UN REPORT ON BOSNIAN EDUCATION
HOW TO TEACH ABOUT SREBRENICA?
EDUCATION FOR RETURNERS
X-RAY OF A TEACHER’S BRAIN
THREE HISTORIES UNDER ONE ROOF
POPE FRANCIS IN SARAJEVO
THE SCHOOL OF FALLING IN LOVE
A View of Education from the Top

Figures from the Strategic Framework for BH of the Economic Planning Directorate of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina

46% of Roma children drop out of primary school

3% of students at the University of Sarajevo complete their studies in the allotted time

83.2% of children under six attend 1st grade in BH
76,2% is the rate of enrolment in secondary schools in BH

54% of pupils complete secondary school in the allotted time

24% of secondary school graduates continue their education

15% of Roma children are enrolled in secondary education

4% of Republika Srpska’s GDP is spent on education

6% of the FBH’s GDP is spent on education

14,5% of 18 to 24-year-olds in BH in 2010 had completed two grades of secondary school at most

Source:
http://www.dep.gov.ba/naslovna/DEP%20Strate-
ski%20okvir%20za%20BiH.pdf
Mission, purpose and ambition

Školegijum, a journal for critical education, was launched as a platform for critical analysis of the education policies and practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under a wider campaign for a fundamental and comprehensive education system reform. With such a program, Školegijum draws attention of the public to the presence of indoctrination in curricula, textbooks, and in classes. It also identifies the responsible actors in the education system – ranging from the parliamentary parties and ministries to the academia and the media, teachers, school administrations, and parents. Advocating for the reform, Školegijum highlights the examples of good practice both in BH and abroad. In an effort to maintain the high media standards, the editorial staff insists on objectivity, accuracy, verifiability, the protection of personal integrity and copyright law. For this purpose, the magazine uses different forms of articles, from expert analysis and commentary, reporting and interviews, news, to statistics, surveys, and satire. The editor and the publisher assume responsibility for the texts written under a pseudonym.
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Selection of articles published in the Journal for Critical Education issues no. 11, 12, 13, and 14, in 2015.
Each to Their Own Pen
How does the United Nations view BH education? Judging by the report by UN Special Rapporteur Farida Shaheed, you could say – as problematic. From the chapter entitled Realizing cultural rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: specific issues, we have extracted what we believe are its key observations. (See also a polemic review of the Report by our Editor-in-Chief on p. 21). The report is available online in English. It is 22 pages long and has 112 points.

A. A segregated school system

37. A number of international and European human rights mechanisms have expressed deep concern regarding the segregated school system established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, operating through both the “two-schools-under-one-roof” system and mono-ethnic schools. The issue, therefore, is not new, and the authorities are fully aware of its depth. No reform has, however, been possible, owing to the inability of the fragmented governmental system to take action, the politicization of education issues and the mistrust between communities.

The over-emphasizing of cultural differences, including linguistic differences, is used to justify practices that enforce the segregation of students based on ethno-national affiliation. The Special Rapporteur stresses that this is a serious misinterpretation of cultural rights, which must not be used under any circumstances to justify segregation policies.

1. Two-schools-under-one-roof system

38. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at the two-schools-under-one-roof system, by which children from different ethnic groups attend classes in the same building but are taught in segregated sections, have different curricula and rarely mix within the school environment. Institutional arrangements render it virtually impossible for pupils to interact, even in the playground. The schools have separate administrative bodies, school boards, parents’ and student councils, as well as student clubs, for such activities as sports or theatre. This system operates in 54 schools in three cantons of the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina, in municipalities with mixed Bosniak/Croat population. Sixteen have now been administratively unified under pressure from the international community.

39. Many of these schools were formed to accommodate returnee children in school buildings catering to the dominant ethnic group of the area in the wake of the reconfiguration of population demographics caused by the conflict. Conceived of as a bridging step, the schools became cemented and are now justified by some as a means to protect the right of children to learn in their mother tongue.

40. Some initiatives have been undertaken to suppress the two-schools-under-one-roof system. In 2010, the Federation Parliament of BH invited the cantonal ministries of education to take the measures necessary to bring the system to an end before the beginning of the new school year, but was unsuccessful. In April 2012, the Mostar Municipal Court ruled that the two-schools-under-one-roof system operating in the towns of Stolac and Čapljina was illegal and discriminatory. It ordered the Education Ministry of the Herzegovina – Neretva canton to end the practice by the start of the new school year. The judgement has yet to be implemented. In August 2012, the Ministry of Education of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina outlined a two-year plan to end segregation, although strong political resistance at the local levels is likely to hamper progress.

41. The Ministry of Education of the Herzegovina – Neretva Canton explained to the Special Rapporteur that municipal councils resisted implementing the ruling, but that efforts were being made at the cantonal level to move forward. The Special Rapporteur also met the Mayor of Stolac, and agreed with him that the two-schools-under-one-roof system was often used as the symbol of the country’s segregated educational system, although mono-national/ethnic schools, which are equally problematic, are far more numerous (see points 44 and 47 below).

42. The two-schools-under-one-roof system exemplifies how divisions between children based on their national or ethnic affiliation become entrenched by establishing different entrances and
Farida Shaheed is a Pakistani sociologist and feminist human rights activist. In 2012, she was appointed the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. She heads the Shirkat Gah women’s resource centre in Pakistan, and is known for her extensive work on gender and class analysis, both in Pakistan and around the world.

It is disturbing to see how those schools deliberately seek to prevent any kind of interaction between children. Multiplying joint activities and integrating these schools should be easy to organize; all that is lacking, clearly, is political will. Reforming the system should pave the way for broader reforms to address the mono-national/ethnic schools system throughout the country. In the Stolac school she visited, the Special Rapporteur met the directors of both the Bosnian and the Croat wings, and felt the necessity of building trust among the various communities through joint activities. She was pleased to note in this regard the joint drawing exhibit organized at the time of her visit by the directors, who were considering further joint activities, as well as a joint “peace garden” being created by the two student bodies. These are small but important steps in the right direction.

2. Mono-national/ethnic school system

43. Fewer than 6 per cent of all pupils are enrolled in the two-schools-under-one-roof system, the vast majority being educated in mono-national/ethnic schools in both the Federation and Republika Srpska. Curricula, school environments and practices throughout the country ensure that schools cater largely or solely for the ethnic majority in municipalities, with parents forced to choose between having their children face assimilation in the local school or enrolling them in a distant school with a different ethnic majority. This is of great concern to the Special Rapporteur, as children in these schools are denied opportunities to meet children of a different ethnicity. It also means that children with a culturally diverse heritage only have access to one part of their cultural heritage.

45. The right of pupils to learn in their mother tongue and the right of parents to choose their child’s school are often advanced in defence of the current segregated education system, be it through the two-schools-under-one-roof school or mono-national/ethnic schools. The Special Rapporteur notes, however, that the implementation of such rights is not dependent on establishing a segregated school system, as evident in many other countries. Furthermore, the choice of parents cannot be real in a situation where options are limited to either a mono-national/ethnic school of their own affiliation or a mono-national/ethnic school of others’ affiliation. In practice, this discriminates against parents wishing their children to enjoy a pluralistic culture.

46. The Special Rapporteur is disconcerted by the fact that some neighbouring countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina support mono-national/ethnic schools (for people sharing their own national/ethnic affiliation) or support one side of a two-schools-one-roof school, leading to striking discrepancies either between mono-national/ethnic schools or between the two wings of a two-schools-under-one-roof school.

3. Integrated schools

47. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur learned of efforts to establish integrated schools. She visited the First Gymnasium of Sarajevo, where classes are offered in the three languages of the constituent peoples. She also visited the Gymnasium of Mostar, which was re-organized as a joint reintegrated school in 2004. These remain isolated examples, while the Special Rapporteur was informed that many more students would like to attend such gymnasia.

48. Unfortunately, to date (in particular in the case of the Gymnasium of Mostar, which the Special Rapporteur had more time to study), integration is minimal: only one class is held in common (information technologies, owing to the strong demand by the company from Japan that offered the computers), while all other subjects remain divided between the Bosnian and Croat curriculum, including, for example, mathematics. In general, pupils from west Mostar choose the Croat curriculum, while pupils from the east select...
The municipalities and the 10 criteria given in the table for the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton are the starting point for analysing the phenomenon of “two schools under one roof.” The Primary School Ramno, for two pupils of Serb nationality (who are returnees), classes have been organised in the Serbian language at the branch school in Ivanjica in line with the RS curriculum.

Legal entity | Name of School | Number of schools |
--- | --- | --- |
* | Crnići (Cro) and BS of Prva osnovna škola Stolac (Bos), PS “Lipanjske zore” and BS Čapljina, BS Doljani (PS Jablanica) and PS Ramno | 4 |
** | PS “Marko Marulić” and PS “Alija Isaković”, PS Stolac and Prva osnovna škola Stolac, Secondary Traffic and Transport School Mostar (Cro) and Secondary Mechanical, Traffic and Transport School Mostar (Bos), Secondary School Stolac (Cro) and Secondary School Stolac (Bos) | 4 |
*** | BS “V. Pavlović” (Cro) and BS Čapljina (Bos) | 1 |

The Mostar Gymnasium has not been included in this table in view of its administrative and legal unification.

* one legal entity, including branch schools belonging to another legal entity (a total of four schools in four buildings, including branch classes of other schools).
** two legal entities in one building (two schools under one roof – eight schools in four buildings).
*** two legal entities (two schools) with branch schools in one school building

On the territory of the Zenica-Doboj Canton, according to the responsible cantonal ministry, “two schools under one roof” no longer exist.

PS=Primary School, BS=Branch School, SVS=Secondary Vocational School
A positive example of integration is Brčko, where only the blackboards are divided. What about the chalk?

According to interlocutors, nothing more can be done by the city and school, since cantonal and pedagogical decisions regarding curriculum content must be followed. A common curriculum simply does not exist, including in the said integrated schools. Hence, further efforts are completely blocked owing to the operative political and administrative environment.

49. Nevertheless, joint extracurricular activities such as sports have started, and administrative bodies, such as teachers’, parents’ and students’ councils, have been integrated, easing interaction and the organization of joint activities like competitions. Still, pupils reported a lack of connectedness across communities and expressed their desire for enhanced joint activities. Teachers organize theatre clubs separately, without sharing information with students from other communities on how to join. In addition, organizational arrangements obstruct interaction: there is no cafeteria; so shared meals are not possible. Pupils from the primary school attend in the morning, while pupils in the secondary attend in the afternoon. It is interesting to note, in contrast, that students themselves have organized initiatives outside of the school to interact, for example bridge-building events outside their school premises and on the Mostar bridge. The Special Rapporteur recommends that they receive robust support for such activities.

50. The system put in place in Brčko is often presented as a good model of integrated schools, where the pupils from different communities attend school together and mainly receive instruction in their own languages in the same classroom. According to the Education Law of Brčko District, “the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages, and the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, shall be used in equal terms in the realization of curricula and facultative activities in primary and secondary schools” (Article 13). The law stipulates that students have the freedom to express themselves in their own language, and that school documents are to be issued in the language and alphabet requested by a student or parent. In class, only the blackboard is divided, enabling teachers to use both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts and to show the differences existing between the various languages.

