO's bombing. Access online: http://www.kosovomemorybook.org/db/kkp_en/index.html

¹⁴ See also: Gashi, Shkëlzen. History of Kosovo in textbooks of history in Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, 2016 (p. 112, s. 2). Access online: http://kfos.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/12/Historia_e_Kosoves_SHG_ENG.pdf

¹⁵ Rexhepi, Fehmi and Demaj, Frashër. History 11. Prishtina: School Textbook Publishing House (Libri Shkollor), 2016 (p. 210, s. 5)

2.3 Education and Reconciliation

Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, and Hagengimana (2005) define reconciliation as a manifestation of mutual acceptance by members of groups that were in hostility with each other. As a result, members experience a positive change of attitude toward one another and move past the prevailing rhetoric of victimhood and perpetrators. In its purest form, reconciliation is synonymous with reestablishing friendship and harmony between opposing sides after a conflict (Bar-Siman-Tove, 2004, as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). Reconciliation as a process is likely to be progressive and gradual, especially in cases when the groups experienced intense violence between each other. In this case, it needs structural and institutional support with an altered psychological component (ibid). Bies and Tripp (1998) imply that forgiving and acknowledgment of the wrongdoings by perpetrators are considered one of the leading facilitators of reconciliation (as cited in Staub et al., 2005). In cases when the former hostile groups live close to each other, such mutuality is considered crucial (ibid). Literature also mentions 'peaceful coexistence' as a more natural and transitional step viewed as the basic level of positive relations that could help in achieving the challenging task of 'reconciliation' (Bar-Tal, 2004; Kriesberg, 1998 as cited in Zembylas et al., 2016).

Education can have a significant and supportive role in the reconciliation process if policymakers and state leaders would not promote nationalistic issues in schools. Among others, education systems are considered one of the main areas where reconciliation could be problematized, due to their role in socializing young generations, cultivating values of trust, and developing mindsets of seeing differences as opportunities rather than threats (Tolomelli 2015; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). In line with the theoretical framework of the 4Rs¹⁶, Novelli, Lopes Cardozo & Smith (2017) underline that the approaches used to implement educational practices in post-conflict settings play a prominent role in the reconciliation process. Subsequently, they emphasize that education has a role in preventing another relapse into conflict once themes of dealing with the past and dangerous memories, the teaching of history, the transitional justice process, bringing communities together are tackled by policymakers (ibid). Moreover, education can be supportive of the reconciliation process through concrete measures designed to address wrongs of the past by offering a space where various narratives of the past are studied, recognized and discussed (Datzberger & Donovan, 2018). On the same train of thought, Zembylas & Bekerman (2008) argue that schools ought to offer

¹⁶ The 4Rs theoretical framework (redistribution, recognition, representation and reconciliation) developed as part of the work of the Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding provides the opportunity to analyze the challenges that policy-makers face in building sustainable peace and promoting peacebuilding activities in post-conflict contexts.

a space where the so-called 'dangerous memories' of the past should be discussed rather than being silenced or told from a one-sided perspective. Drawing from these thoughts, the stagnation of Kosovo's education system in promoting reconciliation is possibly far down bonded to the current educational practices of the negative face of education that disrupt this process.

2.3.1 Intergroup Contact Hypothesis

The literature on the approaches applied to bring conflicting societies together makes regular references to Allport's contact hypothesis (1954). The theory asserts that individuals who engage in intergroup contact under conditions of equal status and cooperativeness, that allow repeated interaction and potential development of friendship, might contribute to alleviating intergroup conflict and positively shift prejudices toward out-group members (Allport, 1954; Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Various factors are to be considered when concluding the effect of intergroup contact, especially in situations when groups have a history of conflict and animosity between each other as they are characterized with more perceived stereotypes against individuals of the out-group members and their group as a whole (Brown and Hewston, 2005 as cited in Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Moreover, adding supplementary characteristics to the situation, such as having a balanced ratio of majority and minority group members within the setting where intergroup contact takes place may strengthen the effect of intergroup contact (ibid). Further factors ought to be considered when assessing the conditions under which intergroup contact would prove to be more effective. In their study in Northern Ireland, Al Ramiah, Hewstone, Voci, Cairns & Hughes (2013) found that there is a positive correlation between openness for intergroup contact among those students who reported that they have cross-group friendships; this was also associated with a reduced level of prejudices and an increased level of trust toward out-group friendships in general. Similarly, the extended contact hypothesis insinuates that when an individual knows that an in-group member experienced a positive contact with an out-group member, it can lead to more positive intergroup attitudes and reduced prejudices (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe & Ropp, 1997).

Drawing from Allport's theory (1954), institutional support is necessary in order for the intergroup contact to influence positively the reduction of prejudices, as research has further demonstrated that the ideologies by which different groups are fed through the leading institutions, affect the experience of contact. In instances of negative media portrayal, or hate ideology, members of different groups feel threatened and antagonistic towards the out-group, and would rather avoid intergroup contact or participate in acts of violence (Van Zomeren, Fischer & Spears, 2007). In

Kosovo's case, the lack of interaction between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs is characterized by a lack of trust, threat, fear, and anxiety on a vertical level, and is affected by hostile political ideologies mediated by political elites on a horizontal level (Kastrati, 2015).

With reference to the effect of contact mediators on intergroup prejudice reductions, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) name anxiety reduction, empathy and knowledge as the most significant ones. They suggest that anxiety of intergroup contact is reduced once the actual intergroup contact takes place, and is preceded by lower levels of out-group prejudices in the future, while induced empathic feelings in intergroup friendships also proved to be negatively associated with out-group prejudices (ibid, p.929). Similarly, Allport (1954) concluded that knowledge helped in realizing similarities with the out-group and mediated contact effect positively. On this occasion, intergroup relations could be improved by the provision of accurate information about the out-groups by means of education or media platforms (Triandis, 1974 as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). Relating to conflict resolution and reconciliation, literature proposes that the contact process must be mediated by trust, empathy, and forgiveness, as these values are positively correlated with higher readiness for conflict resolution and out-group interactions (Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000; Tam et al., 2009 as cited in Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Another critical determiner of the dynamics between intergroup contact and reconciliation is previous contact experience before the violent conflict. Apart from determining the anticipated level for out-group prejudice, studies have validated that prior contact experience (negative or positive) was linked directly to the degree of readiness for reconciliation (Biro et al., 2004; Binder et al., 2009 as cited in Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013).

2.3.2 Peace Education Initiatives and Integrated Schools

Wagner and Hewstone (2012) highlighted that educational settings provide a principally secure and valuable context for the facilitation of intergroup contacts, as they are in line with the optimal conditions for contact initiation. Founded on Allport's theory of intergroup contact, integrated education systems and peace programs in societies that have suffered from a prolonged ethnic-religious-political conflict, such as Northern Ireland and Israel, have revealed a positive impact on students' identity, out-group attitudes, forgiveness and reconciliation (McGlynn et al., 2004; Biton & Salomon, 2006; Pickett, 2008). This implies that other countries could view co-education or integrated education in a similar light as a way to move forward with conflict resolution and with the promotion of peace. It is important to note that socio-political drives play a vital role in the

establishment of integrated education and promotion of education for coexistence, as political ideas and ideological differences pose the most common emotional challenges for implementing such initiatives (Bekerman & Nadir, 2006; Zembylas et al., 2016). As a consequence, in the context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, what led towards the creation of an integrated education was a shared liberal political standpoint, a deep understanding of the disadvantages of the segregated education system, and a craving to provide good education for the young generation, by both sides (Bekerman & Nir, 2006).

Integration in post-conflict educational contexts demands a comprehensive range of policies, practices, and pedagogies that involve building the necessary skills, values, and attitudes with respect to language, culture and social norms, that would teach children how to live together (Deeb & Kinani, 2013). Peace education programs and initiatives usually serve as a bridge to the integrated education, as they focus primarily on the interventions and practices that aim to promote peace, non-violence, and reconciliation (Zembylas et al., 2016). Studies on peace education interventions in Sri-Lanka and Cyprus suggest that a humanistic discourse of peace education, which places emphasis on human rights, democracy citizenship, and mutual values such as peace, equality and respect, could serve as an entry point to talk about “reconciliation” in schools in conflict-affected societies (Zembylas et al., 2016; Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017). McGlynn et al. (2004), expand that when social identity plays an important role in a post-conflict society, integrated education can influence identity positively through the promotion and encouragement of alternative forms of self-identification, which incorporates identity features of the communities involved. Likewise, bilingual educational projects in post-conflict countries that were developed on basis of commonsensical humane approaches, posed numerous benefits to their participants, including provision of an increased level of multilingualism, equal opportunity for academic achievement, and an area for the construction of a strong and positive multicultural and multilingual identity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995 as cited in Bekerman & Nadir, 2006).

Systemic changes in individual and institutional levels are necessary for the implementation of good education practices and long-term transformation toward peacebuilding and reconciliation (Smith, Datzberger & McCully, 2016). In Kosovo’s case, international actors and civil society organizations were crucial in initiating most of the educational reforms on peacebuilding, which in most cases were met by the resistance of local actors involved in the actual implementations of such changes (Selenica, 2018). Through Chandler’s conception of post-liberal governance, Selenica (2018) argues

that any educational reform aimed to tackle the Kosovo conflict is characterized by a penetrative influence of the international actors that implies a minimal agency for the local actors in policy-making (p.243). On a similar note, Stewart (2011) argues that the post-conflict strategies of international communities are most times founded on cultural isolation from the local sentiments and politics. Quite the reverse, one of the key elements of successful peace education and integrated schools efforts in conflict-affected societies is the balanced engagement of all stakeholders, with a strong emphasis on a greater local involvement, that is as close as possible to teachers, students and parents (Milcev, 2013; Deeb & Kinani 2013; Duncan & Lopez Cordozo, 2017). Another pivotal factor in endowing an integrated education system is considered the just representation of both ethnic communities in classrooms, as well as in the development of educational materials and in decision-making processes (Deeb & Kinani, 2013). Correspondingly, such an approach enables the voices of those who are directly affected by the educational practices to be heard (ibid).

Massey & Denton (1993) highlight that in cases when political and structural forces restrict opportunities for contact, and passively tolerate segregation in school settings; it contributes to the creation of negative social norms toward integration as a general concept (as cited in Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). In view of this, the political forces in Kosovo are very resistant to change and transformation and lack adequate initiatives to come to terms with legacies of the conflict (Selenica, 2018). Apart from non-formal peacebuilding activities and projects of a reasonably small scope initiated by local and international NGOs¹⁷, the political and historical forces have not allowed officials from state institutions to work on directly addressing the issue of segregated education (Sommers & Buckland, 2004). This leads us to the implicit form of peacebuilding education and how the absence of policies tackling this issue leads to the unequal application of education policies across the country, thus reproducing the existing inequalities and affecting the reconciliation process (Smith et al., 2016). On this note, the development of education policies in macro-level has been proven to be unsuccessful in cases of contexts, which were resistant to change (ibid). Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) point out that if a change is to be achieved it should be focused on the routine level of life, for this reason, education interventions in post-conflict societies should direct their analytical attention on first exploring the details of interactions and practices in everyday school life. It could be rightly said that Kosovo's failure to tackle the issue of the segregated education system was one

¹⁷ Action for Non-Violence and Peacebuilding, Search for Common Ground, CARE KS, UNICEF, Humanitarian Law Center and GIZ are some of non-governmental institutions that have made attempts in bringing the two communities together through various peace, inter-dialogues and community projects.

of the outcomes of the top-down approach policies designed by UNMIK administration after the war in cooperation with local authorities (Kastrati, 2016).

Chapter III. Methodology

Strauss and Corbin (2008) outline methodology as “a way of thinking about studying social reality”. The approach that best aligned with my research interest in studying social reality was the qualitative research method. More comprehensively, my research pertains to the phenomenological approach of qualitative research methodology. I chose this method to help identify the meaning behind the participants’ experiences and perspectives. The phenomenon of interest was how students, parents and education employees experience and understand the segregated education system in relation to its impact on post-war interethnic relations between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs. This chapter elaborates further the methodological procedures that were used for this thesis. The first section of this chapter provides a rationale for the qualitative research inquiry, whereas section two expands on the phenomenological approach to the study. In the third section, I explain the sampling method and size, participants’ selection and the process of gaining access. The fourth section offers a brief description of data collection, followed by the fifth section where data analysis is presented. Finally, the sixth section talks about the limitations of the study.

3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Research Inquiry

Qualitative research methods, as Glesne (2006) outlines, are purposeful in understanding certain social phenomena from the point-of-view of those involved, in contextualizing concerns within their specific socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes in transforming social circumstances. Many scholars have provided their rationale for using the qualitative approach as an accurate method to help interpret the experiences of others (Weinberg, 2002). The nature of this study also justifies qualitative inquiry as the best method to study the phenomena of segregated education in post-conflict Kosovo. The literature related to how Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs students, parents and education employees experience and understand the ethnically segregated education, and conceptualize the role of education in influencing interethnic relations, remains scarce. The established politicized education systems on both sides ignore the experiences of those who are an

essential human resource for improving educational processes and bring about changes in society. Furthermore, understanding the phenomenon of the construction of ideas in a segregated education provides an opportunity to reflect on the potentiality of establishing an integrated education system that could help in nurturing the interethnic relations.