B. Common core curriculum

51. Separated classes facilitate, and are seemingly aimed at, teaching a non-harmonized curriculum and various narratives, in particular related to “national groups of subjects” – language and literature, nature and society, religious instruction, geography, and history.

52. For more than a decade, many steps, supported by the international community, have been taken to develop a common core curriculum to reduce differences of perspectives among students and to promote mutual knowledge and understanding. In 2003, the State Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education provided for the development of a common core curriculum for all public and private schools, consisting of “the curricula and syllabi of all subjects of primary and general secondary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina that have as broad an agreed common core as possible” (Article 42). All Ministers for Education pledged to introduce the common core curriculum under their jurisdiction in the 2003/04 school year.

53. Unfortunately, an assessment widely shared in the country is that the reform did not bring about significant progress. The main curricula currently used in Bosnia and Herzegovina reportedly retain a strong ethnic slant, primarily in the “national groups of subjects.”

54. One obstacle frequently mentioned by interlocutors was the deep system-wide politicization of education. The perspective of stakeholders with regard to the education system is quite worrying: they consider that most people on school boards are politicians, view school boards as an extended arm of political parties, and believe that school funding is based on political affiliation. Municipalities appoint school boards, which in turn appoint school directors, who then hire teachers. An issue requiring attention is the fate and prospects of teachers who may become redundant and risk losing their jobs following curriculum harmonization and the reunification of the school system, bearing in mind also decreasing population growth.

55. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur met representatives of a national network of student councils demanding a uniform school system. She also had the opportunity to attend a demonstration of high school students, organized in Sarajevo with the support of the Youth Communication Club, which links around 292 student councils across the
country. Demonstrators asked the ministries of education many questions, including regarding when a harmonized curriculum would be available for all schools in the country.

56. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina also reported that the start of the school year in September 2013 was accompanied by disputes over the curricula being used in a number of schools in Republika Srpska where there had been a significant number of Bosniak returnees. Parents and pupils boycotted classes at a number of schools. The High Representative stressed that “the problem underlying the protests is not unique to Republika Srpska. It reveals the failure of the competent authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past 11 years to find a permanent, countrywide solution, which would guarantee children’s equal rights to education.”

57. Although the common core curriculum is better developed in Brčko, culture, language and history remain highly sensitive issues; officials there reported that they exercised caution “to preserve the different characteristics of groups, while bringing them round to universal values.” Classes are separated only for language and religion. Language

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<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Common school principal</th>
<th>Common school administration</th>
<th>Unified school board</th>
<th>Common parents council</th>
<th>Additional common activities</th>
<th>Common staff room</th>
<th>Common teachers</th>
<th>Common shifts</th>
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<td>PS “Berta Kučera” (BoS) includes branch classes of PS “13. rujan” (Cro)</td>
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<td>PS “Braća Jezerčić” and S “Berta Kučera”</td>
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<td>BUGOJNO</td>
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<td>PS Busovača (Cro) houses branch classes of PS Kačuni (BoS)</td>
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<td>VSS Vitez and SS Vitez</td>
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<td>Two schools under one roof</td>
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<td>The Bugojno Gymnasium (BoS) houses branch classes of Uskoplje Gymnasium (Cro)</td>
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<td>VSS Gornji Vakuf and SS Uskoplje</td>
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Legal entity | Name of School | Number of schools |
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<td>PS Divičani and BS “Berta Kučera” (BoS) and BS “13. rujan” (Cro), PS “Bristovi” and Prva osnovna škola Bugojno (Cro), Gromiljak and Bilalovac, Busovača and Kačuni, PS Vitez (BoS) and PS Vitez (Cro), secondary schools: Gymnasium Bugojno and Secondary School Uskoplje</td>
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<td>Treća osnovna škola Bugojno (BoS) and Prva osnovna škola Bugojno (Cro), PS Kiseljak 1 – Bilalovac and PS Brestovsko, secondary schools: Secondary School Vitez (BoS) and Secondary School Vitez (Cro), SS Busovača (Cro) and VSS Uskovača (BoS), SS Uskoplje (Cro) and VSS Gornji Vakuf (BoS)</td>
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<td>BS PS “Berta Kučera” (BoS) and BS PS “13. rujan” (Cro) are situated in four locations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>****</td>
<td>PS “Muhsin Rizvić” and BS “I.G.Kovačić” are situated in the building of the Secondary Vocational School “Zijah Dizdarević” (BoS)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* one legal entity, including branch schools belonging to another legal entity (in total, four schools in four buildings, including branch classes of other schools)
** two legal entities in one building (two schools under one roof – eight schools in four buildings)
*** two legal entities (two schools) with branch schools in one school building.
**** two legal entities (one primary and one secondary school) and the branch classes of a third school all in the same building.
PS = Primary School, BS = Branch School, VSS = Vocational Secondary School, SS = Secondary School

ŠKOLEGIJUM
12

Better textbooks in three steps:
1. Define and describe indoctrination methods used in a textbook
2. Identify learning outcomes for each lesson
3. Approve every textbook that:
   a) does not contain any indoctrination methods
   b) achieves the identified learning outcomes

58. Differences in the curricula seem to create a general feeling in the community that children are educated to become “little ethnic soldiers.” Many interlocutors opined that children of “the other community” were being raised “as enemies.” The Special Rapporteur believes, however, that a thorough study may be necessary to assess the extent to which this is the case.

C. The teaching and writing of history

59. According to various observers, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, “the different perspectives of history that the pupils are taught in schools seem to generate more divisions and ethnic discrimination. Although there has been progress in eliminating explicit hate speech from history and geography textbooks, significant differences in history teaching still exist and cause serious concern.”

60. During and following the 1992-1995 war, school curricula were divided into three different and often conflicting versions of history. Immediately after the war, teams of international experts reviewed all textbooks in order to delete references considered to be offensive. The exercise was not without problems. Text correction entailed deleting or blackening out entire sentences, including, for example, references to “genocide” and “aggression” in the textbooks used in the Federation, without, however, proposing any alternative language to describe traumatic events.

61. In April 2005, all Ministries of Education, with the strong support of OSCE and the Council of Europe, adopted a set of guidelines for writing and evaluating history textbooks for primary and secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (www.coe.ba/pdf/History_Report_22_April_05.pdf). The guidelines are considered a huge step towards the elaboration of scientifically based and objective textbooks that apply the principle of the multi-perspective, thereby enabling children to learn tolerance and encouraging the development of critical thinking. A new and substantially improved generation of textbooks has now been published in accordance with the guidelines. Furthermore, a teacher’s manual on contemporary history teaching in schools was developed, published, and distributed to schools.

62. Nevertheless, it appears that history textbooks still feature a national/ethnic bias. A comprehensive study conducted to analyse history textbooks published in 2007/08 demonstrated that all Croatian-language history textbooks for the primary school curriculum presented history as the history of Croats; all history textbooks for the primary school curriculum in Republika Srpska predominantly presented history as the history of Serbs; and some (but not all) history textbooks under the framework curriculum for the compulsory nine years of primary education in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina presented history as predominantly the history of Bosniaks.

63. Teaching about the 1992-1995 war remains one of the most problematic areas for history teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. It is still a sensitive, highly politicized issue; indeed, some history textbooks make no reference to it at all. When references are included, they are mostly one-sided or manipulated to create segregated identities. Many interlocutors, including teachers, stressed that they still try to avoid addressing the war.

64. Textbook policies vary between the entities. In Republika Srpska, a single textbook per grade is published and approved, even though the Special Rapporteur was assured that modern textbooks together with additional material are made available to students to develop their critical thinking. She was also informed that, since 2007, vocational schools too have been working with a new generation of textbooks that address history from diverse perspectives and are drafted by authors of various nationalities. In Republika Srpska, the only publishing and printing company, created in 1993 and owned by the Government, has the monopoly of the textbooks market.

65. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, three textbooks are officially approved for each grade. Textbooks can be chosen by individual teachers, in consultation with colleagues, or the decision may be made for them at a higher level, namely, by the Pedagogical Institute or the Ministry of Educa-
The Special Rapporteur was informed during her visit, however, of a recent decision to accredit only one history textbook, which would introduce a multi-perspective approach, starting from the eighth grade, although cantons with a Croat majority have shown resistance.

66. The Special Rapporteur does not believe that having a single history textbook for each grade in each entity is a good step; she recommends that several good quality textbooks be offered instead. As explained in her thematic report on the writing and teaching of history (A/68/296), a multi-perspective approach can ensure that every event is shown, by way of historical sources, from the perspective of others. In particular, when the historiography of each group provides a very different viewpoint and is closely linked to a political agenda, publishing the historical sources and supplementary teaching material is a reasonable way of presenting sensitive issues and of promoting critical thinking.

67. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur learned of a pilot project conducted under the auspices of OSCE and supported by the Council of Europe, proposing to focus on learning outcomes in history from the sixth to the ninth grade. She believes the project is a very good initiative.

68. The current political environment does not seem to be conducive to progress on this issue. For example, on 27 June 2013, the Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted a declaration on the causes, character and consequences of the tragic armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. In the document, the Assembly criticized the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Prosecutor’s Office, blaming the war on the “domination of the Serb people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Bosniak politicians reacted by labelling the declaration discriminatory and a falsification of history. This episode underscores the extreme importance of ensuring that historians, academics, and schoolteachers enjoy academic freedom, without interference by politicians (see points 70 and 73 below).

69. According to information received, the teaching of literature serves as an important means for nationalistic ideologies to build opposing narratives (including historical ones), dramatically affecting children’s perceptions of each other. Nationalistic ideologies rely on legends, language, national symbols, territories and enemies, and literature can be a very pervasive tool, even though its impact is frequently overlooked. Novelists, poets and other writers enjoy the right to artistic expression and creativity. Given that education is compulsory, however, the State and entities authorities should abide by their obligation to ensure that all educational content is in compliance with the 2003 Framework Law on Education (Article 3) and with international standards with regard to the objectives of education.
How to Teach about Srebrenica?
Despite the constant talk of education reform since the end of Yugoslav wars, the reform has never actually started in the successor states of former Yugoslavia. Some adjustments have been made, such as the so-called “harmonisation” with “Europe”, but there has never been an in-depth examination of the role and the value of education. And this is not a result of the usual inefficiency of our respective administrations. On the contrary, it is an expression of what these systems are, their very core encased firmly in the ruins of the former country. These systems, pretending not to be what they really are, are built on strong foundations set in the ideology which is an amalgamation of all ideas through which the old elites preserve their monopoly of power. And then, on top of that, there are nationalism and social egalitarianism, anti-modernism and traditionalism, collectivism and rejection of any change. There is left and there is right. But before all and above all, in the root of these systems lies authoritarianism. These systems without a system and the ideology with an excess of seemingly disparate ideas are there to protect the very essence of politics, which allows no compromise and which holds everything together.

Why is teaching about Srebrenica subversive?
Teaching about Srebrenica threatens precisely this essence. And this is why it is subversive. And unacceptable. Because, if teaching about Srebrenica was possible, that would mean that nationalism is not the be all and end all of our political orders. It would be a sign that the system is down, and that schools no longer produce its future leaders and consumers, but autonomous individuals prepared to see the world around them for what it really is. An opportunity would then present itself to cultivate individuals with critical thinking skills who are perceived as a strength and not a weakness of a society. The inherited patriarchal concept in which teacher is seen as the strict father and textbook as a scripture would collapse. Students would learn to ask questions and not just to mechanically answer them. The windows would open and the fresh air would come into the stuffy, damp schools. It would also mean the end of the politics of war of the nineties and the start of examining their causes. It would be a sign that priorities have changed – development would replace fantasies of bright future founded on sacred past. And that is the key: the past would become a place for critical questioning and critical confrontation instead of the identity pantry from which each government takes what suits it and pushes that which is not in its favour into the deep darkness.

Ancestral timeline
Those who criticize the idea of teaching about Srebrenica usually argue: it is too early. They also invoke the (in)famous historical distance, as a cover to all those running from something. They also say that without examining the archives, which will only be possible in some 30 years, nothing must be said. It is a deliberate misconstruction. It is a manipulation, because Srebrenica was placed in textbooks by its architects almost at the moment the crime was committed. Therefore – it has always been in textbooks, so the distance has never been a problem. The real question is – why is it there?
Indeed, the Yugoslav wars had been entering history textbooks since their very beginning. It is indicative that history textbooks in Croatia were changed in 1992, in Serbia in 1993 and in Bosnia in 1994. What does this bizarre chronology tells us? It unequivocally demonstrates that, in the midst of military operations and committing crimes, governments had the time and the money to also act in the “field of past” and that it was one of political priorities at the time. Everything was changed then – both the old and the new past, both the middle ages and the modern times. It was necessary to adapt the past to the present, to create a historical context in which the unbearable present would seem an entirely normal and logical product of history. A new historical legitimacy had to be lent to the new governments and the new events, the history timeline had to be created for the new states, and the leaders had to be afforded desirable historical ancestors.

The present had to be explained as well. And not so much for the sake of the present. More for the sake of the future. More because the images of the ongoing events were uploaded onto hard drives of children’s brains to leave their imprint forever, to shape their future opinion of the war that marked their childhood. By bringing the war events and personal interpretations directly into history teaching, the creators of wars sought to cement their explanation and justification of war, to impose their sick vision as a historical logic. It is a crime with a delayed effect, a trust deed for the future. This is why the regimes which instigated and fought the wars imposed their interpretation of the cause, the course and the meaning of wars into teaching history thus depriving the debate on historical distance of any meaning before it could even start. Historical distance, therefore, is not an argument. Quite the opposite.

Unlearning confrontation with the past
Although there are many examples in the countries around the world where a long time had to pass before controversial events were introduced in curricula, the arguments in favour of teaching about the present or the recent past are strong. These arguments are ingrained in the very nature of school itself, which, in spite of what our ministries wish for, is made up of living, breathing people. To be more precise – it is made up of living, breathing children. And children have this unpleasant habit of asking questions, even when they are not supposed to. And they do. Especially about the most recent and the most sensitive events. They need an authority, such as a teacher, to explain these events to them, to help them reflect on them. And this is where problems begin. Teachers have two options – either to forbid asking questions or to proffer their own interpretations, which is extremely dangerous in the majority of cases. This is yet another reason why the interpretation of such important, sensitive events should be in the hands of experts. Or, to be more precise, why the approach to teaching traumatic events should be based on purposely developed didactic methods. Moreover, teaching about recent past is important because school should be a significant participant in the process of facing the past. Almost 20 years that have passed following the end of the armed conflicts have been spent in attempts not to confront the past. However, it has become clear that new, thriving societies cannot be created without first overcoming the traumas that eradicated the previous ones. It has become obvious that the attempts to avoid confrontation with the past only ensure further decay and that moving forward is impossible without disinfecting the old wounds first.

Slovenia and Croatia, the former Yugoslav republics that went through the transition in a seemingly more successful way, also prove this point. There too the old pus is still alive, stopping them from moving forward. It has become clear that post-Yugoslav societies and countries have failed in finding solutions for their problems, largely because they did not want to examine how they found themselves in those problems in the first place. Nobody had a desire to question the ideological paradigm that brought them where they are today. No government has dared to point the finger at the root of the fantasies
which led to this endless stumbling through the dark. And it was obvious that the vital step forward cannot be made without a clear look into the past. That crucially important look into the past cannot be made without the help of the education system. Only when cataract is removed from the eyes of education, can we expect the new generations to have a clearer view. Many examples prove this clearly, Germany being the most prominent one. It was only when the question of German accountability was posed systematically through the education system and when the excursions to the places of mass executions started taking place, that the public awareness could be shifted forward. It was only then that teaching/learning could lead to the adopted way of thinking.

How do we agree on the truth?
Let us see where we stand at the moment. We said that Srebrenica is already in the curricula anyway. We said that it should be there, but not like it is now. So, how then? What to teach? Do we know what exactly happened there? Has what happened there been determined using scientific methods? Is there a single truth about that or any other event? Can Serbs or Bosniacs get to that truth? How would they agree on what the truth is? By voting, outvoting, consensus? Hardly. The comparative analysis of textbooks that was conducted in the South-eastern Europe (www.cdsee.org) showed that there are huge differences in the interpretation of historical events and phenomena. Even those which are not even remotely as complicated or as emotionally intense as the ones related to the latest Yugoslav wars. Everyone needs their own interpretation, everyone seeks that what is called national identity through this interpretation. Whether a war will be labelled a liberation war or an aggression, a just or an unjust war, depends solely on the present needs of the current regime and the society and only vaguely reflects the events that occurred in the past. After all, every past event is extremely complex, it provides elements for different interpretations and arguments for often entirely conflicting viewpoints. In addition, there is little knowledge attained using reliable and scientific methods. The underdeveloped domestic scientific methods have not yielded concrete data, which could be easily checked, verified and be definite. How then can we teach about something so sensitive and controversial such as the genocide in Srebrenica? How do we do it without it causing controversy, conflicts or without it becoming a new argument in favour of old nationalistic ideologies?
Firstly, we can go back to the beginning of this text and once again ask the question of the purpose of education. And what is even more important – why do we need to teach about Srebrenica? Should we accept the contemporary pedagogical approach that the purpose of education is creating free, self-aware citizens, who gain skills through education, for example, learning to read, understand and critically process a text, then teaching about Srebrenica may be the most important part of education. Precisely because this issue is so sensitive and so controversial. That is exactly why it would be extremely important to realize, first of all, that there is no one simple truth, but that understanding an event is always full of nuances, always different depending on the perspective, always pluralistic. And that is the essence – teaching about Srebrenica would help teach plurality, it would help teach that it is not only natural but also necessary to have different opinions and that the job of a true educational system is to teach how these opinions can be discussed, how to present arguments, ask questions, consider "the others", and to understand. This is our only possible corrective on our way to becoming better people.

Valuable examples
In the previous projects whose aim was to achieve better understanding of common past through history curricula, where history would have a reconciliatory role and cease to be one of the main factors of confrontation, two interesting and valuable solutions were used. One is the common Palestinian-Israeli textbook (Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Is-
rael-Palestine, eds. Sami Adwan, Dan Baron, Eyal Naveh, New York 2012), in which two narratives, two completely different perspectives of events are represented in two parallel columns, while a third, empty column, is left in the middle for students to fill, writing about their own perception of the relevant events. The same approach could be applied in the case of Yugoslav wars because all sides have their own strong narrative about what caused the wars, about their course and about individual events. Therefore, introducing those parallel narratives would be of utmost importance as it would provide students with the already established perspective of both sides, firmly laid down and very different frameworks for understanding events, which would demonstrate how greatly the interpretations differ. This way students would be exposed to the other side’s perspective, they would learn how it is possible to see one event from completely different angles and how each event in the past always gets interpreted differently within a single, and across different, societies, just as today’s political issues can be viewed in a completely different way. This is an important, almost therapeutic lesson, because every society has a tendency to believe that in the past there was only one interpretation of events, although we are aware of the plurality of the opinion on the present. This is why it is important to teach that the past was also plural, and that therefore the current teaching about it should be plural as well. It is particularly important in post-conflict societies (if our societies fall into that category at all) to show that there is a conflict of memories, that the “others” have their point of view and that, even when we cannot possibly agree with it, it is important to accept that a different point of view is possible and hear its arguments. This in itself is already the beginning of a dialogue, beginning of understanding, getting to know other people, and even accepting the idea that a different opinion is legitimate. Such a step is an enormous lesson on teaching about tolerance, plurality, but, even more so, about ourselves. Because being aware of other interpretations makes our views more flexible, more open, more complex, and softer. And this is precisely what the creators of our education policies fear. Understanding the “other” is still seen as a weakness.

Another approach can be found in the common textbooks specifically designed for the countries of South-eastern Europe (Teaching Modern Southeast European History. Alternative Educational materials, ed. Christina Kouluri, Thessaloniki, 2005, published in 9 languages of the region, www.cdsee.org) using the multiperspectival method. These textbooks present events through historical sources, texts or illustrations from the time in which they occurred, thus showing students how different sides saw certain events and how much their understanding differs. This way students are shown that even at the moment an event is happening its interpretations depend on the perspective it is viewed from and how, with the passage of time, these positions drift apart further. An important lesson is learned as to what an event seemed like to its contemporaries, what they knew about it, what explanation was given as to its cause. This lesson on the relation between the past and the present is also very valuable, because it shows motives and emotions of the contemporaries and introduces arguments which are today forgotten, and which explain the viewpoints of the participants. Such presentation of the past is important because it allows for opening up a discussion in the class, to study arguments of different sides, to cross-reference the data they cited and thus to recognize the complexity of each historical situation. This type of education enables us to reach the point when learning about the past no longer means memorising “one truth”, but questioning each argument and understanding the complexity of each political moment. History stops being a result of conspiracy or force of nature destroying everything before it and becomes an open space for discussion and constant questioning. The team of historians who wrote these textbooks has already prepared the next phase of the project.
which would also include the wars of the nineties.

Lesson on responsibility and democracy

If the events in Srebrenica get presented through such a method, it would mean including different types and levels of historical sources. The first part of the lesson would have to provide the number of the killed, the information on the remains of victims found so far and the researched information on victims and their biographical data. In the second part, the historical sources would be cross-referenced, primarily the newspaper articles, which would illustrate all the differences in the information on the same events given in the Bosnian and Serbian press. This would primarily reveal when the information about Srebrenica were published for the first time in Serbia and how laboured and slow the process from complete denial, through the acceptance with justifications to the beginning of confronting the past ran. That would be of tremendous importance, especially for the students of Serb nationality, who would learn about attempts of hiding the truth and manipulating the public. This approach would first acquaint the students with the fact that events have been presented differently by different sides from the beginning, they would gain an insight as to how the contemporaries understood these events and which version of the events they believed in. This is very important because the students are shown that the interpretations of an event are independent from the event itself, thus teaching them critical reading which, in turn, enables students to evaluate their sources, primarily the press. Such approach does not relativize the crimes, it shows that it is very important how crimes are interpreted and that interpretations have more effect on the public than the bare facts. Crimes are undeniable, but the attitude towards them is
what determines today’s societies and what can contribute to questioning the causes leading to them. That which happened cannot be changed, but our understanding of it can.