In order to understand this phenomenon, primary data collection and analysis were required. Creswell (2007) describes how conducting qualitative research empowers individuals in sharing their in-depth experiences, thus enabling their voices to be heard. Likewise, the various perspectives of the participants in this particular study allowed for a profound opportunity to explore how they experience the phenomena of a segregated education system in Kosovo. Similarly, Marshall and Rossman (2011) highlight the strengths of qualitative studies in terms of being exploratory and descriptive of the context, setting and participants' position. Additionally, my research is vastly focused on the qualitative variables such as emotional responses and perceptions of the participants. The prevalence of my research topic asserts that meaning was developed socially and historically along with the individual experiences, which in turn provide multiple subjective interpretations. Through in-depth conversations between the researcher and the participants, respondents are allowed to revisit their experiences and construct meaning through dialogue (Creswell, 2007). My interpretive data emerged and was collected through open-ended inquiry and then analyzed in an evolving manner that required me, as the researcher, to actively participate in the explanation of social meaning. In conclusion, using a qualitative research approach proved to be the best method in exploring the depth of the phenomena due to its flexibility that enabled me to probe for a deeper meaning through continued dialogue with the respondents.

3.2 Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological research approach is founded on the researcher's interest in a particular problem (Flynn & Korcuska 2018). In this case, my interest was fueled by my personal observation of the phenomena of the ethnically segregated education system in post-conflict Kosovo and its influence on the intergroup relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The origins of phenomenology trace back to the ideas of Kant and Hegel, however, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl is regarded as "the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century" (Vandenberg, 1997). Husserl argues that phenomenology is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of people involved. Through his research,

Husserl pointed out the independent existence of objects and the reliability of objects when shaped by experiences. In this way, he suggested that individuals' perceptions of a lived experience exist as an accurate representation of their consciousness (Fouche, 1993). Consequently, phenomenology focuses on observing the individual's firsthand experience of something rather than the abstract experience of others.

Selvi (2008) explains how phenomenology helps in elucidating the meaning of things from an individual lens, and from that of self-experiences. This research was guided by influences including my personal enthusiasm to learn more about not only others but also my own presuppositions related to this topic. This study required and encouraged participants to describe, observe and explain their feelings, experiences, and thoughts on the relationship between self and others which included other students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders involved in the phenomena. The approach for collecting and analyzing data within phenomenological research usually includes in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus groups and artifact collection (Guba & Lincoln 1985). Typically, data in phenomenological research ought to be derived from participants that experience the phenomenon. Groenewald (2004), names Bentz & Shapiro (1998) when explaining the focus of the researcher during the data collection in a phenomenological study, that a researcher ought to focus on "what goes within" the participants and urge the participants to "describe the lived experience in a language as free from the constructs of the intellect and society as possible".

Bailey (1996) explains that the interview process in a phenomenological study aids the researcher in their attempt to find more information about the setting of the participants. As such, it implies adherence in the dialogue engagement between these two, which was the case during the data collection in my study. I chose this approach as I sought to reveal meaning behind participants' attitude and experience of the segregated education phenomena, which is justified by Patton's (2002) remark of phenomenology being a method concerned with interpreting the ways that participants perceive a phenomenon in line with their descriptions, feelings, and judgments of it. Although most scholars consider phenomenology as an interpretative approach, it primarily enables the researcher to interpret whilst built on the meaning found among the participants (Creswell, 2003).

The phenomenological approach is particularly applicable to describe a situation in the field of education. Education has a social reproductive function, which refers to the adaptation of an individual to the current social system through the acquisition of the values, and rules that the

system promotes (Kurenkova, Plekhanova, Rogacheva & Latysheva, 2000). This one is usually obtained through formal and informal learning in order to ensure the continuity of a social system or ideology. My research also aligns with the applicability of the phenomenological approach in the educational context, as it seeks to understand the attainment of values through one-sided curricula in both the Kosovo Albanian and Serbian education systems, and how the production of divergent ideologies in education systems potentially affects intergroup relationships in conflicted societies. Finally, I legitimize employing this approach in my research study as it allowed participants to offer a credible explanation of a phenomenon from their viewpoints, and reflect on their own opinions and perceptions about the phenomena.

3.3 Sampling, Gaining Access and Ethics

3.3.1 Sampling

In order to understand the central phenomenon of the research, I utilized a purposeful sampling, which was then followed by a snowball technique. Polkinghorne (2005) states that qualitative research employs a purposeful sampling in order for the researcher to intentionally select participants who could serve as providers of significant explanations of a phenomenon through collective experiences. For this study, I purposefully chose the sample in the research site where the division along ethnic lines in Kosovo is the most evident. The region of Mitrovica was chosen because ever since the end of Kosovo conflict, it remained divided and polarized by outbreaks of violence, post-war politics, and strained inter-group relations. Also, Mitrovica has not been studied extensively by academia in the context of education. What makes Mitrovica an interesting site to study is that the city represents the physical proximity of many communities in Kosovo to each other, while on the other hand; it lacks inter-community contact, especially between Albanians and Serbians. Therefore, Mitrovica is an instrumental case in illustrating the stagnation of the peace-building and reconciliation process between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. I gravitated towards choosing public secondary schools that are mainly focused on studying social sciences, which ultimately led to the selection of participants from 4 public secondary schools in the area of the North and South sides of the Ibar Bridge.

The question of the sample size reflects a persistent problem in phenomenological research. Scholars such as Boyd (2001) and Creswell (2007) regard two to 10 participants as sufficient to reach

saturation, whereas Flynn and Korcuska (2018) propose a minimum of 15 participants. Kvale (1994) suggests that the answer to the sample size is, 'Interview so many subjects that you find out what you need to know.' I decided to collect data from four different kinds of informants, which included a sample size of 38 research subjects in total. This sample size was considered as abundant in reaching 'data triangulation' to be able to contrast the findings and render a holistic understanding of the phenomena (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). In this study, 4 participants, more specifically principals, were selected through a purposeful sampling, which was followed by a snowball technique for the recruitment of other participants. This qualitative study used phenomenological inquiry through participant observation and in-depth interviews to obtain the lived experiences of 4 principal participants, 12 social science teacher participants, 16 student participants (8 male and 8 female) and 6 parent participants. The criteria for the candidates to be eligible for participation in the study is presented below:

1. A Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian participant who is responsible for administration and staff management in Albanian-/Serbian-speaking secondary schools in South/North Mitrovica, respectively.
2. A Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian participant who teaches social sciences in Albanian-/Serbian-speaking secondary schools in South/North Mitrovica, respectively.
3. A Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb participant whose child attends the Albanian-/Serbian-speaking secondary schools in South/North Mitrovica, respectively.
4. An Albanian and Serbian participant who attends 9th-12th grade in Albanian-/Serbian-speaking secondary schools in South/North Mitrovica, respectively.

Some considerations were applied to provide a balanced blend of both participants' demographics and experience as the sample group was chosen. These included ethnic identification, sex, age, and the subject of teaching for teachers. This strategy attempts to develop best a sample where multiple perspectives would offer both depth and diversity (Creswell, 2007), and where selected respondents are likely to provide information relative to the premeditated phenomenon (Maxwell, 2005). A more detailed illustration of the sample is provided in the following tables:

Sample in South Mitrovica			
Principals	Teachers (civic subjects)	Students (15-18 years old)	Parents
2	2 (history)	4 Males	1 Males
	3(civic education/geography)	4 Females	1 Female
	1(Albanian L. Literature)		

Table #1: Participants' demographic information in South Mestrovic

Sample in North Mitrovica			
Principals	Teachers (civic subjects)	Students (15- 18 years old)	Parents
2	2 (history)	4 Males	2 Males
	3 (civic education)	4 Females	2 Females
	1 (geography)		

Table #2: Participants' demographic information in North Mitrovica

Appropriate approval for conducting interviews was obtained from the principals of each school. The initial sample was planned to be 40 participants, 20 from each region. Due to challenging political and socioeconomic circumstances in South Mitrovica that will be further elaborated on in the limitations section, I managed to interview 18 participants in that area, which totaled 38 participants from both regions. The emerging data from this sample still allowed for informational saturation to occur. In South Mitrovica, I chose a modified snowball sampling effort to further connect with the participants, with principals serving as gatekeepers. A selected principal from the research location in South Mitrovica was requested to inform teachers and parents about the research project and confirm their willingness to participate in it. The snowball sampling effort was extended once teachers were recruited. They, in turn, helped in the selection of students based on the participant's profile selection criteria that were handed to them. Due to the tense political situation between the two ethnicities in North Mitrovica, participants' recruitment was different in North Mitrovica. As in most cases with hard-to-reach groups, snowballing proves to be an efficient recruiting strategy, mainly when researchers work with cultural brokers or community leaders (Adamson and Donovan 2002; Lu et al. 2005) cited by Liamputtong (2008). The recruitment process was done with the help of a local civil society organization called Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC), an

organization that works on improving the engagement of the multiethnic population and increasing awareness of the citizens for democratic culture. School principals were primarily contacted by ACDC, who provided them with the information letter and the selection criteria for the recruitment of other research participants.

3.3.2 Gaining Access

In some instances, gaining access to research participants can turn out to be problematic (Liamputtong, 2008). This is also applicable to my study because of the sensitivity of the topic that addresses the latest interethnic conflict in Kosovo between the two participative ethnic groups. Creswell (1994) stresses that studying human subjects requires approval from an institutional ethics committee. I was required to complete the approval form of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (as a part of enrollment in the University of Oslo) to assure the protection of the identity of participants based on the background information. After the completion of the NCRD online form and the approval to continue with the research, I followed procedures to gain access to the research sites and the participants as well. In understanding the phenomena of the problem, the role of the researcher is to “gain entry to the research site and consider the ethical issues” (Creswell, 1994). I was able to gain access to schools in Mitrovica through the help of stakeholders such as local NGOs. Hennink (2008) suggests that the purpose of cross-cultural research should be to benefit local groups. As such, it must be developed and carried out in collaboration with local members. For this reason, it was imperative to have a research team that included members of the local community and serves as “cultural” brokers. In South Mitrovica, I obtained access to schools through the help of a local supervisor who assigned an assistant from a local NGO (Education Innovators Kosovo) that cooperates with primary and secondary schools in South Mitrovica. Afterward, the permission was obtained from the respected authority (principals) for entering school facilities.

Studies that include researching people from a cross-cultural perspective also require more time for the project to be completed (Liamputtong 2005). To collect excellent and reliable data from individuals from different cultures, researchers need to develop a trusting relationship with their research participants and establish a good rapport maintaining cultural sensitivity (ibid). Therefore it took me a longer time to gain access to the potential participants and build trust and rapport with the community in North Mitrovica. Accessing the fieldwork site in North Mitrovica was anticipated to be challenging since the very beginning because of the interethnic political tensions. I experienced

non-responsiveness from various stakeholders that I contacted to conduct this research. It was understandable that building trustful reports with participants in North Mitrovica would prove to be more difficult also because of the preconceptions related to my positionality. The assistance provided by ACDC, an organization that maintains a good reputation among the local community, helped me incredibly in gaining access to participants and establishing a trustful relationship with them. In addition, since the critical timing of the fieldwork, since most schools in North Mitrovica were on winter holidays, plus the political situation, did not allow entry to schools, another alternative was found in terms of the setting where the interviews were conducted. I am immensely appreciative of the support of ACDC who offered their own facilities as an alternative location to conduct the interviews with Serbian participants. This way, a safe and comfortable environment was ensured for both the researcher and the interviewees.

3.3.3 Ethics

The study was exceptionally guided by the well being of the participants, considering the sensitivity of the topic. All participants received and signed their approval in the information letter ([See Appendices](#)); a document that outlined both the scope of the project and summarized the possibilities available to them in case they felt harmed or threatened during the process. The information letter was translated to both Albanian and Serbian languages. The document indicated participants' ability to stop their involvement in the research at any time without any recourse. Any questions regarding the document were prioritized to ensure participants' involvement rights in the research process. Merriam (1988) lists some of the ethical issues to follow during the research process in the following statement: "the researcher is required to maintain the confidentiality of data, preserve the anonymity of informants, and use research for the intended purposes" (Merriam, 1988). A signed authorization indicated acknowledgment of the conditions of participation. I followed all those ethical features, and finally, the interviews were audio recorded. This was also subject to prior consent since I clarified that the audio was only for the author's records in order to facilitate as referencing as accurate as possible. One respondent from South Mitrovica expressed the wish not be audio-recorded, thus written notes were taken instead. Around 10 respondents in North Mitrovica required reading and reviewing the interview questions to check whether they would be comfortable with answering them. Respondents expressed that they would like to remain anonymous upon the submission and potential publication of the study, and wished for their quotes to be cited in ways that their identity would not be recognizable. For this reason, there was an

inevitable need for the data collection and the communication of results to be done through anonymity. Data collected from individual respondents were reported by identifying participants based on their sex, occupation, or their role in research (parents) if applied as a direct quote, which is confirmed in the next chapter. This was done in order to ensure minimal risk to those who partook in the interviews. Respondents did not receive any form of payment or service as compensation for their involvement with the research. All participant identifiers and responses were protected with the strictest level of confidentiality. All data was stored for at least 5 months in password-protected devices. Documents linking specific participant information were also securely stored in a secure space to which only the researcher had access.