Once this is accomplished, samples of documents demonstrating different views of these events should be made available. This would be especially important for the Serbian side, as it would also show the reactions of the Serbian anti-war circles who opposed the politics of war and condemned the crimes. Such didactic approach would introduce an unambiguous awareness of the plurality of society; awareness that there have always been different viewpoints and that this means that a responsibility can be concretely apportioned for a particular course of events. Namely, if such plurality is not taught in history classes, then it appears that history is a predetermined, metaphysical course that exists apart from people and that people cannot influence it. If, on the other hand, the existence of different opinions is shown, we demonstrate that every historic situation has several possible outcomes, that they are not predetermined and that certain circles make decisions as to which road will be taken. It would be an important lesson in responsibility and democracy.

The third part should be dedicated to remembrance as well as the testimonies in the Hague, thus individualising the relationship with victims and developing empathy for their suffering. The last part should contain extracts from court verdicts, such as those rendered by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia which established these crimes as a genocide, as well as those by the International Criminal Court.

**A chance for History**

If this method were to be applied in presenting Yugoslav wars in textbooks used in the countries that participated in them, it would also mean that the new basis would be created for facing those wars as well as for a complete change in the way we teach about the past. The prescribed truth which is only memorised and precludes asking questions would be gone, and the understanding of the past would be based on different perspectives and arguments. This encounter with a different perspective would be painful, it would provoke resistance, run into contempt, even denial of the need to know what the others think. However, in conflict or post-conflict societies that step is necessary, for it leads to finally noticing the others, to recognising their legitimacy and opens up the possibility of a debate. Teaching about pain would then replace the statesmen’s empty apologies, and schools would become places of nurturing autonomous opinion instead of being an ideological pulpit as they have been and still are today. And history? History would get a chance to transform from being an instrument in the preparation for war into a critical discipline helping the nation to grow up, rub its eyes, notice the world around it and start creating a far-off, democratic society.
A polemic review

The Cyrillic Kids and the Latin Kids

Segregated blackboards as an alternative to segregated schools

In Paragraph 50 of her Report, in the Section titled Realizing cultural rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: specific issues, Farida Shaheed, the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, pointed out the so-called divided blackboards in primary schools in Brčko District as a positive practice. To quote: The system put in place in Brčko is often presented as a good model of integrated schools, where the pupils from different communities attend school together and mainly receive instruction in their own languages in the same classroom. Setting aside the vague diplomatic rhetoric used in this statement, not saying who exactly considers the education system in Brčko District a positive example, we believe that it is necessary to point out quite the opposite. The system set up in Brčko District is not a positive example of integrated schools. The students in Brčko are not united; they do not comprise a whole. In secondary school they are segregated and they attend separate classes in which they are taught the “national group of subjects”: language and literature, history, and geography. In primary school, these subjects are also taught according to different curricula, which complicates things greatly for teachers. Integration is physical and formal, carried out only to the point at which the Dayton brains can come to terms with its lethargic consciousness. The Special Rapporteur further says that the law stipulates that students have the freedom to express themselves in their own language, and that school documents are to be issued in the language and alphabet requested by a student or parent. In class, only the blackboard is divided, enabling teachers to use both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts and to show the differences existing between the various languages. With this she demonstrated that she either did not understand the root of the problem or, taking the easy way out (the way the international community in BH consistently keeps taking), she decided to put her trust in well-trained troublemakers. One language is spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina, not three. Cyrillic and Latin scripts therefore cannot show the differences between one language, but they can show the difference in the ways the polebearers of nationalism in Bosnia use different alphabets as an instrument of division. In the experience of teachers, divided blackboards bring only one good thing: by the time they reach the third grade when they should start learning the other script, the children reading the contents off the divided blackboards whereby the teacher writes in Latin script for one half of the students on one half of the blackboard and in Cyrillic on the other half, already know both (the Latin kids read Cyrillic, and the Cyrillic kids Latin.) However, the question everyone avoids answering as a rule, and which the Special Rapporteur did not even ask, is this: according to which curriculum are the Latin kids taught, and according to which the Cyrillic ones? The integrated one? Of course not, because there is no integrated curriculum. There is only the tacit and makeshift one, a make do and the it doesn’t matter anyway curriculum... What is it that Farida Shaheed wants to tell us – that it is a positive example that the children have half a class instead of a whole one, because the teacher spends the other half in front of the other half of the blackboard? Blind to the grotesqueness of divided blackboards, the international community shows how incompetent/unwilling it is to name the fundamental problem of the BH education – nationalism. In the last twenty years we have gotten used to this incompetence, aware that you cannot expect from diplomatic conformism more than an empty rhetoric and pandering to the impudent local powers that be. It becomes irritating only when, like in the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur, the concessions to nationalism are seen as a good example of integrated education. There is another question that each international expert glorifying the Brčko District example should answer: which half of the blackboard speaks to the children who are neither the Latin kids nor the Cyrillic kids – to the Roma children, for example, or the “Others”? Why, for instance, Bosniak parents have the right to be dissatisfied with the Serbian curriculum (in Konjević Polje) and the Roma parents do not have that right with regards to the Bosniak curriculum? Is that the best the European elite can get for the BH children – to choose between segregation and assimilation? And they usually get it through the crazed or frightened, confused or confounded, misguided or disinterested or semiliterate parents or guardians. ●

Nenad Veličković

A View from the Rock
Why is the number of Roma children attending school still so low? Is it mostly because of their parents, **loyal to their traditional way of life**, or should we be looking for reasons elsewhere?

Some have large ornate houses and colourful look-at-me cars parked in the yard with an abundance of garden sculptures and high fences with the names of the owners written in large letters. Others live in run-down houses without a façade, even without windows, or in improvised shacks made out of lorry trailers. Children from both groups in the two settlements we visited primarily don’t attend school or drop out early.

**Roofed Pantries**

In Varda, a Roma settlement in Kakanj, there are many children. Some are playing, drawing, or chasing each other over the roofs of the garages. Others are fetching water, minding the simmering pot for lunch, washing dishes, or gathering the dry clothes from the lines. The houses they live in are crowded, inadequate and messy, like roofed pantries where over the winter everything freezes. Children either go to school or help out by begging together with their parents.

In the settlement of Stijena (the Rock) Mačije oči, near Zenica, it’s much the same. Rifić, Mirsad, Ramiz, Hasiba, Amra, Sandro, Dula, Dula Junior, Evelina, Valentina, Meho...they’re not sure how many of them there are, some are there permanently, some only for a while. They have been living at the rock for years. Dula has thirteen children. Mirsad and Hasiba five, and Amra four. The children range in age from eight days to two, three, four, five, six, seven, ten, twelve, and thirteen years. The dogs running about were until recently not the only pets in this community. They also used to have their pigs and sheep. But they can no longer afford them. None of the children go to school, and the grownups either dropped out long ago or never went to school themselves. They collect secondary raw materials, mostly iron, and beg. These are their main sources of income.

**Not for Any Price**

For the children, school is abstract and unreachable. They tell us about their fears and dreams: Twelve-year-old Sandro went to school for four years while he lived with his family in Mostar. He has not been in school for the past two years. He would like to go back to school. He

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**Translator’s note:** Literally: Cat’s Eye Rock. Name of the settlement, often referred to as just Stijena or “rock.”

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Ines Haskić and Nenad Veličković

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Key word: **Cultural relativism** — a principle whereby there is no universal truth. It varies from person to person depending on how experience is interpreted in view of origin, values, and social norms. These factors influence perception and judgement, so there is no unique set of values for all societies. From the perspective of cultural relativism, all worldviews are equally valid and truth is relative depending on the origin of the individual, his or her cultural identity, and environment. All important aspects of human experience, including morals and ethics, are more local and variable than they are universal.
misses having friends. He wanted to learn. He didn’t have good marks.

Six-year-old Mehô, barefoot and undressed, but very dedicated to his task, is dragging pieces of scrap iron to the rock one by one. He takes no notice of us visitors or our camera.

Amra has never gone to school because she was a sickly child. Now, she begs. Sometimes she earns ten, sometimes twenty marks. She was reluctant to tell us which school she would have liked to attend. When others from the community started teasing her about going to school to become a cleaning lady, she conceded: nursing school.

Timka never went to school; if she had, she would have been in secondary school by now. Together with her sisters, she works a stall at the market, her father works with copper, and her mother begs. She told us about her experience of school:

“*I can read and write a bit. I’d like to learn German. I don’t need maths. I have a phone and a calculator. I’d study Bosnian a little bit. I don’t even know what they teach you, but I don’t need it. I thought I could be a hairdresser without school, but I can’t. I have no idea what my future will be. I don’t know what I can be. A lot of Roma don’t go to school. It’s better to beg. I didn’t want to go without my sister, but when she was old enough, I was too old and I didn’t want to go again. And she didn’t go because I didn’t go. Our older sister started going to school in Germany. When she came back here, she didn’t want to continue, not for any price. Our brothers gave up on school from the very beginning, they just weren’t interested. I was scared of school, I was terribly afraid. My father kept trying to persuade me and make me go, but I would just cry and scream. They wouldn’t let me out of the house for seven days, but it was no good, they could have given me a million marks, I was still too scared. People from the Centre for Social Work came, but it was no good. They told me, you have to go to school, you need it to get a job, you have to have all the rights like the other children...I don’t care about that, I don’t care about rights, I’m scared. I was so scared, I couldn’t even talk to them. They said if the child won’t go, we can’t force her. I get scared when I see all those children in the school. I wouldn’t be scared if I were there on my own. I’m afraid of people who aren’t nice to me. I’m afraid they’ll laugh at me and tease me. I was afraid someone might beat me. In Germany, a girl hit my sister and hurt her head. They tell me all sorts of things when I go to town, that I’m disgusting, that my mum begs, that I don’t have any rights, that my father won’t let me go to school, that I’m a coward...Sometimes they’ll walk straight at me to scare me. Then I have to move away or cross the street. I get so scared I think I’ll go crazy. Some people want to hit me, too. They call me Roma. People are aggressive towards the Roma, they don’t treat us like other people. I am especially scared of everything since I watched the Vampires. They have this tower in one town. Since that day, I’m afraid of going anywhere on my own. I also saw a film about people who escaped from prison. Father told me that really happens. I am afraid of those people that kill, I am afraid of everything that is aggressive. Now, I’m most afraid of these people coming from Syria. They are very problematic.*”
Better to Clean than to Plough

The parents never went to school, so it’s understandable that they can’t see what use their children would have from sitting in a classroom. What is more, the few experiences they had often included humiliation and trouble fitting in. Finally, school costs money, and every child in school means a pair of hands less for working or begging.

“No Roma ever decided not to go to school of their own will. Our whole life is a struggle. I wish I’d completed economics secondary school. I have zero grades of school, but I manage. I am self-taught, I can read and write. I work with iron. 90% of Roma work with iron and secondary raw materials. If you don’t have any schooling, you can earn 300, 400 or 500 BAM a month.”