3.4 Data Collection

During the data collection process, I resided in the capital city in Prishtina, the city where I grew up and lived. I, therefore, chose to commute from Prishtina to Mitrovica whenever interviews were scheduled. My study makes use of semi-structured interviews but is not limited to that. Merriem (1998) suggests semi-structured interview questions offer flexibility for the researcher to navigate the interactive experience with each respondent in the best way. My data collection process also included participatory observation which entailed everything from detecting the language and non-verbal communication cues that participants were using during the interview, to more obvious indicators that could be observed in the city such as flags and other symbols that emphasized anything related to the phenomena. Relating to participants' observation, I was attentive to both verbal and non-verbal cues of participants. I paid particular attention to the language used by the participants to explore the meanings and concepts that were attached to the words. Denzin (1978) highlights, one can learn a great deal through language about the participants' worlds. Through the provision of a bilingual interpreter, I was able to bridge the language gap between Serbian participants and myself. In terms of my personal observation in the field, I had the opportunity to wander around and observe the particularities of everyday life, such as routines, and other surroundings such as shops, restaurants, bars, and cafés. I also kept a fieldwork diary during the fieldwork, where I could put my personal observations, informal conversations, thoughts, and feelings. Thus, the data collected for this study was triangulated through the application of multiple research methodologies and diverse data sources.

Principals in South Mitrovica were contacted prior to the interview to arrange a convenient time and location for conducting interviews. I scheduled interviews over a 21-day visitation to each of the

research locations. However, this was done within a timeframe of 3 months due to unexpected interruptions of the process such as the political shifts, teachers' strikes and the initial inability to gain access to the Serbian-speaking schools in the North Mitrovica. Participants were asked to attend an interview scheduled for approximately 20-60 minutes that highly depended on participants' willingness to answer all the questions. Although sometimes the short time frame of some interviews proved to be challenging in acquiring the richness of data, it was made up for by the large sample of participants that allowed for the data to be exhausted eventually. Interview times and dates were determined through the scheduling with the principals in South Mitrovica, and with the interpreter in North Mitrovica in order to best establish participants' availability and convenience. The setting for interviews was a confidential environment where participants felt safe sharing their thoughts without any distractions.

In the interpretive paradigm of phenomenological research, language and communication are central to the research process, the resulting data and its interpretation (Winchatz, 2006). As a native Albanian-language speaker I personally conducted 18 interviews in South Mitrovica, whereas due to my limited knowledge of the Serbian language, 20 interviews in North Mitrovica were conducted with the help of an interpreter, who translated from Serbian to English. The interpreter was provided by ACDC ahead of the interviews due to the need to reduce cultural and linguistic barriers. In light of this, the interpreter served as an 'insider' for conducting interviews in North Mitrovica, as she shared social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics with the research participants. Kerstetter (2012) contends that although entering a research community from the position of an 'outsider' allows for more objectivity, the position of an 'insider' helps in engaging participants more easily and gather a richer set of data due to the shared culture and experience. In North Mitrovica, the interpreter was provided with the information letter, and this person informed the Serbian-speaking participants prior to scheduling interviews regarding the purpose of the study and the procedures of the interviews.

The data collection process required me to be extra cautious due to the complicated historical, political, social, and cultural agendas that surrounded the target groups. It is important to note that when retelling lived experiences and realities, the researcher should maintain a reflexive approach (Iphofen, 2011). This means that the researcher must be accountable for the knowledge produced and assess to what extent emerging patterns and meaning is independent of the researcher itself (ibid). Thus, in the interview setting, I presented myself as a student from the University of Oslo in Norway, where I am currently enrolled as a part of the GLOBED master's program in Education

Policies for Global Development. All participants were informed also of my ethnic background as an Albanian because this detail was of high relevance to ensure transparency and acknowledge my positionality in the research. Throughout data collection, I maintained a courtesy manner to make the participants feel content and help them share their experiences in a more comfortable way. After the interviews were audio-recorded, they were transcribed and all the interview transcriptions and data were stored in multiple devices safely. Finally, when the procedure of data analysis was completed, all data were deleted.

3.5. Data Analysis

Phenomenological research utilizes coding methods that include, but are not limited to, descriptive coding, open coding, thematic coding, and horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Hycner (1985) offers an interesting explanation of the process of data analysis when using phenomenological research approach: "...unlike other methodologies, phenomenology cannot be reduced to a 'cookbook' set of instructions, It is more an approach, an attitude, an investigative posture with a certain set of goals." Similarly, Giorgi (1997) expresses that there is a possibility that any research method analysis might arise when trying to be responsive to a phenomenon, as such there is no method of data analysis that is arbitrarily imposed when trying to explain a phenomenon.

As is the case with most qualitative research analyses, the process of phenomenologically analyzing interview data includes transcription first. During this process, I included the literal statements of the participants and tried to note para-linguistic communication of participants. One of the most important steps when analyzing an interview from a phenomenological lens is bracketing. This requires the researcher to approach the recordings and transcriptions with openness to whatever meaning they give (Hycney, 1985). Thus it was required that I enter into the world of the participants by suspending my predispositions and biases regarding the interpretation of what participants were saying. By staying true to the data, I engaged myself in a rigorous process of coming up with a context that would help me categorize the data. I carefully read the transcriptions of the interviews several times and came up with an a-priori template relevant to the research questions. For this reason, the data analysis of this study was done primarily through thematic analysis. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) explain that this process involves identifying themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data." Boyatzis (1998) defines a theme as "a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at

maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 4). I composed broad preliminary code categories that were descriptive of the phenomena. Analysis at this point was guided by but not necessarily confined to those codes. During the process of coding transcripts, inductive codes were assigned to those segments of data that described new themes observed in the text. Some of the emerging codes were separate from the predetermined ones; others were expanded from the preliminary code categories. Eventually, codes were clustered under headings that related to the research questions. According to King (2004), a thematic analysis could be employed to a phenomenological approach, since conceptual themes do develop during the analysis and the clustering is done into broader groupings, where eventually 'master themes' are identified. In the case of my study, 4 master themes emerged which revolved around the following problematic:

1. Participants' experiences and attitudes on interethnic interaction in a segregated setting
2. The issues of curricula taught in segregated education system
3. Their opinions on possibilities for an integrated education system, and
4. Their understanding and standpoints on interethnic reconciliation.

Each of the master themes included subsidiary themes of their own. The lower-order or subsidiary codes did evolve in an inductive way, while I was going through the data back and forth until the data was exhausted. Although the phenomenological approach requires an analysis of individual cases in greater depth before attempting any integration of a full set of cases, utilizing a-priori themes proved to be more practical in categorizing the data due to the fact that this study involved a larger data set than phenomenological studies usually do. In addition, King (2004) justifies the usage of thematic analysis in cases where the research involves perspectives of different groups within a specific context. In order to investigate the topic properly, my research also included a philosophical orientation prior to conducting the interviews, specifically the academic literature, my own personal experience, and informal evidence. All these contributed to guiding the coding process. The coding categories that were not relevant in addressing the research questions were eventually eliminated. In the end, the above-mentioned 4 central themes that were added and slightly modified from the initial a priori themes seemed to illuminate the worlds and experiences of participants in the best way.

3.6 Limitations

While phenomenological and cross-cultural research provide for rich description, the methodological limitations include the complexity of their design that requires extended time and effort (Creswell, 2003). It is important to mention that the process of this research was limited by several factors. Marshall and Rossman (1980) mention how human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, in my case the physical setting in which the interviews in North Mitrovica took place could be considered as one of the limitations, as I was not able to observe the behavior of participants in a school setting. In addition, my positionality as a Kosovo Albanian student who is conducting the research in the field of education as a part of a master's program in Oslo, Norway with the assistance of local stakeholders, might have affected answers of the participants, causing them to become either suspicious or more hesitant about their responses. Another limitation was the language barrier between North Mitrovica participants and myself, as I possess a very basic understanding of the Serbian language. Thus interviews had to be conducted with the help of a translator/interpreter. I experienced drawbacks in having an equal study size on both sides; the initial aim was to have 20 research participants from each side, South and North Mitrovica, respectively. This was not possible due to the challenging political and socioeconomic circumstances in Kosovo that cause the education employees to go on strikes during the time that the fieldwork was conducted. School principals in South Mitrovica served as gatekeepers through whom, among others, I also recruited parent participants. Unfortunately, due to the strikes, it was unmanageable to reach them for the recruitment of two more parents in one of the schools in South Mitrovica. Lastly, I did everything I could to be aware of my own biases and attempted to set them aside. Nonetheless, I have to recognize that my personal experience of the conflict is yet another limitation in terms of bias on the interpretation of the results of the study.

3.7 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter described in details the study's research methodology. A qualitative phenomenological research approach was used to explore how participants in South and North Mitrovica experience the segregated education system and how the segregated education system impacts interethnic relations, while exploring implications for an integrated education system and interethnic reconciliation in post conflict Kosovo. The participants' sample of 38 individuals was selected both purposefully and through the snowball method. Data was collected through personal

semi-structured interviews and participatory observation, and was further coded by NVivo software using the method of thematic analysis. Limitations of this study included my own positionality, modification of sample size in South Mitrovica, language barrier, and the inability to conduct interviews in school settings in North Mitrovica. The following chapter provides discussion and analysis of the findings with data excerpts that helped support and explain each finding.

Chapter IV. Discussion and Analysis

4.1 Overview of the Study

This chapter presents and discusses the key findings identified from 38 in-depth interviews with the selected participants. The main purpose of this thesis was to research and analyze how students, parents, teachers and principals of secondary schools in North and South Mitrovica experience and understand the ethnically segregated education system in relation to its role in post-conflict relations between the two ethnic groups. The research attempts to address this aim through participants' opinions on the implementation of curricula in both systems with a focus on the interpretation of textbooks and the pedagogical practices of teachers, specifically on topics related to the history of conflict and dealing with the past. In line with this, the research attempts to shed light on possibilities for an integrated education system in the future, and the extent to which education contributes to the reconciliation process. As mentioned in the previous chapter, data was analyzed using thematic reflection in relation to the research questions. Consequently, four main themes that are central to answering the overarching questions of this study emerged from the data analyses:

- 1) (Un) readiness for Intergroup Contact
- 2) Teaching and Learning Contested Curricula
- 3) Prospects for an Integrated Education System
- 4) Stances on interethnic reconciliation.

These themes are followed by their corresponding sub-themes and backed up by excerpts in the form of quotations from participants' interviews in order to highlight, through their own voices, how

they understand and experience the phenomena. In cases of direct quotations, participants' pseudonyms are cited and identified by their position in the study (parent, student, teacher, principal), gender (male, female), and the region to which they correspond (South/North Mitrovica).

4.2 (Un) Readiness for Intergroup Contact

The first theme, **(Un) Readiness for Intergroup Contact**, relates to the first sub-research question ['How does participants' experiences of being segregated in schools and their everyday lives affect their willingness to interact with the other group?'](#). In this theme participants shared their opinions and experiences on how the everyday physical separation shapes their attitudes toward the other group. In addition, where possible, they also elaborated on their previous contact experiences. Several subthemes emerged from participants' argumentations that positioned participants' willingness for intergroup contact between the two conflicting communities. Resistance to intergroup contact among participants was interlinked with prolonged physical segregation and entrenched prejudices, and strong attachment to in-group identity. On the other hand, a more neutral and positive stance was correlated with previous out-group contact experiences and with the idea of facilitating intergroup contact in an educational context.

4.2.1 Prolonged Separation and Entrenched Prejudices

The majority of participants in South Mitrovica expressed opposition to the structure of the segregated education system. Around 11 participants suggested that the prolonged physical separation of the two ethnicities and the lack of inter-group contact reinforced prejudices and moved the two communities further apart from each other. Four students in South Mitrovica talked about how they were 'raised with' and 'taught' the idea that the two ethnicities should be separated from one another from an early age. One student explained:

We judge each other based on our ethnicity very much. We are very separated from each other and we do not have any interaction at all. I feel that it is almost impossible to interact with Serbs, and get to know who they truly are because we only hear bad things about each other. (Male student, South Mitrovica)

Primarily this confirms that individuals from groups that have a history of animosity with each other

endorse more stereotypical attitudes against the individuals of the out-group members (Brown & Hewston, 2005; Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). In addition, it supports the argument on intergroup contact that when structural forces limit the opportunities for intergroup contact by tolerating segregation, negative social norms such as prejudices and stereotypes are increased (Massey & Denton, 1993). Half of the teacher respondents in South Mitrovica held parents responsible for imposing prejudiced attitudes and opinions on their children towards the other ethnic group. This indication was also supported by students' statements who expressed that they were raised with the opinion that Serbs are "bad people" thus they have no interest in interacting with ethnic Serbs. In addition, teacher participants in South Mitrovica argued that the persistent ethnic separation in educational settings and the dichotomous narratives taught in these education institutions feed the existing prejudices. Teachers drew a strong association between the politicized education systems and the high level of prejudices between the youth of the two ethnic groups. One teacher in South Mitrovica highlighted that the depiction of each community as the "enemy" in both Serbian and Albanian education systems in Kosovo contributed to increased prejudices:

In both education systems, students are taught about who their "enemies" are, which only feeds prejudices amongst each other. This makes children hesitant to establish any sort of contact with each other. It does not allow them to see that there are no significant differences between us. (Male teacher, South Mitrovica)

In line with Allport's theory of intergroup contact and the argument on the necessity for institutional support on the reduction of prejudices, this finding demonstrates that when individuals are fed by negative ideologies through institutions such as schools or families, the level of antagonistic attitudes and prejudices toward the rival out-group increases (Allport, 1954; Van Zomeren et al., 2007; Sartori, 2016).