“Some children steal, but all of them beg; even children from families that have crazy good cars worth fifty thousand marks, as well as children from families that live in very difficult conditions. Roma think that other people who live from their salaries and pensions are billionaires. That it is your duty to give them money, that they were born to beg and steal.”

“When my husband died, my son Sandro left school. Before that, he went to school for four years. I wasn’t able to send him to school anymore. He begged me to let him go to school. Every year for school you need clothes, shoes, a schoolbag, food, a mark or two every day...I don’t even have that one mark. School isn’t cheap or free. Some children get textbooks from the Social Work Centre, but not everyone. I don’t have enough to feed him, I can’t think about school. Sandro now helps me out. We go begging. My other son isn’t here today, he went to earn us some bread. When you have nothing to live on, you have to beg.”

“My children will go to school. I will work hard to give them that because I want what’s best for them. Look at my youngest. A boy. He will study to be a lawyer. That pays well. You can’t even go to the toilet, pardon my language, without money. School is their only chance to get a job and have bread on the table every day, and not like this.”

“I’ll tell you the truth, his mother won’t let him go to school. I won’t let him. It’s better to clean than to plough. They come from the Centre only if there’s a problem, no one comes to see the children.”

“When my father-in-law was alive, it was different, it wasn’t difficult like this. He had pigs and lambs, so we had our own meat, food for the winter, everything. We didn’t beg. Now we’re all on our own. I can’t send my children to school hungry.”

“My whole life’s been full of trouble. I don’t care about justice or the world. To tell you the truth, I don’t care about anything. I’m fighting for these children. My husband’s in jail. I don’t know when he’ll be out. Two of my children are deaf and mute. I want them to go to school, seeing as I never got to. I don’t need any money, just help for them to hear, to get an operation or hearing aids, and to go to school, just these basic things.”

“Wherever there’s a job, I go to work. Most often I collect iron. We pick it everywhere, from the bins, from landfills...Whatever we find, we sell and buy something for the children. That’s what we live on. And what the wife makes. She begs. There are Roma who spend their begging money on all sorts of things, on alcohol mostly, but we don’t do that, we don’t have schooling or a job and, apart from the iron, it’s our only source of income.”

Photo
Above: Meho brings his pickings to the rock
“I don’t need money. I’d let the children go to school if they gave me school supplies and books, and if they had something to eat and drink in school. It would be no problem. Then they wouldn’t have to earn their own bread.”

“I think school can be good for you if you get a diploma. I wish I’d gone to school to be a car mechanic. I finished six grades of primary school, but that’s no good. I can’t get a job. I don’t have a diploma and my schooling means nothing. I wasn’t a good pupil, I’d go for two lessons then skip the rest. It’s my own fault. I didn’t listen. I was young and stupid.

“There aren’t a lot of lessons for life in school. You have to learn a lot of nonsense. Like, for instance, religion. They teach pupils how to pray to god, and god gives us nothing. If we didn’t work, we wouldn’t have anything. It’s a fact.”

According to these responses, what are the reasons why parents of Roma children boycott school? First of all, it has to do with distrust, and a close second is lack of information. Certainly also being used to a certain way of life, inertia, plays a role. School is something remote and foreign, and as such, it is not in the best interest of their children. In Stijena and Varda, why did they choose iron and begging instead of school for their children, poor hygiene, unequal treatment of boys and girls, poor health protection, and no education.

What is the attitude of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards their choice not to send their children to school? As a signatory of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, it shouldn’t be difficult for BH to prove that inequality, child labour, illiteracy, and poor health protection are not in the best interests of children.

But the state does nothing. Why? First of all, because when viewed in terms of education, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not seen as one country, but as three. In this set-up, each of the three groups (Bosniak, Serb, Croat) evidently lacks a mechanism to ensure quality education for Roma children. How and why is this possible? One of the bigger reasons is certainly this: Serb/Croat/Bosniak education aims to ensure acquisition of the tradition, language, culture, and religion of the community that parents chose to belong to. The interests of the community are placed above those of the child! This is analogous to the fact that it is in the interest of the community and not the child for a five-year-old to beg and rummage through rubbish for scrap.

Photo
Above: A lorry trailer converted into a home
iron, or for girls to be kept to help around the house instead of being sent to school. Many communities in the world, not just the Roma, have this reasoning. This is a problem contemporary schools face in most countries. From a position of politically correct cultural relativism, how can the ruling ethnic majority impose its values (its language, its history, its tradition) while also allowing others to do the same?

Mired in cultural relativism, which serves as a cover for their semi-concealed curricula, ethnic (Serb, Croat, Bosniak) education authorities do not know how to prevent parents of Roma children from accessing rights guaranteed to the parents of their majority community. From their perspective, there is no solution. If, for example, Croats and Bosniaks have the right to two schools under one roof where they will prevent their own children from critically evaluating the views and values of their parents and their community, how can Roma be prevented from doing the same outside school?!

It is easier (and it is covertly done) to keep themselves and the public convinced that the Roma have only themselves to blame for the misery they live in – that they have chosen such a life because it happens to be in agreement with their traditions. And all of a sudden, the topic is no longer discrimination, but tolerance.

However, the fact that Bosniak, Serb, and Croat children (for the most part!) live in better conditions than Roma children cannot be explained by tolerance, unless we mean the tolerance of education for discrimination. And that is a feature, almost by definition, of both Serb and Croat and Bosniak education, each preoccupied with its own values, focused on fostering and preserving its own tradition, religion and, ethnically perceived culture.

Viewed from the rock, education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is failing in its most important task: it is not trying to show each child, whatever their origin, that there is a different (equally good if not better) way of living and thinking than that of their parents or their community. Schools in this case respect the traditions of ethnic collectives more than the rights, interests, and needs of children. From the rock, it is clear what an immoral institution the school is. •
How to miss educational targets

The Family as Shaped by Ignorance
There are a number of lesson topics that are discussed in the classroom each year through various subjects. The topic of family, along with the seasons and traffic, is certainly one of them. When they finally reach fifth grade, after years of learning, we should expect ten-year-olds to know that life is not a margarine commercial, and that a family is not always a mum and dad (married to each other) and their son and daughter.

Having introduced children to the concept of family for four years, it is now time to admit to what they have been seeing around them – to reveal that there are families without children, that a family might be without a father or without a mother, that parents may be divorced, that families may have adopted or biological children, or both...

Now, they will finally understand that Nejra and Filip both have families even though their mothers did not give birth to them and that there are no real and not real mothers or ‘own’ and ‘not own’ children.

Are ten-year-old children capable of understanding this? Of course they are.

It’s called *Culture of Living* and the first lesson deals with modern families and begins with these encouraging words: Babies and children grow up in diverse families. There are children whose parents live together, and children whose parents live apart, as well as children with only one parent. There are children who were adopted by their parents, and children who live with one parent and a step-father or step-mother, children who live with their aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather or other relatives, children whose parents are homosexuals, children with foster parents...

Grandmothers and grandfathers, as well as other relatives, are also part of the family, and some people also consider good friends as part of their family.

Below, under the subheading Different ways of conception – more ways to have a child and start a family, surprisingly, the author does not write about immaculate conception, but provides fifth grade pupils with more details about assisted conception, even pointing out the colloquial term artificial and explaining how there is nothing artificial about it, before going on to describe the process of adoption where people opt to adopt a child if they cannot have biological offspring or for other, mostly altruistic, reasons.

The textbook was published by IK Bosanska riječ in Sarajevo in 2008, and its authors are Zijad Numić and Tatjana Neidhart, who has a degree in architecture.

Now, let’s be serious.

The textbook cited above is not used in schools, of course, and has not been approved for use in teaching, but should be on every teenager’s bookshelf. It is called *Let’s Talk About Sexuality – Changes in the Body, Growing up, Sexuality and Sexual Health*. It was written by an American author, Robie H. Harris, and published by Egmont, Zagreb, 2004.

**Adopted Children Have No Brothers or Sisters**

Her parents adopted Nejra when she was ten months old. They had tried to have biological children and after a year of treatment without success, they decided to start the adoption process. Today, Nejra is completing fifth grade,
just like her friend from the other fifth grade class, Filip, a boy adopted by his parents when he was two. Her parents are glad she knows Filip because in him she recognises her story and the story of her family. These things are not talked about in school. Children like her don’t exist in textbooks and assigned books. Where she lives, it goes without saying that parents adopt children only when they lose all hope of having biological offspring. That is why adopted children have no brothers or sisters. Apart from Filip. But his brother is not his real brother said his mates from the playground when his brother was born two years ago.

The application form at the Centre for Social Work of the Sarajevo Canton that prospective adoptive parents have to fill out to start the adoption process

For years, Filip and Nejra have been living in their families, the only families they’ve ever known. In second grade, going through the same topic from the last year of My Family, Nejra raised her hand when the teacher asked who wanted to prepare a report and do a presentation about their family. The girl was overjoyed and enthusiastically went about preparing the presentation, going through family albums, but her mum was a bit worried. She feared the questions other children might ask. Since the start of the school year, the girls from her class had been hounding her with stories about an adopted girl from the only narrative that was available to them on that topic at the moment: an Indian TV soap. The protagonist of this TV soap grew up and finally found her real mother. They comforted her, saying it would be the same for her when she grows up. But Nejra cried and said she did not want to leave her mum. Never, not even when she grows up. But that’s not your real mum, the girls insisted.

The Story about the Boy with Spikes

Nejra’s mother finally asked the teacher for help and the teacher in turn spoke with the children and their parents. She strictly forbade them from teasing Nejra. And that was that. She did not use Nejra’s presentation to involve her parents and introduce the class to the real life of an adopted child, to something that would contradict the stereotypes about the evil stepmother, orphanages, and dreams of a lost birth mother. At the parent-teacher meeting, she did not advise the parents to talk or read with their children instead of watching Indian soaps on TV. For entirely understandable reasons (these were, after all, seven-year-olds), she did not recommend the excellent textbook Let’s Talk about Sexuality. But she also failed to recommend the age-appropriate picture book Hedgehog,¹ which tells the story of an adopted boy-hedgehog and how he found a family, and how his parents found the joy of parenthood. She probably didn’t know about it. Such books are visible only to parents who share a similar experience. They are recommended and talked about in a narrow circle of people.

¹ Katarzina Kotowska: Jež, Naklada MD, Zagreb, 2007
In the table above the following statements are highlighted:
Do you have your own biological children?
Do you have adopted children?
Age and sex of a child you want to adopt
Nationality of a child you want to adopt
Other characteristics of a child you want to adopt

Perhaps she could have tried to find similar texts, the Internet is vast, after all. But she did not. And she did not, even though she could have and should have, educate the children and their parents about proper terminology. Because just as assisted conception is not artificial because the embryo is formed by the joining of the father’s spermatozoid and the mother’s ovum cells, a biological child is no less one’s own than an adopted child.

A blond three-year-old Croat with curly hair, if you please
But how can a teacher facing these challenges unprepared warn about the wrong terminology that may make the child feel bad, about divisions into right and wrong, ours and theirs, when there is a lack of terminological correctness even in the official adoption form of the Sarajevo Canton’s Centre for Social Work.
In this questionnaire, its designers will ask whether you already have any of your own, biological children. Then they will ask about the age and sex of the child you want to adopt, and then his or her nationality and any other characteristics of the child you want to adopt. At that point, the questionnaire brings up a host of ethical problems, in addition to problems of terminology, and openly violates the rights of children whose interests it should be defending by finding the best parent for the child and not the best child for the parents.

Once you adopt a child, you’re a parent for the rest of your life, and the fact that you or your spouse/partner did not carry that child inside your belly for nine months, but instead rushed around doing paperwork for a year, makes no difference to your everyday life and the daily routines of your family.

Law above Love
The textbook should provide the child with more than the law, given that the right to be different is one of the key principles of education.
The author of the abovementioned 5th grade textbook Culture of Living was evidently not up to the task, providing at the very beginning of the textbook another boring lesson on the family as the smallest community of society:
The foundation of the modern family is the marriage or common-law marriage between a man and a woman who are able to produce offspring, meaning children. In a broader sense, the family is a group of people with common origin and ancestry living under the same roof – the granny (grandmother), grandpa (grandfather) and other relatives... (blah, blah)... The relationship between parents and children, whether they be adopted children or own offspring of spouses, born in marriage or common-law marriage, are regulated by law. Etc.
The reason for this failure lies in the ineptness of education authorities to modernise their patriarchal worldview. That is why the textbook can do no more than repeat the discriminatory phrasing of the law.

Photo
Above: Part of the application form for adoption of the Cantonal Centre for Social Work in Sarajevo, 2015
Pages 24 and 25: The remainder of a building in the former barracks, Sarajevo, July 2015
Three Histories under One Roof

How, if it is adopted, will the Law Prohibiting the Denial of Genocide affect history teaching in primary schools?

Marina Veličković

The Draft Law Prohibiting the Denial, Minimisation, Justification and Approval of the Holocaust, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity was put into parliamentary procedure in the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 1 September by Naša stranka. The Draft Law foresees prison sentences and monetary fines for those guilty of denying, minimising, justifying or approving the crimes listed above. The sanctions are more severe if the offender is a public official abusing his or her authority. In the Draft Law, the holocaust, genocide, and crimes against humanity are defined as crimes recognised by international tribunals and courts whose authority has in turn been recognised by Bosnia and Herzegovina. If the Draft Law is adopted, will education authorities be obliged to update textbooks in order to harmonise their content with the new law? We reviewed three approved and current history textbooks for the 9th and 8th grade of primary school that cover periods when genocides were committed – the 20th century:

**textbook 1** – **Povijest 8** / Stjepan Bekavac, Mario Jareb and Miroslav Rozić / Mostar: Alfa, 2012

**textbook 2** – **Historija 9** / Izet Šabotić and Mirza Čehajić / Tuzla: NAM, Zenica: Vrijeme, 2012

**textbook 3** – **Istorija 9** / Ranko Pejić, Simo Tešić and Stevo Gavrić / Istočno Sarajevo: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2014

Photo
Above: Shoes of the killed in Auschwitz.
Source: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum
Our first cursory observation: 3 textbooks, 8 authors, not a single one of them female.

Three Genocides

All three textbooks have a glossary at the end. We shall start there and ask two questions: are the terms holocaust, genocide, and crimes against humanity included, and if they are, how are they defined?

Textbook 1:

holocaust – the word originally denotes ritual sacrifice by fire to the gods of the Ancient Greeks and Romans; here it denotes the systematic destruction of the Jewish people.

The systematic destruction of the Jewish people: when, where, by whom and how? The definition lacks context. The possible reason is that the authors wanted to avoid mentioning the NDH\(^1\) and Jasenovac because then they would have had to connect Croatia with Nazism. But without explaining Nazism, it is impossible to explain the holocaust.

genocide – crime, or criminal intention directed against members of a social group or community (ethnic, national, religious, political, etc.); according to international conventions, genocide is one of the most serious crimes.

The definition of the holocaust was decontextualized, and the definition of genocide is incorrect. First, genocide is a crime defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as committing any of the acts listed under Article 2 against a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Political groups are not protected under the Convention, so crimes committed in Cambodia in the 1970s are not considered genocide, but instead crimes against humanity. The problem with this explanation in the glossary is that it refers to international conventions, but then incorrectly defines the term – this kind of misleading information gives the illusion of being a legal and scientific fact.

crimes against humanity – not defined. This is a significant omission given that crimes against humanity pertain to crimes committed against groups that are not protected under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Killings and persecution based on political belief, gender or sexual orientation (and other human characteristics) constitute crimes against humanity.

Even though pupils are not provided with information on the original meaning of the terms, for the purposes of the curriculum, this definition is satisfactory – it provides the framework in terms of geography and time, recognises that the main, but not the only victims were Jews, and identifies the perpetrators.

genocide – mass killing with the aim of exterminating a people due to its nationality, religious, political or other affiliation.

Again the same error as in textbook 1 made by including political and other affiliation, but there is an additional error here: namely, genocide is not just the killing of members of these groups, but also includes causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

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\(^1\) Translator’s Note: Nezavisna Država Hrvatska – Independent State of Croatia, Nazi puppet state established in Axis-occupied Yugoslavia
and physical, but also to the social existence of communities. On a positive note, this definition at least does not rely on the existence of legal conventions and therefore does not accord itself more importance and authority than it deserves.

**crimes against humanity** – not defined.

Textbook 3:

**holocaust** – not defined.

One the one hand, this omission is not surprising, given that the holocaust does not get mentioned in the curriculum for Republika Srpska. On the other hand, the omission on its own is shocking. Namely, without mentioning the holocaust, which prompted the birth of human rights and the United Nations, and by extension the process of decolonisation, the history of the 20th century is not just impoverished but also unacceptably simplified. (It should be noted that the holocaust is not mentioned in the curriculum for the Federation of BH either, or rather, it is only mentioned in the curriculum for teaching in the Croatian language.)

**genocide** – destruction of a people.

A bit like the definition of the holocaust in textbook 1 – incomplete. What makes genocide specific is the intention – the destruction has to be the aim of the incriminated acts; destruction is not secondary or collateral.

**crimes against humanity** – not defined.

**One Genocide, Three Histories**

The first (and to date the only) legally recognised genocide committed in Europe after the Second World War is Srebrenica. Given that the period of the 1990s is covered in all three textbooks, we were interested to see what they had to say about Srebrenica.

In textbook 1, Srebrenica and Žepa are mentioned together and are characterised as the largest killing of a civilian population after the Second World War. It is difficult to imagine the criteria that would make this statement correct. In 1994 in Rwanda, over a period of 100 days, 800,000 people, almost exclusively civilians, were killed. If the textbook authors were referring only to Europe, they should have pointed this out. If they were referring only to civilian victims of war (the killings in Rwanda were part of a genocide separate from the armed conflict), then the statement is again incorrect: some 11,000 people were killed in Sarajevo during the very same war, the majority of them being civilians. In brief, Srebrenica (where 8372 Muslim men and boys were killed, while the women, girls and elderly were expelled) is not an example of civilian casualties, but of genocide. The authors, however, do not say this. They attempt to divert attention to the historical significance of Srebrenica without recognising the legal and moral significance of the genocide in Srebrenica. Whereas civilian casualties can sometimes be justified or morally relativized by military strategy — genocide cannot. Genocide is intentional – the intentional destruction of a group and the intentional commission of crimes with that aim. It is difficult to prove but must be condemned. The Srebrenica genocide has both been proven and condemned, both by the Hague Tribunal and by the International Court of Justice.

In textbook 2, Srebrenica is characterised as the largest genocide in Europe after the Second World War. Technically, this statement is correct. However, Srebrenica is not just the largest genocide in Europe after the Second World War, but the only internationally and legally recognised genocide in Europe after the Second World War. How can it be the largest if it is the only one? Why is it more important to say that it is the largest than that it is the only? If it is the largest, then it is the worst, and if it is the only...? The qualification in Europe is also important, especially in view of being the largest, given that a little over a year before Srebrenica, 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda – almost 100 times more than in Srebrenica. This indicates the uncomfortable reality of measuring the terribleness of genocide – is the genocide in Rwanda worse than the genocide in Srebrenica because more people were killed? Or is

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2 According to humanitarian law, civilian casualties may be justified if the civilians were not the primary target, but instead were killed as collateral damage proportional to the military advances achieved by the operation.
every genocide equally terrible precisely because its aim is to destroy a group of people because of their innate characteristics? If we accept that this is what makes genocide terrible, then how can some genocides be bigger than others? This would mean that one group is more valuable than another, and this is precisely the kind of thinking at the core of every genocide. And it should not be allowed in textbooks or in classrooms.

In textbook 3, Srebrenica is not mentioned at all.

So, textbook 1 relativizes and minimizes the crime of genocide. Textbook 3 implicitly denies it. Textbook 2 subjects it to a value judgement. The proposed law, if it is adopted, will apply only to textbooks 1 and 2 because it pertains only to the level of the Federation, but will not cover textbook 3, which is used in Republika Srpska and which, according to our analysis, is what the law is most aimed at. That is the paradox of the attempt to introduce the Law Prohibiting the Denial, Minimisation, Justification and Approval of the Holocaust, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity: if there were an adequate, united state structure that could implement it, we would probably not need this law as such.

Universal Laws, National Curricula

The need for this type of law arises from the state organisation that includes three versions of variously skewed histories, which is why pupils in Mostar learn about Vukovar, pupils in Sarajevo about Srebrenica, and pupils in Banja Luka about the 1999 NATO intervention. They are taught about themselves as victims and about others as perpetrators, murderers, and criminals. The Draft Law is a proposal to take responsibility, to identify and recognise crimes in a society where responsibility has been morally relativized. Textbook 1 gives a map of non-Serb civilian casualties in the Homeland War; if Serb casualties were to be recognised, Operation Storm [BCS: Oluja] would be a war crime and not an example of patriotic heroism. In textbook 2, pupils are asked to compare a photo from the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords with a photo of the signing of the 1939 Cvetković-Maček Agreement. Textbook 3 does not contain a single image of the war in Bosnia, but it does contain 15 images of the NATO intervention.

History is part of the national group of subjects. According to a study conducted by the Open Society Fund BH in 2007 titled What Are We Teaching Children?, most textbooks for the national group of subjects, which includes mother tongue, history, geography and religious education, mostly encourage disunity and internecine tension, and very rarely cohesion and a united Bosnian-Herzegovinian identity. Such findings are not surprising – if subjects within the group were to encourage mutual understanding and respect for human rights, there would be no need for separate subjects and textbooks.

As long as we insist that children in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be learning three different histories, and as long as we consider developing their national identity to be more important than developing their ethical judgement, the proposed law cannot have its full and desired effect. An ethical reform of society that relies on law more than it does on education is not likely to be successful.

3 The political agreement on the internal divisions in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia
You are what you eat

When the Spaghetti Blossom

How important is knowledge about food production?

On 1 April 1957, the BBC show Panorama featured a report on the harvesting of spaghetti in the south of Switzerland. The report explained how the mild winter and eradication of the spaghetti weevil positively affected the growth of spaghetti-bearing trees, making the uniform length of the spaghetti and their quality above average for that year’s harvest. Of course, this was an April Fool’s joke that had to be explained to the thousands of people calling the BBC to inquire about where they could get spaghetti tree seedlings and how to grow their own spaghetti.