As anticipated, there was an observable difference between the views of participants in North and South Mitrovica regarding the situation of living separately and the possibility of intergroup contact. Although, almost half of the teacher participants from North Mitrovica agreed that segregation at school affected interethnic relations as it contributed to the perpetuation of ethnic prejudices, the vast majority of participants (15 out of 20) in North Mitrovica evaluated the lack of contact between students of both ethnic groups as less risky for a violent conflict. The stance of skepticism for intergroup contact was more prominent among student participants in North Mitrovica, as they

appeared doubtful that ethnic prejudices could be reduced due to the longevity of living separately and the close proximity of the war period, as illustrated in the example above:

I think that any kind of interaction between Serbs and Albanians has potential to end in a physical conflict. Probably because historically, the war years are still close and we never interacted with each other before. (Male student, North Mitrovica)

Around 8 student participants in both North and South Mitrovica considered that due to the established prejudices, the idea of intergroup contact would make matters worse and produce conflict between the youth of the two ethnic groups. One student from South Mitrovica said:

By having contact, students can express their prejudices through bullying and discriminating against each other. This can most probably lead to a violent conflict. (Male student, South Mitrovica)

Evidence demonstrates that although both sides recognized that segregation affected interethnic relations as it contributed to the re-creation of prejudices, most participants were hesitant, anxious and had negative attitudes when it came to intergroup contact between the two conflicting communities. According to them, prejudices were already fixed against each other and this posed a threat for a potential conflict in case contact takes place. By adopting the concept of intergroup anxiety and intergroup ideology, this shows that under conditions of negative information for the out-group, there is an increase in prejudices, and individuals of an in-group tend to feel more threatened toward the out-group (Allport, 1954; Stephan & Stephan 1985; Van Zomeren et al., 2007). These factors help to partially explain why both groups are more likely to avoid contact with each other. The second theme shows indication on how strong emotional investment to the in-group identity affected the present state of the interethnic relations between the two communities.

4.2.2 Strong Attachment to In-group Identity

While prejudices proved to be reinforced by the current situation, social identity also proved to be salient among participants. Student participants in both North and South Mitrovica displayed a

strong emotional attachment to their in-group identity. Firstly, these findings show to be in conformity with Vygotsky's (1934) idea that the mental functioning of the individual has socio-cultural roots. Secondly, as Maloku et al., 2016 suggested, it was confirmed that national identity, comprised of ethnicity and religion, represented the badge of differences between the two groups. In accordance with these findings, McGlynn et al., affirm that individuals tend to show strong emotional attachment to their identities in cases when identity is associated with ethnic or religious components. Both sides categorized differences between each other through social cues such as speech (the use of different languages), culture and beliefs. The strength of students' in-group identity also influenced their attitudes on interethnic relations. Intergroup contact would mean, "sacrificing" one of the defining characteristics of their in-group identity. In the case of Albanian students, not reciprocating contact by speaking the language of each other, was associated with a threat to social identity, as seen in the following example:

If I had no other choice but to communicate with Serb students in their language, then I would expect them to speak to me in the Albanian language because it needs to be a reciprocated thing. (Female student, South Mitrovica)

Similarly, Serbian students considered language and having "different faiths" as the main challenges for contact and preferred to stay "at a distance" from each other. One teacher participant from North Mitrovica elaborated on this point:

Our children are educated in a different cultural spirit. The younger generation does not speak the same language in any sense. In case a contact happens, I see a very high possibility of conflict between them. (Male teacher, North Mitrovica)

Around 15 participants (out of 38) considered their ethnic and religious identity differences as the main barriers for intergroup contact and displayed reluctance to interact with each other, given such distinctiveness between the two ethnic groups. In accordance, Tajfel's (1978) SIT, it was detected that when individuals identify strongly with their in-group, they focus more on the attributes that distinguish them from the out-group. While striving to maintain a positive perception for their in-group, participants on both sides explicitly highlighted the prototypical differences between them based on the characteristics that they identify themselves with the most (ethnicity, culture and religion), which also warranted their reluctance to interact with each other.

4.2.3 Previous Out-Group Contact Experiences

There were indications that cross-community interactions with ethnicities other than Serbs and Albanians among students on both sides, affected positively out-group attitudes with a reduced level of prejudices and willingness for intergroup contact. Such a discovery is compatible with findings in previous studies, which confirmed that reduced prejudices and openness for contact with the out-group are positively correlated with having other cross-group friendships (Al Ramiah et al., 2013). As such, participants who were able to interact more frequently with fellow students from other ethnic groups were more likely to be open to interact with Albanian/Serbian peers, respectively. A student's statement from North Mitrovica is indicative of this point:

I have friends who practice different religions, and I have no problem or prejudice against them, as long as their behavior is positive. I wouldn't feel any different if they happened to be Albanian too. (Female student, North Mitrovica)

Likewise students in South Mitrovica that attended "inclusive schools" with peers from other minority communities in Kosovo displayed a more positive attitude towards mixing with the out-group and interacting with them, including Serbian students. This also relates to the ideological component of the contact experience that affects attitudes toward the out-group (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Van Zomeren et al., 2007). In this case the positive ideology promoted in schools such as inclusivity contributed to a reduced level of prejudices and more openness for intergroup contact. The readiness for intergroup contact was correlated also to participants' personal previous experience of interacting with "the other". Prior negative experiences of intergroup contact between the two conflicting ethnicities were correlated with increased out-group prejudices and a reduced readiness for a recurring intergroup contact. This was the case among two students in South Mitrovica, explained by one of them in the following excerpt where he also refers to the Serbian counterpart with the pronoun "they":

Once, when I went across the bridge to the north side...they were very unwelcoming, they threatened and offended us. I think neither the education that they receive at school, nor the one at home causes them to be this aggressive. It is because mainly most of them don't go to school, hang out in the streets all the time and are influenced by negative peer pressure.

(Male student, South Mitrovica)

On the other hand, participants who had positive intergroup contact expressed positive out-group attitudes followed by a readiness for intergroup contact. This was highlighted in the way several students and teacher participants on both sides described the Albanian and Serbian individuals that they interacted with, by referring to them as “helpful”, “good” and “normal” people. Therefore, in line with Binder et al., (2009), it can be considered that prior experience of intergroup contact predicted later out-group attitudes between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. This case illustrates that the extent to which contact was positive or negative, also predicted the attitudes that student participants on both sides had toward the out-group.

The experiences of participants’ parents with ‘the other’ group were undoubtedly influential in explaining out-group attitudes and readiness for intergroup interaction. Fifteen out of 34 students and teachers from both sides shared stories of how their parents used to socialize with one another in the era of Former Republic of Yugoslavia. The extent to which parents had previous positive experiences with individuals from the other ethnicity seemed to be a very important factor. Fifty percent of the students in both South and North Mitrovica, whose parents socialized previously with individuals of Serb and Albanian ethnicity respectively, did not hold negative opinions about the other group and were more willing to accept to interact with them, as shown in the example below:

Mitrovica always had a multiethnic environment. I know that my parents went to school together with Albanians, and they still have Albanian friends. They would be supportive of me socializing with Albanians, as long as there is no violence or conflict. (Male Student, North Mitrovica)

This finding was observed among three students in North Mitrovica, who similarly recalled the time prior to the violent conflict when their parents socialized with Albanians, and claimed that there are also “good Albanians”. One student in South Mitrovica shared her parents’ experience of being friends with someone of Serbian ethnicity to the point of reducing her negative biases towards Serbians:

My father did have a Serb colleague. We used to play together with their children, and they were very polite and nice to us. I never remember once that he made us feel uncomfortable

or asked questions about our religion or ethnicity. I was able to see that there are also nice Serbs. (Female Student, South Mitrovica)

Conversely, students whose parents had prior negative intergroup experiences did not express any desire for intergroup contact. Most students from North Mitrovica expressed reluctant views such as feeling “scared”, “doubtful” and “uncomfortable” in case of intergroup contact. These findings illuminate on the extended contact hypothesis (Wright et al., 1997) as it was shown that having an in-group member (in this case parents) who had previous contact experience with an out-group member, did influence student participants’ attitude and level of prejudices toward the out-group. In this case, student participants’ attitudes were influenced both positively and negatively depending on the experience of the contact that their parents had.

4.2.4. Arranged Intergroup Contact in an Educational Context

On a more positive note, student and teacher participants in both South and North Mitrovica provided possible alternatives for facilitating successful intergroup contact, which included intergroup contact under educational circumstances. Around 10 teachers on both sides believed that intergroup activities facilitated in an educational setting created an opportunity for mutual acquaintance and could enhance students’ understanding and acceptance of the other group members. In North Mitrovica teachers suggested that intergroup contact established for educational purposes would “benefit students” in that they would “learn new things from each other”. When questioned on whether they believe interethnic meetings for educational purposes could change negative attitudes and stereotypes, 6 out of 8 students in South Mitrovica answered positively. Consequently they mentioned that such activities do not have to necessarily take place in schools, and that it could include sports, arts, or other extracurricular educational programs. A student participant from South Mitrovica affirmed:

I think that having more frequent contact with Serbs, outside school first, would make the relationships better and less tense between each other. If you meet the same person on a regular basis, there is no chance that you will not be able to have some sort of interaction with them. I would certainly socialize with a Serbian person, in circumstances such as while

playing games or other activities. (Male Student, South Mitrovica)

4 out of 8 students from North Mitrovica were more doubtful about this idea, however they did address the possibility that meeting each other more often within an educational and/or sports context “ might help in overcoming differences” between each other. For example:

Perhaps if we start meeting each other about sports or education projects we could become friends. I am really not sure because I do not have any prior experience with Albanians. (Male Student, North Mitrovica)

Students who expressed these opinions also emphasized that what matters the most is “for them to be good people”, when elaborating on the conditions under which they would be ready to interact with students from the other Serbian/Albanian ethnic group. Such findings indicate that activities with educational purposes could serve as a starting point for the facilitation of intergroup contact between the two groups. Facilitating contact in an educational setting would provide a space where intergroup conflict could be lightened as they fulfill the optimal conditions for an effective intergroup contact such as equal status, cooperation and repeated interaction (Allport, 1954; Wagner & Hewstone, 2012).

4.3 Teaching and Learning Contested Curricula

The findings on the second theme, ***Teaching and Learning Contested Curricula***, attempt to answer the sub-question: *‘What are the opinions and experiences of participants on the current national curricula, focusing on pedagogical practices and textbook references to conflict and dealing with the past?’*. Accordingly, results of this theme delve deeper into the phenomena of the segregated education by elaborating the ways that the current national curricula in both systems deal with the past and address war facts. Participants’ answers offered insights on the content of textbooks and on the pedagogical practices used to tackle these topics. Subthemes that emerged showed that both curricula taught contested narratives regarding the past, and in the case of South Mitrovica, responses of student and teacher participants implied that the present pedagogical practices are rather influenced by the memorialization of war trauma.

4.3.1 Teaching and Learning Incompatible Pasts and Facts

The powerful effect of contested historical narratives in both Albanian and Serbian curricula in Kosovo was detected when participants talked about how the existing national curricula present the multifaceted events and outcomes of the conflict in Kosovo. The following findings represent the practice of Bush & Saltarelli's (200) paradigm of negative face of education, whereby educational practices in the face of the present ethnic tensions, contribute to keeping the two communities further apart.

Large differences were noted in the interpretations of the historical past in the textbooks of Kosovo and Serbian education system. A consistent thread in participants' interviews in South Mitrovica, when addressing historical events and the past, was focused on the crimes committed by Serbs against Albanians. Phrases such as "violated", "discriminated", "killed", were constant during students' descriptions of Serbian wrongdoings to the Albanian population. The description by four student participants about the historical past learned from textbooks in the national curricula of Kosovo highlighted the underlying ideological principle that guides the representation of history in the current national curricula, which is constructed around the divisive narrative of 'victims' (us) and 'perpetrators' (them). This is demonstrated this explanation from a student:

In History, we learn about how Serbs started the war for territories. We learned that the means, which they used to conquer these territories, involved many massacres and killings along the way. (Female student, South Mitrovica)

Half of South Mitrovica student participants perceived the ethnically motivated violence as one sided and embraced the self-image of Albanians as victims. As with most cases of being educated in a post-conflict setting, the victim vs. perpetrator narrative contributes to the creation of the new ethno-centric national narrative and to the endorsement of generalization and stereotypes (Davies, 2004; Zembylas, 2008; Zembylas & Bekerman 2012; Gashi, 2016). The following excerpt of another student in South Mitrovica illustrates this:

Some people don't want to learn historical facts and events, because the truth of what they did hurts them. I am not sure if Serb students learn the terror and genocide that Serbia

caused to our nation. I think that they don't even learn about what they did in many countries. (Female student, South Mitrovica)

These findings support Zembyla's and Bekerman's (2012) extensive research in Cypriot and Israeli post-conflict context, where they discovered that the narratives grounded on the assumption that only one side was victimized during the conflict perpetuated stereotypes of the ethnic other, and supported an ethos of conflict continuation. Additionally, such narrative of presenting the history of conflict is common in education in post-conflict societies as it helps in denouncing the narrative of the enemy (Davies, 2004).