Chocolate Comes from Cows

Ignorance about what we eat every day abounds. Modern life has imposed supermarket shelves between nature, which provides food, and the people who consume that food. Our busy lifestyles leave us little time to look beyond the shelves at how the food we purchase and eat is produced. We settle for watching commercials and trusting food labels. If during the war Sarajevo children used to say that milk came from Merhamet and the Red Cross, today their milk comes from Konzum and Bingo. In this story, cows are purple and provide us with chocolate. Domestic food production is puny, disorganised, and uncompetitive. That is why we eat plums from Chile, cucumbers from Turkey, and apples from Slovenia and Poland.

What Happened to the Tomato?

Older people still remember a time when tomatoes were a seasonal vegetable that
could be obtained from mid-June (early Macedonian) to late September (from domestic gardens). Tomatoes were soft and quickly spoilt in the summer heat, so they could be kept on market stalls for only a day or two. The tomatoes from that time had a taste our palates rarely encounter these days. Today, we can buy tomatoes year round, with slight variations in price, but a constant dearth of its long-ago good taste. New tomato hybrids give fruits that align with interests of trade: they are durable for transport, attractive in appearance, and have a longer shelf life in the supermarkets. These are the characteristics traders are interested in, and the producers had to adapt to them in order to sell their products. Consumers have to eat, have to buy food, and have to choose among what is offered. Trade determines supply and there the story starts running in circles. The real taste of tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables remains only in the memories of older generations. New generations have only ever known the taste of supermarket stock.

How Do Peanuts Grow?
How much do new generations know about the production of fruits and vegetables they find on their plates every day? Do our children know the relationship between crisps and potatoes? Would we be surprised to find out that our children, having grown up and gone to school in urban areas, are convinced that tomatoes grow on trees? Why would it go without saying that children know what a tomato plant looks like simply because they eat its fruit every day? Is couscous a type of grain or a type of pasta? Did you know that the peanut is a type of legume that forms above the soil following blossoming and pollination, and then falls to the ground where producers cover it with soil so that it may ripen? Did you know that you can grow your own peanuts in BH? You didn’t learn about this in school?

Textbook Knowledge
In lower grades, the subject of My Environment includes lessons on fruits and vegetables, and food production with illustrations of the most important sorts. Thus, pupils in third grade, having learned about the Importance of Plants in Human Nutrition should be able to undertake simple work in the garden, orchard and field and independently or with the help of others grow flowers in the classroom (My Environment, 3rd grade curriculum, Sarajevo Canton). In higher grades such lessons are rare because it is assumed that by this time children can differentiate apples from oranges. Information from textbooks is all that education offers. Someone who wants to know more will have to visit relatives in the country or study agronomy when they’re older. Few schools have their own gardens where pupils can get their hands dirty growing fruits and vegetables. There is not enough space, resources, plans, or initiative. In the garden of our education, not enough is an abundant sort. Too bad it’s not edible.

A Garden in Every Schoolyard!
The second term, the period from February to June, provides ample time to organise sowing or planting of radishes, spinach or lettuce. It doesn’t even require a lot of room. Dedicating a small part of the schoolyard to this is not much of an investment. Even a small plot, with good organisation, can yield different fruits and vegetables, or at least some herbs to begin with. The Internet has plenty of information about how to grow your own food on your balcony, on your windowsill, or in flowerpots. Urban gardening has become a trend in large cities where people want to learn about how to produce food and grow plants, and where they want to eat something they grew themselves despite all odds. The education system should devote much more attention to food production and nutrition because they relate to a vital human need. Without this knowledge, we are left to the tyranny of the market deciding for us what we will eat, our food quality, and pricing. Without that knowledge, we trust commercials recommending top-quality products and healthy food, but whose labels are rife with small-print mysterious E-codes. Without that knowledge, we are liable to swallow anything, even a story about spaghetti growing on trees.
Education for Returnees
In the last school year of 2014/2015, there were a number of occasions when problems related to the education of children whose parents are returnees made it into the public eye in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the second school year that children in Konjević Polje have not attended regular classes at the Petar Kočić Primary School because their parents insisted that children should be provided with classes in the national group of subjects that follow the so-called Federal curriculum.

In Kotorski, parents and children refused to accept their reports at the end of the school year because they listed Bosniak instead of Bosnian Language as a subject. However, they may try to justify this with linguistic and legal arguments, it is clear that this is a case of expressing political dominance and pressure on the national feelings of returnees. In reality, if we were to adhere to the Constitution of Republika Srpska (Article 7), the subject that teaches language and literature should be called the Language of the Serb People, the Language of the Croat People or the Language of the Bosniak People according to parents' wishes. The discrimination of Others is already guaranteed under the Constitution of BH and in entity constitutions. On the other hand, the system of two schools under one roof in some municipalities in Herzegovina and Central Bosnia is still up and running, despite court orders to end such segregation practices. The political manipulation accompanying these issues has disabled any attempt to solve them in a professional and legal manner. This means that in the coming school year we can expect new cases of contention. The solution to this sensitive issue, with a tendency to create new points of contention, lies within reach but, first, everyone needs to drop their weapons.

At the Beginning Was Dayton

In 1995, the Dayton Agreement brought an end to the Bosnian War. However, while the Dayton Agreement made legal the Dayton Constitution of 1995, it has not resolved the division of the country. According to the letter of the Dayton Agreement, the area of education falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of the entities. However, the United States and the European Union are not satisfied with the living theatre of the absurd, with the internationally recognised原则 of recognition, that the Dayton Constitution is a living theatre of the absurd, with the universally accepted principle of recognition, that the Dayton Constitution is a living theatre of the absurd, with the universally accepted principle of recognition, that the Dayton Constitution is a living theatre of the absurd, with the internationally recognised principle of recognition, that the Dayton Constitution is a living theatre of the absurd, with the internationally recognised principle of recognition, that the Dayton Constitution is a living theatre of the absurd, with the internationally recognised principle of recognition, that the Dayton Constitution is a living theatre of the absurd, with the internationally recognised principle of recognition, that the Dayton Constitution is a living theatre of the absurd, with the internationally 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Agreement contains a whole annex (Annex 7) intended to strengthen the right of expelled and displaced persons to return to their pre-war dwellings, in reality that process is slow, owing in part to the fact that the politics that drove these people from their homes are still, more or less, openly present in government. Returnees have, through no fault of their own, become good material for manipulation of all sorts, where local politicians have exhibited a high degree of creativity. This creativity is mostly aimed at winning election points in pre-election campaigns, but very rarely with the sincere intention to help these people. One such attempt at helping took place in March 2002 when representatives of all the education ministries in BH signed an Interim Agreement on the Accommodation of Special Needs and Rights of Returnee Children. Thus, children of returnees became children with special needs.

Temporary but Permanent
The essence of this temporary solution (which is still in force) was that education ministries committed to providing parents of returnee pupils, if there were at least 18 of them in a class, with a choice of curriculum for the national group of subjects (language, history, geography, religious education, and nature and society). They also agreed to employ a certain number of teaching staff from the returnee population. At the start of its implementation, the Agreement did not create significant problems because returnee children were few and far between and returnee parents did not in-

On the Streets of Petrovac
In the Ahmet Hromadžić Primary School in Bosanski Petrovac, they did not concern themselves with counting pupils: according to the school principal Mujesira Kavaz, classes in the national group of subjects are provided to all children of Serb nationality, whatever their numbers, both in the central and in the five branch schools. When it comes to the name of the language taught at school, all children of Serb nationality have Serb Language entered in their school report. Still, some parents from this municipality enrol and send their children to the school in Drinić (RS). Although this case and this practice are often used to illustrate the dissatisfaction of teachers with how classes are organised in the Federation of BH, principal Kavaz believes that this is an attempt of the Drinić Primary School management to increase the number of children in their schools by offering parents various advantages, such as transport of pupils by school vans from their houses to the school, while the Petrovac school can only provide for free transport of pupils by regular public transport buses. In this part of BH, where the concept of birth rate has become an abstract idea, the fight for every pupil becomes merciless.

Zdravko Radošević, a returnee to Bosanski Petrovac and the parent of a school-aged child, believes that Serbs living in Bosanski Petrovac have a hard time accepting, understanding, and identifying with the fact that they live in the Federation of BH, the state of BH, and that they are still victims of daily politics keeping them in a vacuum between reality and the feeling that BH is a stepmother to them – while their real mother is the RS or Serbia! The key question is what have the local and cantonal authorities done in the past 10 or 15 years to change these views? Absolutely nothing! The party staffing policy has ensured that, in the last 15 years, only 3 or 4 teachers of Serb nationality have worked or work at the Primary School. The van that is used to transport pupils is often broken or out of petrol. The absence of self-criticism is astounding, as are the irresponsibility and crudeness, starting from parents enrolling their children in a school in the other entity even though they have a school 100, 300 or 500 meters from their home, all the way up to policies that are meant to bring together, but actually divide. And that’s how it’s been for almost 20 years since the end of the war.
RATIONALISATION IN THE INTEREST OF PRIVATISATION

The planned rationalisation, if it is indeed that, is not a Sarajevo cantonal problem, but rather a model to resolve similar problems on other Bosnian-Herzegovinian planets.

Having won the elections, the winners are faced with a budget deficit. Because of pressures from the international community they cannot count on assistance, loans are due to be repaid, and a tightening of the belt is inevitable. That would lead to social unrest and weaken the voter base. The situation is difficult, but not hopeless. The solution comes in the guise of privatisation. The international community welcomes every step in that direction. The catch is what to privatise in education. What is it that education has that would be of interest to capital, given that it already receives a cheap labour force?

The answer becomes obvious: properties and buildings. That would be the thinking of any farmer faced with the prospect of surviving another year – he would sell a field, or meadow, or forest to pay his debts. The election winner has good reason to count how many schools and square meters he has won, how many schoolyards and playgrounds, what their position is, and in which zone they are located. All of it has a market value. Seen from the point of view of privatisation, all of it is just real estate – a future hotel, residence, villa, office building, warehouse, parking garage, etc.

As opposed to fields and fallows, school buildings are not empty and cannot be sold off overnight. They first have to be emptied. This, in short, means they have to be shut down. And they can be shut down if they are proclaimed to be unviable. And they are unviable if they have fewer and fewer children and more and more teachers. Then, the first step towards privatisation becomes rationalisation. This means to set things up rationally: surplus teachers are to be let go (save on salaries) and children who are in short supply should be moved somewhere where they will become surplus. Because the same solution will say that a class may now contain more than 24 pupils, say 32. (Save on heating, maintenance, etc.) Step by backwards step, the solution to a seemingly hopeless situation begins to resemble good transitional business. It’s an opportunity for our people to go get in on the deal. All attested patriots defend Bosnia by privatising it. Besides, who else would buy these crumbling rundown buildings with their obsolete installations and dried-out woodwork? The rationalisation that began in the glass of Sarajevo’s business towers ends up in unfinished privatisation. And then the relationship between shutting down schools and saving education becomes clear. Capital has no interest in the quality education of its future workers. More children in classrooms and fewer teachers in schools pave the road to a cheap and loyal labour force.