In North Mitrovica, the dominant narrative that surrounded the conflict between the two ethnicities was that of silencing the past. The common concern among all participants in North Mitrovica was that addressing the topic of conflict in classrooms could possibly generate new interethnic tensions.. Most participants in North Mitrovica highlighted that the topic of the past would also bring politics and nationalism into the classroom. One teacher added:

There is really no need to talk about the past because it would boost the tensioned situation. The curriculum does not emphasize this, as we do not want to mix it with politics, and propagate nationalism. (Female teacher, North Mitrovica)

These findings confirm that the current narrative in Serbian curricula deprives its population from developing an identity that allows the understanding of multiple perspectives of a conflict, and it distances them from the social truth of the conflict (Ristić & Petrović, 2017; Datzberger & Donovan).

In line with previous studies (Kostovicova, 2005;Gashi, 2016; YIHR KS 2017), the outdated and misrepresented facts in relation to the key events that surround the conflict were also confirmed by the answers of participants' in both education systems. The explanations that geography teachers in South and North Mitrovica provided about the territorial borders of Kosovo were presented in a complete contradiction with each other. Accordingly, in South Mitrovica students learn about Kosovo being an independent state after the constant territorial "threats" and "aggressions" from the long-term "enemy", Serbia. While in North Mitrovica, students learn that Kosovo is a part of Serbia and that the situation of borders "might" be subjected to changes.

Opportunely, student in South Mitrovica talked about the misrepresentation and distortion of

historical facts in Kosovo school textbooks more broadly and openly than students in North Mitrovica. Four students in South Mitrovica explicitly asserted they thought that the Kosovo war in textbooks was told in a very “aggressive tone”. Additionally, they did not rule out the possibility that some facts could be “one-sided”, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

Everyone who reads our history textbooks would say, “Oh look what they did to Albanians”! I am not saying that Albanians did something very wrong to Serbs, but if they did, we never got the chance to learn that in our schools. (Male student, South Mitrovica).

Students in North Mitrovica were more hesitant to talk about the topic of the conflict and less likely to perceive any biases in the Serbian curriculum and textbooks. Their only statement was that there are no discussions in classrooms about the conflict, which again endorses the argument that Serbian education institutions choose to silence the past. The viewpoint of the parents in North Mitrovica also documented this narrative, since according to them it may be ‘risky’ for conflict continuation between the new generations.

Remarkably, teacher participants from both sides were united in their criticism about the inaccurate and outdated facts presented in civic textbooks. In South Mitrovica, teacher participants openly shared that the current textbooks are not on par with the national curriculum and most of them were very critical of the presence of hate language in them. One history teacher vocally addressed this issue:

In some history textbooks, the author refers to Serbians using the ethnic slur “chetnik Serbs”. Furthermore, in these textbooks, the atrocities of Serbian paramilitary force are described quite graphically on how they “massacred thousands of Albanians”, “exercised continuous violence and terror on the Albanian population”, the word “reprisal” is used continuously throughout the modules describing the conflict. I would strongly suggest for the language of hatred to be taken out of the current history textbooks because it is dangerous for our kids to be educated in this spirit. (Female teacher, South Mitrovica)

On this note, all teachers and school principals in South Mitrovica professed that there have been continuous promises from the relevant institutions for the development of new textbooks, but no

actions have been taken in this regard. Although teachers in North Mitrovica were more diffident about having the conversation about how the past is tackled in the Serbian curriculum, they nonetheless acknowledged that the current textbooks do not touch upon the subject of the conflict that happened in 1998-1999. What became clear during the interviews was that teachers in North Mitrovica were cognizant of the pedagogical challenges that they experience when talking about the conflict, as they have to comply with the educational content presented in the curricula. Three out of six teachers in North Mitrovica expressed criticism about the curriculum's failure to transmit accurate information to the new generation. One teacher articulated:

There have been new publications of textbooks, but the content has remained the same. This would be one of my few complaints regarding the Serbian Curriculum. There are no historical events regarding the conflict of 1999 documented in textbooks, in some history textbooks not even the war in Bosnia & Hercegovina. They should be added because the young generation should learn about the past in an objective manner. (Female teacher, North Mitrovica).

When asked how they deal with the incompatibility of textbooks with the curriculum and their own beliefs, teachers and principals on both sides claimed that the curriculum allowed them a certain degree of autonomy. Most teachers explicitly asserted that they pursued a personal strategy by using additional materials to deviate from what they disagreed with, and instead taught with input from their own beliefs about what should be addressed regarding the past events. In South Mitrovica teachers expressed that they pursued pedagogy of interaction and discussion, which stimulated classroom debates with questions, related to human rights abuses and discrimination of minorities. They asserted that this approach helped children think more critically about the information that they get from textbooks and it aided them in creating a less biased stance on complex topics such as the conflict. In North Mitrovica teachers mentioned using additional material and literature in classroom to address objectively some of the historical facts that were not presented in textbooks, as the following example illustrates:

I usually add new materials such as documentaries. It motivates students to learn more about the history of their nation. I showed them a documentary about the war in Bosnia and how the Dayton agreement between Serbs, Bosnians and Croats happened because it is

an important event in Balkan history and is not included in the textbooks. (Male teacher, North Mitrovica)

The findings above confirm that the current pedagogical practices of both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs teachers were affected by the ideology of the political context in which the national curricula are produced (Rexhaj et al., 2010; Horner et al., 2015). Nonetheless, their demonstration of analytical thinking regarding the way that the current national curricula and educational materials addresses the violent past between the two ethnicities, accounts as presumably promising.

4.3.2 Post-War Memorialization in Classroom

Remembrance of war trauma in classroom was present among the pedagogical practices of three out of six teachers in South Mitrovica. In the case of North Mitrovica, participants' avoidance of the topic of the conflict hinted that the current practices suppressed the memory of war, and at the same time failed to acknowledge the victimhood and the suffering of the Albanian community. In South Mitrovica, several students used the metaphor of "fresh wound" when referring to the conflict. The trauma experience was very visible in the structure of language used by participants when describing unfortunate occurrences. A principal in one of the schools in South Mitrovica elaborated on the emotional value of war memories by sharing that some of the teachers in school still struggle with the war trauma and the "devastating consequences of the war" because of the loss of their family members during the Serbian regime. Such finding suggests that teacher's past experience of the conflict influences their agency during the instruction process (Lopez Cardozo & Shah, 2016)

The practice of collective memory in classrooms in South Mitrovica presents once again how one's own society is perceived as the victim of 'the other'. In line with Baliqi's (2017) conclusions, it was revealed that the public narrative of collective memory in Kosovo is passed on to the young generation with a strong emphasis on the sorrows undergone for the protection of Kosovo Albanian national identity. During the conversations, students replicated the emotions that they considered as shared, by showing solidarity and empathy towards teachers who experienced traumas of war. This links us to Worsham's (1998) concept of "schooling of emotion" which asserts that certain pedagogical practices related to struggles of war traumas guide the way in which students also should feel about those traumas. When sharing their teachers' stories, students consistently used

the phrases such as “suffering” and “struggling” to emphasize the strong emotions related to war trauma. The following examples illustrate this:

Our history teacher I reckon that has been affected by war herself, and whenever we talk about it we can feel it how she has been impacted by it. She has experienced a lot of suffering herself. For example the way that she explained the case of Jashari family was as if it had happened to us. (Male Student, South Mitrovica)

Our teachers told us how before, those who were teachers struggled a lot and had to teach their students in Albanian language secretly from Serbs. I think we should really know about these instances, in order to appreciate the freedom of studying and going to school that we have today. (Female Student, South Mitrovica)

Results illustrate that students in South Mitrovica are most likely exposed to the generational legacy of war memory through Hirsch’s idea of “second-hand memories” that are passed on to them usually by their teachers, those who have experienced the memories, as this generation of students has little to no personal war experience (Baliqi, 2017). The following response of a teacher in South Mitrovica illuminates this case:

There are cases when we discuss about the war in Kosovo, and I tell my students that when I was their age, the conditions were not this nice. Someone had to look after the door for me to be able to study in Albanian language. Students often ask me why did we resist so much to the point of risking our lives for this nation. I tell them that we had to sacrifice a lot in order to contribute to a better future for our kids. (Male Teacher, South Mitrovica)

4.4 Prospects for Integrated Education

The third theme, ***Prospects for Integrated Education***, links to the third sub-research question, [‘How do participants perceive the possibility for an integrated education in Kosovo in the near future?’](#) .

Therefore it describes participants’ understanding of integrated education system and their opinions on the chances of establishing an integrated education system in Kosovo in the future. A vast number of participants, particularly in South Mitrovica, elaborated on the conditions that they

considered important for an integrated education system to take place. These conditions were related to a peaceful and respectful environment that, according to participants, included reciprocity in learning each other's language, teaching youth about conflict prevention and resolution, and how to live in a multiethnic society. Though the majority of participants claimed that the implementation of an integrated education system in Kosovo would be very challenging and problematic due to evident barriers such as political tensions between Serbia and Kosovo, contrasting history and culture, and students' safety. The latter also proved to be one of the main reasons why participants in North Mitrovica asserted that being educated separately is the best solution for now.

4.4.1 Integrated Education Acceptable under 'Respectful' and 'Peaceful' Circumstances

"Peace" and "respect" came up as concepts when participants described the conditions under which an integrated education system could work as a solution to promote cross-community understanding and contact. Students in South Mitrovica expressed their concern that there are not enough activities that would promote peace and reduce prejudices between students from the two ethnicities, which would help in the long run in order for the two ethnic groups to be educated together. One student provided her opinion on this:

I think that there should be more peaceful activities undertaken that would bring together all communities first. I think we should have an extracurricular class that would prepare us for an integrated system and would teach us more about peace, how not to be divided on the basis of ethnicity and how not to have prejudices towards people who have a different ethnic background. (Female student, South Mitrovica)

Teaching and learning each other's language was generally considered as a potential tool that could serve as a starting point for an integrated education. In general, most teachers in South Mitrovica (native Albanian speakers) were already fluent in Serbian language and asserted that learning the Serbian language would be beneficial in boosting communication and building trust between the youth of the two communities. Additionally, they explained that the level of interest of Albanian-speaking students to learn the Serbian language was quite high. This sentiment is illustrated by the example below

Students are quite interested in learning Serbian language; they ask me quite often to

translate some words from Serbian to Albanian. I myself speak it fluently, and I think it would be a good idea to put it as a separate subject in Albanian speaking schools. (Female teacher, South Mitrovica)

Notably, teachers and two parents in South and North Mitrovica acknowledged that learning each other's language could be an asset for both sides since it would help the young generation in creating a more "diverse identity". History teachers in North Mitrovica provided optimistic answers on the possibility that learning each other's language could be serve as a future tool to bring the communities together in an educational surrounding in the future:

I personally would learn the Albanian language. Speaking more languages only makes you culturally richer. I always like to discuss about history with people of different nationalities. If I had Albanian colleagues, I would be glad to work with them and speak the same language. (Male teacher, North Mitrovica)

The above-mentioned answers mirror optimism on a potential way to bring the two communities together. The openness of most participants to learn each other's language constitutes a sign that both communities could make a step forward in terms of finding a mutual understanding and respecting each other's differences. This could also lead the way to also promoting peace and tolerance between the two groups (Hashmi, 2014).

Teaching youth about ways to prevent and resolve conflict was another idea that came up among 12 out of 38 participants from South and North Mitrovica, as a stepping-stone to an integrated education system. Students and teachers in South Mitrovica mentioned a training activities by GIZ organization (The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) on how to prevent conflict from escalating to violence and how to resolve it. Accordingly, they expressed that such activities could help to change the mindset of students in the future and prepare them "to manage and resolve a conflict in a peaceful and constructive way" in the future. A school principal and two other teacher participants in South Mitrovica, proposed that the current curriculum should include " a new factual subject" on how European countries managed to overcome conflicts such as Serbia and Kosovo. A geography teacher expanded on his thought:

Students should be provided with information on how other countries overcame obstacles such as conflicts and managed to exist peacefully after that. The same way French and German people managed to resolve their misunderstandings and were able to break down the barriers of enmities, we could do the same. When we educate our children properly about humane values and not to hate each other, we could consider the idea of facilitating contact between them in an integrated education. (Male teacher, South Mitrovica)

Although the opinions of participants in North Mitrovica were less positively open, 4 teachers suggested that youth should be taught “conflict and violence are bad”. Moreover, one history teacher also mentioned the importance of acknowledging the mistakes of one’ ethnic group, as illustrated in the example below:

In order for the young generation to have a healthy foundation for the love of their state they must be informed about and accept the mistakes of their own country. (Male teacher, Mitrovica)

Similar opinions were also voiced amongst two students in North Mitrovica:

Before bringing us together, young people should first be taught about how to prevent the mistakes of the past from happening again, to prevent violent confrontation and how to collaborate with each other for a common solution to the conflict. (Female student, North Mitrovica)

On a related note, 16 out of 38 participants talked about the importance of teaching youth how to live in a multiethnic society in order to bring these two communities together in a school environment. Emphasis was placed upon teaching the values of democracy and citizenship, and introducing the virtues of peace, equality and respect among students. Half of student participants in South Mitrovica expressed enthusiasm about participating in a multiethnic education system. The following comment illustrates this sentiment:

I would love to attend an education system that says stop to discrimination, prejudices and mocking towards other cultures, religions and ethnicities. I think it would be good for all of us. (Female Student, South Mitrovica)

Teachers in South Mitrovica, considered the idea of the integrated education system as ‘idyllic’ for the development of the country and proposed its implementation as a pilot project, as seen in the following statements:

We have already lived together for years, despite of war, thus it is very important to educate our children in a multiethnic environment. In other countries, such education systems proved to be successful not only in bringing the students from two parallel communities closer to each other, but also in increasing the quality of education. If a child starts to view Serbs, Roma, Bosniaks and people with special needs equally, this is when a society reaches its maximum standard of good education and culture. (Female teacher, South Mitrovica)

In our context especially, in Mitrovica, it would have been a good idea to have a pilot project of an integrated education. Our school serves as a good example of integrating different communities in one school, and I think it would be very welcoming of Serbian students as well. There is a very good spirit of cooperation in this school, starting from the principal, working staff and including students. An integrated education system, would have definitely called for a solution in bringing together the children of the two parallel communities in Mitrovica. (Male teacher, South Mitrovica)

Although teachers in North Mitrovica did not provide noticeable positive responses to the establishment of an integrated education system, 2 of them emphasized that due to the general multiethnic nature in Kosovo, it was “*very important to educate children to respect each other and live together in peace, regardless of their ethnicity or religious background*” (Male Teacher, North Mitrovica).

Yet most student participants in North Mitrovica expressed skepticism and were not enthusiastic about the idea of going to the same school with Kosovo Albanian students. Students who held more neutral views provided answers that indicated their vision of integrated education as something that could happen in a further future, as illustrated in the following example:

I think both sides have their own education system that fits them best. But if it has to happen at one point for both communities to go to the same schools, it could be after 50

years maybe. (Male student, North Mitrovica)

Although right now is not the best time for this, we could think about it as an option for our future children. I want my child to live and be educated in normal conditions here one day, to be educated in such way as not to hate anyone and to respect everything that is different.

(Female student, North Mitrovica)

Participants' responses in this theme provide a moderately optimistic foresight for chances of an integrated education system in Kosovo. This optimism was primarily displayed from participants in South Mitrovica, as their responses demonstrated to endorse the main pillars of integrated education, which include viewing members of societies from an inclusive lens. The mere fact of mentioning the importance of principles such as respecting each other's languages, accepting differences, promoting non-violence relates to the range of practices and pedagogies that characterize the humanistic discourse of integrated education systems in other conflicted societies (Deeb & Kinani, 2013; Zembylas et al., 2016; Duncan & Lopes Cardozo, 2017). In addition, it is important to mention that although low in number, several participants in North Mitrovica mentioned that learning 'how to acknowledge the past mistakes' was an important component to teach the children, which is also considered as one of the main facilitators of the reconciliation process (Staub et al., 2005).

4.4.2 Challenges to an Integrated Education

More than half of participants explained that there are certain very problematic challenges for the establishment of an integrated education system in Kosovo. The current political circumstance between Kosovo and Serbia was named as one of the leading obstacles for this, as they were mentioned by the majority of participants in South and North Mitrovica. Generally, participants displayed weariness from the tiring political situation and the fruitless efforts to bring the communities together.

In North Mitrovica, participants were more negatively outspoken about the chances for integrated education. School principals in North Mitrovica assessed the idea as "difficult" and "impossible" to be realized, as presented in the following statement:

It is impossible to harmonize a unified education system with the current political situation in Kosovo. It would present major challenges in the teaching process, in developing the educational content, and many other spheres. (Female principal, North Mitrovica)

Equally, most teachers and parents in North Mitrovica were not very keen to talk about this topic while emphasizing that politics influences youth and outweighs education:

I'm not very enthusiastic to talk about this topic. In other countries they might have been able to solve the war tensions and establish such systems. While in our case, government intolerance is channeled to people and politics leads the way. (Male parent, North Mitrovica)

Numerous participants in South Mitrovica highlighted that the Serbian community in North Mitrovica is the one influenced by politics in Serbia, which makes them “isolated” from the rest of society and “uncooperative” in bringing youth together through education. One of the principals in the South explained his failed efforts to engage students from the Serbian community in North Mitrovica in joint activities because of political elite forces:

I proposed organizing a joint football tournament where students from all communities would play together and interact with each other. This idea was turned down because of the Serbian mafia groups and political elite in the North of Mitrovica that do not allow children to participate in educational activities together. (Male principal, South Mitrovica)

Participants in North Mitrovica vocally stated that the two ethnicities have major differences in their history and culture. In this case a sense of identity threat emerged again as one of the reasons why the two communities could not find a common ground with each other, as participants in North Mitrovica, also consistently emphasized the components that distinguish the two groups. Teachers in North Mitrovica reasserted the fact that children in both education systems learn the history of their nation so differently that it would be difficult to find a middle ground, as seen in this statement:

I do not think we would be able to find a proper way to connect. We have different cultures and two different histories. As a history teacher, I would not be able to balance the two histories that are taught. (Male teacher, North Mitrovica)

Likewise, students in North Mitrovica showed uncertainty about attending same classes as the other ethnic group. Differences in terms of culture, religion, language, and on how the two ethnic groups are educated were mentioned among most students. Accordingly, most students thought of those differences as sources where discrimination and provocation would arise, as seen in the example below:

I think we are too different from each other, and I would not feel at ease at all because provocations would arise on a religious and national basis, especially against us, the minorities. (Male student, North Mitrovica)

Around 8 students in South and North Mitrovica expressed that they would feel “scared”, “threatened”, and “awkward” if they were to go the same school together, thus they preferred being educated separately. This makes the safety of students another important factor among the struggles of establishing an integrated education system in Kosovo. Most participants interviewed in North Mitrovica explicitly defended the current segregated education system and voiced that in order to avoid conflict, this system should be maintained. Likewise parent participants claimed that segregation is the best solution at the moment for security reasons. The following quote by a principal in North Mitrovica is illustrative of this finding:

An integrated education system could backfire and deepen the interethnic conflict. It is safer for all of us when we are distanced from each other. (Female principal, North Mitrovica)

Findings above voiced the similarity with previous studies in conflict-affected societies, whereby Bekerman & Nadir (2006) and Zembylas et al., (2016) concluded that socio-political drives play a vital role for the establishment of an integrated education system. All participants stressed the challenges related to contested political ideas coming from both sides, which influence the ideology of both communities. This implies that without finding a common political language, such system would prove very challenging to be established. In addition, responses from North Mitrovica revealed signs that an integrated education system would pose an identity threat for them and they would rather avoid participating in it. Feelings of threat were also related to their position as a minority group in Kosovo which stresses the importance of having a balanced ratio of the majority and minority group in case such systems takes place in the future (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013).

4.5 Stances on Interethnic Reconciliation

The fourth theme, *Stances on Interethnic Reconciliation*, aims to answer the fourth sub-research question, ['What are participants' attitudes on reconciliation and to what extent do they perceive that education affects this process?'](#). As such, it encompasses findings on participants' understanding of the notion 'interethnic reconciliation', their attitudes regarding it, and their opinions on what factors hinder the reconciliation process between the Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo. The discussion in this section aims to observe the ways which participants conceptualized reconciliation in their respective contexts and how they positioned themselves in relation to it. Deriving from participants' responses on how they perceive the process of reconciliation and factors related to it, 3 different subthemes emerged which showed that reconciliation is understood as a 'natural process', political difficulties are considered one of the vital factors that hinder the process of reconciliation, and education could be considered as a tool to promote the idea of reconciliation. These three subthemes are further discussed and analyzed in the sections above.

4.5.1 Reconciliation Is A Natural Process

In general, when participants were asked to discuss about the idea of reconciliation between the two ethnicities, their responses varied from enthusiastic, to neutral (considering it as a possibility in the future), to categorizing it as something impossible. It is important to note that categorically negative dispositions did not predominate in the data in as the majority of interviews ranged from being ambivalent to positive. Through their responses, participants of both sides made it clear that reconciliation was contemplated as a process that takes time to be achieved. This finding relates to Bar-Siman-Tove's (2004) definition of reconciliation as a long-term process that unfolds throughout the period, especially in the contexts that underwent intense violence. In students' perceptions interethnic reconciliation meant interacting, learning and working with each other, as seen in the following definitions:

Interethnic reconciliation is when we can have proper and frequent communication with Serbs, when we can move freely in the North part of Mitrovica, go to school and have coffee together. (Male student, South Mitrovica)

Reconciliation to me means Serbs and Albanians living a common life with each other, like working, travelling, studying together. Sharing their daily life together peacefully. (Female student, North Mitrovica)

In North Mitrovica, most participants did not display much interest in the issue and chose not to reveal their stance. In addition, they were more consistent in highlighting that both sides are not ready, and that timing matters the most to achieve reconciliation. On this point, the answers from most participants in South and North Mitrovica overlapped as shown in the following examples:

Reconciliation is a historical process, and we do not need to shut it down. It should be allowed to go on its own course. (Male teacher, North Mitrovica)

We need time for interethnic reconciliation to happen. It is a step-by step process. (Female teacher, South Mitrovica)

Anti-reconciliation discourses were related attitudes of skepticism and insecurity from students in North Mitrovica. Most of them demonstrated emotional detachment from the topic, and argued that right now there is relative peace and stability between the two communities. One student shared her opinion about this:

For now, I see this notion as something impossible to happen in the near future. We do live in peace now. It will take maybe generations for it to happen, it is too early to think and to talk about it. (Female student, North Mitrovica)

On the other hand, most participants in South Mitrovica were more optimistic and open to the thought of reconciliation, and considered reconciliation as a necessary thing to happen for Kosovo's future peace and prosperity. In addition, they considered reconciliation as the only way forward and mentioned the inescapability of the two communities living together, as demonstrated in the following statements below:

I think that reconciliation is of a paramount importance for both sides to be able to move forward economically and socially. I often try to tell my students to not be bothered by the idea of having to work in the same office with a Serb person in the future and most of them

endorse the idea of moving on from the past. I think that reconciliation is inevitable. (Male teacher, South Mitrovica)

Everyone should accept the fact that reconciliation will happen at some point, and that we are quite related to each other. We are neighbors. Time, land and life have connected us. (Female teacher, South Mitrovica)

In summary, the findings of this subtheme showed that both sides demonstrated a similar understanding of the notion of reconciliation, which is in line with Staub et al., (2005) definition of reconciliation as a being a mutual acceptance of the rival groups and a gradual process. Although the two counterparts hold opposing viewpoints on the timing regarding interethnic reconciliation, they both demonstrated acknowledgment for the possibility of reconciliation happening in the future.

4.5.2 Unsettled Political Problems Delaying Reconciliation

Participants on both sides enumerated various difficulties that caused the idea of reconciliation to be located in the distance future. The most prominent challenge was reported to be the current political climate between Kosovo and Serbia, which according to participants; it exacerbates constantly the relations between the two ethnic groups. This perspective was more prominent among North Mitrovica participants that were more negatively inclined toward the thought of reconciliation and argued that a political settlement needs to be established first. Principals and parents in North Mitrovica mentioned that education does not play any significant role in affecting the process of reconciliation, as the current situation between the two ethnic groups is a result of the politics implemented in Kosovo and Serbia. This sentiment is illustrated in the following excerpts:

Right now is not the time for truce, because of the current politics. Definitely politics is the thing that created so much hatred between these two nations. (Female student, North Mitrovica)

Reconciliation means that both parties should come to an agreement, which at the moment, such thing is very difficult to happen. This means changing the whole politics for the well

being of people, and unfortunately politicians today do not think of people. (Female teacher, North Mitrovica)

Teachers in North Mitrovica additionally emphasized that the young generation is also being “brainwashed by political propaganda in the media” where the opinions towards each other are also created:

The portrayal of politics in media destroys youth’s awareness and good thinking. Youth is exposed constantly to biased political news in the media, which of course incites feeling of hatred and anger towards each other and affects the reconciliation process in the future. (Male teacher, North Mitrovica)

Opinions by teacher and principal participants in South and North Mitrovica further overlapped when mentioning the lack of political will from the governing institutions to take measures on accelerating the process of interethnic reconciliation. However, they differed in terms of naming which institution was guilty of delaying the process. Participants in North Mitrovica generalized by making vague references such as ‘relevant authorities’ not providing support and initiatives to improve the current situation between the two ethnic groups in Kosovo, but instead ‘multiplying’ the problems. However, teachers’ statements led towards the understanding that citizens of North Mitrovica are weary of the political situation originating from both Serbian and Kosovar governing institutions. While, participants in South Mitrovica who were affected by the conflict, mentioned that reconciliation would be possible only after certain injustices were solved. The following example demonstrates this:

Well, I think reconciliation could happen after some wrongdoings are addressed and solved. My family has been affected by the war. I still have a missing uncle - we do not know where he is because he was taken by Serbian force. The relevant governing institutions and their politics are at fault for this process being delayed because they do not prioritize issues like this. (Male Student, South Mitrovica)

Nonetheless some participants in South Mitrovica underlined that ‘Serbian institutions are not cooperative’ or open to the reconciliation process, and more than half of them considered both political institutions guilty. A school principal participant in the statement below explains how the

hesitation of Kosovar institutions to initiate reconciliation initiatives comes from a source of 'insecurity':

The government of Kosovo should come up with ways to bridge this gap and provide security that would cultivate trust among all citizens of Kosovo, in order to promote the reconciliation process. I think the hesitation from the Albanian side to partner with such initiatives comes from the fear and insecurity of another possible invasion by Serbia. (Male principal, South Mitrovica).

The evidence in this section highlights once again that political instability disrupts the relationship between the two communities, and therefore delays the reconciliation process. This fact has been also extended by further research, which has demonstrated that in cases where the two conflicting communities have shared a violent past, structural and political support is crucial in order to be able to move forward with the process (Bar-Siman-Tove, 2004 as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). In addition to that, in cases such as Mitrovica, where the two groups live in close proximity with each other, the mutuality of forgiving and acknowledging the wrongdoings are considered vital facilitators of the reconciliation process (Bies and Tripp, 1998 as cited in Staub et al., 2015). In which case, the current political agenda of Serbia and Kosovo shows that it is far from creating such conditions for facilitating the process.

4.5.3 Education as a Tool for Reconciliation

Participants' offered insights also on the ways that they thought education could affect the reconciliation process positively. Which, according to them was still dependent upon the political will for cooperation by governing institutions in Kosovo and Serbia. The majority of North Mitrovica participants did not consider the role of segregated education very significant in impacting the reconciliation process. Nonetheless, three out of six teacher participants in North Mitrovica did share similar opinions with the participants in South Mitrovica that education could be useful in promoting the idea of interethnic reconciliation among the younger generation in Kosovo.

In South Mitrovica, participants showed an increased willingness for collaboration between the two ethnic groups to promote the idea of interethnic reconciliation through educational initiatives.

School principal participants in South Mitrovica suggested that in order for this idea to start being promoted in educational institutions, the government in Kosovo should “prioritize education as a field for policy interventions”. On the same note, teacher participants stressed that a strong institutional will should come from the Ministry of Education to start including the idea of reconciliation in the official curricula. Teacher participants in South Mitrovica also provided proposals about including additional modules and chapters on the topic of reconciliation in civic and social subjects. Collectively, they considered that it is crucial for ‘messages of peace and reconciliation’ to be communicated in the classroom. In North Mitrovica, three teachers agreed that the lack of being educated about resolving conflict and reconciliation makes it more probable for youth to be engaged in conflict. Correspondingly, opinions were shared amongst teachers and principals in South Mitrovica on the usage of holistic approaches to bring the two communities together and to promote the idea of reconciliation on both sides. One teacher said:

I suggest reaching out to international organizations, those that operate in the humanitarian and peacebuilding fields to train people in establishing communication between students and bring them closer to each other. The reconciliation would then become unavoidable, and an integrated education system could be established. There is no better setting than education where the idea of reconciliation could be promoted. (Female teacher, South Mitrovica)

Most students in South Mitrovica expressed their wish to hear the word ‘reconciliation’ more often in their schools. In addition, they said that promoting this term in all schools in Kosovo, would help both communities apologize and forgive more easily and move on from the conflict. Similarly, a student illustrated that joint projects and initiatives with the help of international organizations would boost the awareness of youth regarding the importance of reconciliation between the two ethnicities:

I think that the relevant institutions should take measures and concentrate on the future rather than the past. Also, with the help of international organizations we could come up with a lot of joint projects to promote reconciliation on both sides. It requires apologizing and forgiveness for all the wrongdoings, and I think that we are human enough to do and accept that. (Female student, South Mitrovica).

From the above, it is clear that teachers, principals and students in South Mitrovica acknowledge the supportive role of education in the reconciliation process. The line of South Mitrovica's participants' thoughts is parallel to the ones emerging from studies that confirmed education as an area where reconciliation could be problematized through reflective approaches that would help in developing mindsets of interethnic trust and acceptance, while properly addressing important topics that deal with the past (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012; Tolomelli, 2015; Datzberger & Donovan, 2018). The positive responses of participants in South Mitrovica signpost openings for the education policymakers to consider designing and introducing peacebuilding and peace education programs in the formal education sector in Kosovo, supportive to the reconciliation process.

4.6 Overview of the Main Findings

The findings presented above have shown that the ways that segregated education impacts interethnic relations in post-conflict Kosovo are influenced by various complex factors. Several conclusions have emerged from the analysis above. Firstly, it has been revealed that participants' experience of living and being educated in segregated settings contributed to the construction of opposing social identities and influenced the level of prejudices toward each other negatively. The latter, therefore, affected their openness to establish interethnic relations with each other. However another angle on this, suggests that most participants were willing to interact with each other in educational circumstances, which provides an opportunity for enhancing communication and initiating interactions between the students of the two ethnic groups. Secondly, the evidence highlights that the current national curricula in both Kosovar and Serbian education systems is driven by sociopolitical and nationalistic ideologies that endorse the narrative of contested victimhood (Strapacova, 2015), as both systems do not address the past occurrences objectively, show only one side of the story, and thrive to present a positive image of their corresponding ethnic group (Baumeister & Hastings, 1997 as cited in Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). Additionally, the pedagogical practices in the education system in Kosovo are affected by the transmission of traumatic war experience through a shared collective memory. Such results show the further contribution of segregated education to the polarization of the two ethnic groups. With regards to the attitudes of participants toward integrated education in the future, the evidence concluded that while participants from both communities shared similar stances on the conditions that would be acceptable for the initialization of such intervention, settling political issues in relation to conflict proved to be a pre-requisite for establishing an integrated education institution. Finally, the opposing viewpoints of participants regarding interethnic reconciliation are correspondingly justified

by the impact of sociopolitical factors on participants' attitudes. In the lack of political will and the absence of truth, participants in North Mitrovica were more ready to shut down reconciliation as an option in the near future. In contrast to that, participants in South Mitrovica demonstrated readiness on promoting reconciliation through education; yet again it was clear that in order for such education initiative to take place it was necessary for relevant Kosovar institutions to offer strong institutional support.

Chapter V. Conclusion

This thesis has studied the empirical realities of living, teaching and learning within a segregated education system in North and South Mitrovica, the most divided city on an ethnic basis in Kosovo. It did so by exploring how participants experience and understand that segregated education impacts their interethnic relations, and how the current contested national curricula in both regions shapes the attitudes toward the opposing group. At the same time, this thesis identified gaps where a potential education intervention might bring the two communities together and how this might be introduced. The analysis facilitated an overview of the main complexities that are interlinked with being educated separately in the absence of institutional support and justice in a post-conflict context. These ranged from the maintenance of prejudices and contested attitudes between the Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian communities by means of national curricula, to the skepticism and hostility toward integration and the reconciliation process, all linked to the impact of historical and political ideologies. However in another angle, education also proved to indeed constitute a powerful mechanism through which it is possible to lay groundwork for seeking and introducing solutions that could improve interethnic relations and further the reconciliation process. This study affirms that the sociopolitical context within which the education system in Kosovo evolves is set in such a way as not to allow education to generate its essential goal for change in the direction of interethnic reconciliation. In line with this, the research showed that in the absence of institutional support, schools have an impact on perpetuating prejudices and stereotypical attitudes that participants hold toward interethnic relations. In this case it demonstrates that issues of national identity molded by governing institutions are one of the basic challenges faced by education practitioners, parents and students. Findings of this study also confirm that in post-war societies education proves to be a significant agency of remembrance, whereby, biased, antagonistic historical narratives are transmitted and contested collective memories are reproduced (Baliqi, 2017). In the case of Kosovo, specifically Mitrovica, the study showed that the current education

system has significant gaps in addressing the issue of dealing with the past, as the politics of remembrance proves to deepen the contested memories rather than bridge them. In addition, participants' answers demonstrate that the predominant education system in Kosovo has cultivated the narrative of 'otherness' and for decades, it has emphasized the suffering resulting from 'the other'. Moreover, the Serbian education system in North Mitrovica keeps its distance from addressing the topic of conflict and chooses to silence the past. Again, these narratives proved to not have been cultivated by education on its own; they were powered by sociopolitical forces. The conclusions of this study contribute to filling the void in scholarly literature regarding the empirical realities surrounding the potential role that segregated education on an ethnic basis plays in shaping attitudes toward interethnic reconciliation in the context of a transitional country such as Kosovo. Whereby ultimately, it is implied that upon the fulfillment of some vital conditions such as the political settlement of the conflict, education could be considered as a viable tool for reconciliation.

5.1 Policy Recommendations

Based on the accounts and arguments of those who live and experience the complex educational and societal reality of living separately, this section presents policy suggestions regarding education that could contribute towards the improvement of interethnic relations in Kosovo and pave the way for furthering the process of reconciliation. In line with studies on education policy interventions in countries with similar post-conflict contexts, the following recommendations could be considered:

1. A bottom-up approach should be developed for any kind of education intervention that aims to tackle peaceful coexistence and reconciliation in Kosovo. Such an approach would help in reestablishing trust and confidence among Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian communities, and state institutions. In this step, an essential part of the way forward is cooperation with local stakeholders such as city government and civil society organizations that would aid in gaining access to those who are at the forefront of implementing educational practices. This would allow for the views of all stakeholders to be taken into account and could provide a space where school principals, teachers, parents, and students could offer their own suggestions.
2. Mutually acceptable solutions and policies on the use of official languages should also be introduced. In this instance, as the second official language in Kosovo, the Serbian language

could be introduced in the Kosovo education system, initially as an optional course in secondary schools. Similarly, professional language courses of the Albanian language could be offered to the Kosovo Serb community in cooperation with local stakeholders. Such an intervention could serve as a step forward toward enhancing communication and trust between the two communities.

3. The current national curricula in Kosovo should be re-designed by correcting the biased historical narrative in textbooks with validated history facts. Moreover, the current curricula could be modified by using a more proactive approach that promotes the integration of the two communities. Such an approach could include putting a stronger emphasis on critical reflection on themes such as intercultural dialogue, multiple perspectives and acceptance of differences, forgiveness, peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. These themes could be added to modules of civic textbooks accordingly.
4. In relation to pedagogical practices, timeliness and sensitivity of any peace education intervention should be carefully considered in line with the potential challenges that teachers might encounter during the implementation process. This could be attempted through an education programme that would include widespread teacher trainings prior to the intervention that would address teachers' emotional, cultural, and sociopolitical concerns in order to ensure both their professional and their emotional readiness.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

As previously mentioned, this thesis is one of the first pieces of research in Kosovo that has brought together the two rival communities, namely Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. Unusually, it has pioneered the creation of a space where members of both communities could talk about their experiences, thereby increasing understanding of the current segregated structure of the education system and how it affects their post-conflict interethnic relations. In the context of post-war societies, social science research has to make sure that it gives back to communities that are being studied. For this reason, more research should be undertaken to explore the realities that can actually shape new policies on the ground and would lead to designing peace education policies tuned in to local realities and needs. Future research could focus on the ways to build trust with both the Kosovo Serbian and Kosovo Albanian communities and make sure that their voices are

being heard on issues that they find more complex such as peace, integration, and education.

There are several ways the research could be extended beyond this study. Firstly, a similar research project could be replicated in other municipalities in Kosovo, especially in areas where both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs reside (such as in the south of the country), and the latter seems to be more integrated into the mainstream society, despite the same segregated education system being maintained. Conducting both within-case and cross-case analyses on the interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians in other municipalities in Kosovo, could potentially aid policymakers in identifying appropriate measures for tackling the existing challenges of interethnic tensions in the northern part of Kosovo. In this instance, researchers could also focus on the conditions that both communities in these municipalities consider as acceptable for the two ethnic groups to come together in an educational context and thus, pinpoint more carefully the openings for peace and co-education policy intervention.

Moreover, since this study covers only participants from upper-secondary education in public schools, additional research could explore whether there is a difference between public and private schools regarding the pedagogical practices used to treat the topic of dealing with the past, and observe whether there are any significant differences regarding how the historical discourse of the conflict is transmitted to the students in these schools. Building upon the foundation of this study, a research project interviewing students and teachers in private schools who teach and learn in an environment affected by slightly different components could yield different results. Such research could potentially help policymakers in recognizing which sector would prove to initially be more efficient in introducing a policy intervention on bringing the two communities closer.

Future research could also consider a longitudinal study on positive intergroup contact experiences among youth from both Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb community in terms of the prejudice-reducing effects of the intergroup contact. This study could measure how intergroup anxiety and former prejudices were affected, while considering contact mediators such as having prior objective knowledge about the out-group, and the conditions under which the contact was established. This could help the relevant stakeholders and policymakers to understand what kind of contact with mediators and conditions would be optimal to facilitate successful intergroup contact in the future.

In conclusion, this research showed that the path toward reconciliation in Kosovo is no walk in a park. The current social and political realities on finding a settlement to the conflict seem to only have perpetuated the ethnic division. As a first step, both communities should acknowledge their past mistakes in order for peace to prevail. At the end of the day, principals, teachers, parents and students do not have the supreme authority to demolish the current narratives on identity, memory and reconciliation, but they do have the power to contribute to new efforts on changing them. Although potential openings that were identified in this study for integrating both communities in education do not imply a permanent solution to the problem, still these openings should be seen as opportunities. Having lived in close proximity for many years, both communities could focus on highlighting the common elements that unite them and continue to unite the fate of their children, rather than clinging to their differences. To quote Kristeva (1991):

The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities.
(p.1)

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information Letter and Consent Form for Principal Participants

Request for Participation in the Research Project

” The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo”

Letter of Information and Informed Consent Form *for principal participants*

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project as a part of my Master’s degree on Education Policies for Global Development (GLOBED) where the main purpose is to explore the impact of the segregated education system in post-conflict Kosovo on the interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The research aims to provide a better understanding on how the ethnically segregated education system in North and South Mitrovica in post-conflict Kosovo delays the reconciliation process and perpetuates divisions between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The research purpose is to analyse the perceptions, attitudes and experience of the research participants towards the segregated system. The research aims to illustrate how the lack of contact and interaction between the two ethnicities, the ethnically oriented curricula and the engagement of teachers’ with such curriculum could affect the reconciliation process and risk a stable and secure future for these two ethnicities in Kosovo.

The research will take place at schools, in case that is not possible, a location of your own convenience will be chosen instead. Bear in mind that the timetable of the students will be taken into account for the time when the interview is conducted. Below, I describe the approach of the research. If you have no objection to your participation in this research, I ask you to complete and sign this letter of consent (see the consent statement).

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

The interviews have been selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The priority was to conduct interviews in the secondary schools in Mitrovica since the situation of the segregated education system is most notably visible there, as schools in the South Mitrovica are organized by Kosovo institutions and are attended by Kosovo Albanians, whereas the schools in North Mitrovica are funded by Serbian Government and attended from Kosovo Serbs. The sample includes 30-40 people, which consists of students, parents, teachers and principals in 4 secondary schools in South and North of Mitrovica.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the research project, a semi-structured informal interview that will take approximately 30- 45 minutes will be scheduled with you at an agreed date and time. The interview includes questions about your experience as a school principal in Mitrovica in post-conflict Kosovo, your opinions on the current education system, on the national curriculum, on prospects for an integrated education system and your ideas for a more sustainable and peaceful education system in a multi-ethnic society. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. In case you decide to withdraw, all your data will be deleted from the files. This research will not affect your relationship with the other research participants or with any of the education institutions.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). All personal data will be processed anonymously. The data from this research will be only used for research purpose by the research team (student and supervisors). The identifiable data including audio recordings will be stored in a secured device and the only person who will have access to it is the research author (student). In the case of submission of the Master Thesis and further publication of the study, the anonymity will be still guaranteed and the participants will not be recognizable.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end by July 2019. Upon the submission of the thesis, all the raw data will be anonymized and the audio recordings will be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of Oslo, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The researcher Vesa Deva via devavesa@gmail.com , or by telephone: +38649155947
- The supervisors; Anne De Graaf via a.m.degraaf@uva.nl, Rinor Qehaja via qehaja.rinor@gmail.com
- UiO responsible Fengshu Liu via fengshu.liu@iped.uio.no, or by telephone +47-22856163;
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personvertjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent form

This form corresponds to the written information you received about the research. By signing this form you declare that you have read and understood participant information.

I have received and understood information about the project “The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview
- for the interview to be audio recorded

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. July 2019

(Signed by the participant, date)

Appendix B: Information Letter and Consent Form for Teacher Participants

Request for Participation in the Research Project:

” The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo”

Letter of Information and Informed Consent *for teacher participants*

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project as a part of my Master’s degree on Education Policies for Global Development (GLOBED) where the main purpose is to explore the impact of the segregated education system in post-conflict Kosovo on the interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The research aims to provide a better understanding on how the ethnically segregated education system in North and South Mitrovica in post-conflict Kosovo delays the reconciliation process and perpetuates divisions between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The research purpose is to analyse the perceptions, attitudes and experience of the research participants towards the segregated system. The research aims to illustrate how the lack of contact and interaction between the two ethnicities, the ethnically oriented curricula and the engagement of teachers’ with such curriculum could affect the reconciliation process and risk a stable and secure future for these two ethnicities in Kosovo.

The research will take place at schools, in case that is not possible, a location of your own convenience will be chosen instead. Bear in mind that the timetable of the students will be taken into account for the time when the interview is conducted. Below, I describe the approach of the research. If you have no objection to your participation in this research, I ask you to complete and sign this letter of consent (see the consent statement).

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

The interviews have been selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The priority was to conduct interviews in the secondary schools in Mitrovica since the situation of the segregated education system is most notably visible there, as schools in the South Mitrovica are organized by Kosovo institutions and are attended by Kosovo Albanians, whereas the schools in North Mitrovica are funded by Serbian Government and attended from Kosovo Serbs. The sample includes 30-40 people which consists of students, parents, teachers and principals in 4 secondary schools in South and North of Mitrovica.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the research project, a semi-structured informal interview that will take approximately 30- 45 minutes will be scheduled with you at an agreed date and time. The interview includes questions about your teaching experience in Mitrovica, the pedagogical practices, your engagement with the current national curriculum and textbooks, your opinions on the impact of the current segregated education in inter-ethnic relationships and your ideas of an alternative education system in a multi-ethnic society. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. In case you decide to withdraw, all your data will be deleted from the files. This research will not affect your relationship with the other research participants nor with any of the education institutions.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). All personal data will be processed anonymously. The data from this research will be only used for research purpose by the research team (student and supervisors). The identifiable data including audio recordings will be stored in a secured device and the only person who will have access to it is the research author (student). In the case of submission of the Master Thesis and further publication of the study, the anonymity will be still guaranteed and the participants will not be recognizable.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end by July 2019. Upon the submission of the thesis, all the raw data will be anonymized and the audio recordings will be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of Oslo, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The researcher Vesa Deva via devavesa@gmail.com , or by telephone: +38649155947
- The supervisors; Anne De Graaf via a.m.degraaf@uva.nl, Rinor Qehaja via qehaja.rinor@gmail.com
- UiO responsible Fengshu Liu via fengshu.liu@iped.uio.no, or by telephone +47-22856163;
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent form

This form corresponds to the written information you received about the research. By signing this form you declare that you have read and understood participant information.

I have received and understood information about the project “The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview
- for the interview to be audio recorded

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. July 2019

(Signed by the participant, date)

Appendix C: Information Letter and Consent Form for Student Participants

Request for Participation in the Research Project:

” The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo”

Letter of Information and Informed Consent *for student participants*

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project as a part of my Master’s degree on Education Policies for Global Development (GLOBED) where the main purpose is to explore the impact of the segregated education system in post-conflict Kosovo on the interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The research aims to provide a better understanding on how the ethnically segregated education system in North and South Mitrovica in post-conflict Kosovo delays the reconciliation process and perpetuates divisions between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The research purpose is to analyse the perceptions, attitudes and experience of the research participants towards the segregated system. The research aims to illustrate how the lack of contact and interaction between the two ethnicities, the ethnically oriented curricula and the engagement of teachers’ with such curriculum could affect the reconciliation process and risk a stable and secure future for these two ethnicities in Kosovo.

The research will take place at schools, in case that is not possible, a location of your own convenience will be chosen instead. Bear in mind that the timetable of the students will be taken into account for the time when the interview is conducted. Below, I describe the approach of the research. If you have no objection to your participation in this research, I ask you to complete and sign this letter of consent (see the consent statement).

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

The interviews have been selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The priority was to conduct interviews in the secondary schools in Mitrovica since the situation of the segregated education system is most notably visible there, as schools in the South Mitrovica are organized by Kosovo institutions and are attended by Kosovo Albanians, whereas the schools in North Mitrovica are funded by Serbian Government and attended from Kosovo Serbs. The sample includes 30-40 people which consists of students, parents, teachers and principals in 4 secondary schools in South and North of Mitrovica.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the research project, a semi-structured informal interview that will take approximately 30- 45 minutes will be scheduled with you at an agreed date and time. The interview includes questions about your educational experience at school in Mitrovica, learning and teaching practices in the classroom, your opinions on the curriculum and textbooks, on interactions with students from other ethnicities, and your future aspirations as a citizen of Kosovo. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. In case you decide to withdraw, all your data will be deleted from the files. This research will not affect your relationship with the other research participants nor with any of the education institutions.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). All personal data will be processed anonymously. The data from this research will be only used for research purpose by the research team (student and supervisors). The identifiable data including audio recordings will be stored in a secured device and the only person who will have access to it is the research author (student). In the case of submission of the Master Thesis and further publication of the study, the anonymity will be still guaranteed and the participants will not be recognizable.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end by July 2019. Upon the submission of the thesis, all the raw data will be anonymized and the audio recordings will be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of Oslo, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The researcher Vesa Deva via devavesa@gmail.com , or by telephone: +38649155947
- The supervisors; Anne De Graaf via a.m.degraaf@uva.nl, Rinor Qehaja via qehaja.rinor@gmail.com
- UiO responsible Fengshu Liu via fengshu.liu@iped.uio.no, or by telephone +47-22856163;
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent form

This form corresponds to the written information you received about the research. By signing this form you declare that you have read and understood participant information.

I have received and understood information about the project “The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview
- for the interview to be audio recorded

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. July 2019

(Signed by the participant, date)

Appendix D: Information Letter and Consent Form for Parent Participants

Request for Participation in the Research Project:

” The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo”

Letter of Information and Informed Consent *for parent participants*

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project as a part of my Master’s degree on Education Policies for Global Development (GLOBED) where the main purpose is to explore the impact of the segregated education system in post-conflict Kosovo on the interethnic relations between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The research aims to provide a better understanding on how the ethnically segregated education system in North and South Mitrovica in post-conflict Kosovo delays the reconciliation process and perpetuates divisions between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The research purpose is to analyse the perceptions, attitudes and experience of the research participants towards the segregated system. The research aims to illustrate how the lack of contact and interaction between the two ethnicities, the ethnically oriented curricula and the engagement of teachers’ with such curriculum could affect the reconciliation process and risk a stable and secure future for these two ethnicities in Kosovo.

The research will take place at schools, in case that is not possible, a location of your own convenience will be chosen instead. Bear in mind that the timetable of the students will be taken into account for the time when the interview is conducted. Below, I describe the approach of the research. If you have no objection to your participation in this research, I ask you to complete and sign this letter of consent (see the consent statement).

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

The interviews have been selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The priority was to conduct interviews in the secondary schools in Mitrovica since the situation of the segregated education system is most notably visible there, as schools in the South Mitrovica are organized by Kosovo institutions and are attended by Kosovo Albanians, whereas the schools in North Mitrovica are funded by Serbian Government and attended from Kosovo Serbs. The sample includes 30-40 people which consists of students, parents, teachers and principals in 4 secondary schools in South and North of Mitrovica.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the research project, a semi-structured informal interview that will take approximately 30- 45 minutes will be scheduled with you at an agreed date and time. The interview includes questions about your opinions on the quality of education of your child's school, learning and teaching practices, current national curriculum and textbooks, on the role of education in inter-ethnic relationships, the prospects for an integrated education system and your vision for your child's future in Kosovo. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. In case you decide to withdraw, all your data will be deleted from the files. This research will not affect your relationship with the other research participants nor with any of the education institutions.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). All personal data will be processed anonymously. The data from this research will be only used for research purpose by the research team (student and supervisors). The identifiable data including audio recordings will be stored in a secured device and the only person who will have access to it is the research author (student). In the case of submission of the Master Thesis and further publication of the study, the anonymity will be still guaranteed and the participants will not be recognizable.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end by July 2019. Upon the submission of the thesis, all the raw data will be anonymized and the audio recordings will be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

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Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The researcher Vesa Deva via devavesa@gmail.com , or by telephone: +38649155947
- The supervisors; Anne De Graaf via a.m.degraaf@uva.nl, Rinor Qehaja via qehaja.rinor@gmail.com
- UiO responsible Fengshu Liu via fengshu.liu@iped.uio.no, or by telephone +47-22856163;
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent form

This form corresponds to the written information you received about the research. By signing this form you declare that you have read and understood participant information.

I have received and understood information about the project “The Role of Segregated Education in Post-Conflict Interethnic Relations in Kosovo” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview
- for the interview to be audio recorded

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. July 2019

(Signed by the participant, date)