Nenad Veličković
sist on their children’s right to education in accordance with their own national curriculum. That trend started after 2008, when returnees increasingly demanded that their children be educated using their own curriculum and their own textbooks, or that the organisation of classes be changed (abolishing the system of two schools under one roof). The extent to which their demands were taken into account varied from case to case. In Glamoč, those in charge of organising classes ignored the demands of returnees to introduce the national group of subjects. In Martin Brod, returnees and the school administration reached a special agreement about classes whereby parents gave up on the national group of subjects and in return had classes organised in Martin Brod so that their children would not have to travel to school in Kulen-Vakuf every day. Two schools under one roof still exists, despite court decisions to the contrary. Most returnee children in Prijedor have been provided with classes in the national group of subjects, but some children still have Bosnian Language as a subject, while for others it is called Bosniak. In Vrbanjci and Konjević Polje, children of returnees are denied the right to the national group of subjects because there are not enough of them to meet the requirement (the requisite 18).

National Troop of Subjects
How classes from the oh-so-crucial national group of subjects are organised in practice is a whole different story. The national group of subjects does not include Music, so, depending on the curriculum used for language and history lessons for returnee children, they sing Bože pravde, Lijepa naša or U Dul bašći kraj šimšira. What do children draw in art class for Repub-
lika Srpska’s National Day, or Independence Day, or for Christmas, Easter, and Eid? Since secondary schools do not have a national group of subjects, children of returnees planning to continue their schooling have to transfer to the curriculum of the dominant language, and hence learn a different history or geography.

A teacher teaching language and literature in accordance with the Serb curriculum in one primary school in Prijedor teaches the same subject in line with the Federal curriculum as part of the national group of subjects in a nearby branch school.

“It’s all the same,” says this veteran of BH education.

Pupils have the same needs in all returnee areas. Above the name of the subject and the name of their teacher, their wish list includes some quite ordinary needs:

– School buildings equipped for quality education;
– Fun, understandable, interesting textbooks, free of charge if possible, or at least inexpensive;
– Teachers who come to teach and not to learn how to teach;
– Teachers for whom teaching is a vocation and not a reward for loyalty to their party;
– A computer for every pupil in computer science classes;
– A sandwich and an apple for lunch;
– A gym, playground, balls;
– Heating;
– A toilet with toilet paper and running water;
– Transport from home to school and back;
– Different extracurricular activities;
– Competitions and events with pupils from other schools;
– Field trip.

Children as Extras in the Theatre of the Absurd

The problem of organising classes for children of returnees has moved from the field of pedagogy and organisational capacities to the field of low-level petty politics and high-level politics. Politics and politically dependent media have drawn a map of neuralgic nodes in BH education which, incidentally, coincide with the map of places of minority returnees. It is a conflict between two mutually exclusive concepts: according to Dayton, territories belong to one people, its language, religion, and narrative, and, according to the other concept, members of every people have the right to their own narrative wherever they may live in BH. Another twenty years may pass in a petty and high-level political exchange of arguments, but a solution that will satisfy both sides simply does not exist. Constantly repeating that everything is being done in accordance with the law, while pointing fingers at the other (or third party) has become standard fare in political rhetoric on this topic.

It is clear that the only quality compromise is a unique curriculum based on academic principles, and not those of politics, ideology or religion. The idea may not correspond with reality, but that does not mean that the idea is the problem. The problem is this theatre of the absurd we accept as our living environment.

Translator’s Note: Bože pravde and Lijepa naša are the official anthems of Serbia and Croatia, respectively. U Dul bašći kraj šinšira is a traditional Bosniak song.
The latest research into the teacher’s brain carried out by students uncovered certain centres affecting the quality of lessons:

**Collected and edited by Lejla Reko**

**Reality Centre**
It makes them: realistic, treat students well, polite, always have good advice to offer us, show understanding for certain stuff.

**Supportive Centre**
It makes them: explain things clearly, and explain them again if necessary, supportive and considerate, share a joke with us...

**Relaxation Centre**
It makes them: create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

**Pushing Forward Centre**
It makes them: offer support and encouragement. It makes us: comfortable in their presence. It helps them establish a clear line between the work time the fun time.

**Accessibility Centre**
It makes them: well-organized, dedicated to their work, willing to put themselves in our shoes, use interactive approach to teaching, accessible. It helps them grade our work fairly, makes them open for cooperation, keep up to date with the current grading methods, realize that at certain times students are given more tests and written assignments that the law allows.

**Objectivity Centre**
It makes them: creative, funny. It helps them admit their mistakes, use their experience, not force their own views on others, respect the opinion of others, treat all students equally, not prejudiced...

**Stimulating Centre**
It makes them: cover interesting topics they can talk about competently thus making lessons more interesting, try to explain something in a way that makes it easier for us to understand.

**Friendship Centre**
It makes them: try to leave a good impression. It helps them: command respect and have friendly attitude toward students, talk to us about staff not related to school, behave naturally and not force their opinion on us, make the staff they teach more accessible, understand our problems.
Primary and Secondary School students from Sarajevo, Odžak, Jajce, Bijeljina, Maglaj, Goražde and Istočno Sarajevo were included in the survey.

Frustration Centre
It makes them: rude, behave like they have a chip on their shoulder, too strict, take everything too seriously, come to work upset and take it out on us. Nobody likes frustrated teachers. It makes them take out their personal frustrations on students. They show lack of understanding.

Privacy Centre
It makes them: insult students, act all smart, ask too much about your private life, have unrealistic expectations, mix private and work life.

Judging Centre
It makes them: not care whether we would learn anything, boring, say that God knows for an A, the teacher for a B, and the student, maybe, for a C. It makes them: judgemental, lack empathy, use dated teaching methods, not like their job, think their subject is the only one there is.

Favouring Centre
It makes them: abuse authority, judge students only by their grades, favour students with higher grades, grade subjectively, teach badly, talk to students about their private problems, show intolerance towards some students, insult students.

Arrogance Centre
It makes them: arrogant, conceited, put down students who come from rural areas, think that their subject is the only one and that we don’t have any other responsibilities except school, not even try to explain a lesson but tell us to study on our own, have an attitude that scares us thus additionally complicating the learning process. It makes them lack empathy.

Strictness Centre
It makes them: use strictness to avoid additional effort, use dated teaching methods, vain, put grades above knowledge, have arbitrary criteria for marking, strict, test us constantly, give us a C when we accumulate three minuses but we need to have five pluses to get an A, give us too much homework, too harsh. When you know all the answers but one, they give you a D. It makes them shout a lot, angry for no reason.
Relevant or irrelevant?

Sead’s Axiom
And while the BH public was preoccupied with the issue of appointment of members to the Steering Board of the Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, we were wondering what it was that the Board was steering...
Process, a comprehensive reform of higher education aiming to establish a harmonised European Higher Education Area. BH joined the Bologna Process in 2003, and the Framework Law on Higher Education is a prominent achievement of domestic legislature, known for its tardiness in implementing reforms in any area. The Law defines, among other things, the competences of the Agency. There is a list of 21 competences, and an analysis soon concludes that the main responsibility of the Agency is related to the process of accreditation of higher education institutions (13 competences), providing recommendations (four competences), and giving advice (two competences). The Agency represents BH in international organisations in the field and adopts rules and other decisions from within its competences. The main shortcoming of the Agency is that it was established as a legal requirement, i.e. as something BH had to do on its path of European integration. It would have been much better if the establishment of the Agency has been initiated by the higher education institutions themselves in order to introduce order and improve quality in the higher education sector.

About the Agency

The seat of the Agency is in Banja Luka. The staffing structure foresees 35 positions, and 22 have been filled to date with three appointees, 11 civil servants, and eight employees. According to its organisational structure, the Agency is managed by a director. Due to the expiry of the director’s mandate, there is currently an acting director, Husein Nanić. The director has two deputies, and all must be members of one of the three constitutive peoples in BH. Apart from the Management, the Agency also has a Sector for the Development of Higher Education, a Sector for Quality Assurance, and a Sector for Legal, Staff, Financial and General Affairs. The Agency Steering Board has 10 members, appointed in line with national quotas (three representatives each of the three constitutive peoples and one representative of the Others) and expertise. The number of sessions of the Steering Board varies from year to year. In 2011, three sessions were held, in 2012 there were seven, in 2013 and 2014 there were four each, and in 2015, there were two. The Agency does not have its own income and is financed from the BH budget. Its budget in 2015 was 1,133,000 BAM. Within that budget, 51.2% accounts for gross salaries and compensation for staff, 10.4% is allocated to cover expenses of staff and parliamentary representatives, and 14.8% is allocated to contracted services. Travel expenses account for 0.5% of the budget, and the same amount is allocated for the purchase of vehicles and computer equipment. The remaining 22.6% of the budget is spent on other office and material costs.

The information we sought about the structure and activities of the Agency...
was very professionally and promptly provided by its public relations officer, Slavica Škoro. We contacted the director, Mr. Nanić, and asked him to comment on Mr. Kadić’s statement by briefly explaining why the Agency he manages is important. Unfortunately, Mr. Nanić did not make use of this opportunity. However, given that Mr. Nanić and Mr. Kadić are members of the same political party – the Party of Democratic Action – they have probably already had an opportunity to exchange views in private.

Oh My Kafka
Is it even worth mentioning that the accreditation procedure in the BH socio-political context is, to put it mildly, complicated? The description that follows is a simplified version omitting references to articles of the law, rules, and regulations. So, higher education institutions start the procedure by applying for accreditation to their competent authorities, and these are cantonal education ministries, the Agency for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions of Republika Srpska or the Education Department of the Brčko District of BH. Based on this application, the competent authority submits a proposal to the Agency for appointing members to the Committee who will perform external evaluation of the applicant. The Agency checks whether the proposed members of the Committee are on its list of experts, and if they are, the work of the Committee is approved. The Committee is comprised of four members: a foreign and a domestic expert, one person from the business sector, and one student. The Committee evaluates the higher education institution in accordance with predefined rules, focusing on nine key points, and produces a report on its evaluation. The Committee submits its report to the competent authority, which in turn forwards it to the Agency, which based on said report, if it is positive, issues a recommendation to accredit the higher education institution to the competent authority. The competent authority issues a decision on accreditation and submits it to the Agency, which then enters the higher education institution in the State Register of Accredited Higher Education Institutions in BH.

The 1,133,000 BAM Question
The above description demonstrates that the accreditation of higher education institutions in BH is handled by thirteen different bodies, while the Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance functions primarily as a control body in the whole process. Could this whole system have been simpler, and therefore more efficient and cheaper for the society whose taxpayers finance all these authorities? Have students, professors, and employees noticed any positive changes in higher education resulting from accreditation and the work of the Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance? Sead did not know the answer to this question, so he voted as he did.
In the upcoming period, the Sarajevo Canton Assembly will face an important and needed, but almost impossible, task. Namely, last summer it was tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Programme of budget rationalisation measures of the Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Education, Science and Youth to improve the quality of the teaching process and successive payment of compensation to claimants from among the staff in primary and secondary education (hereinafter: the Programme). This year, the Ministry announced that it would implement reform steps in education, many of which have set the public atwitter. In order to secure a degree of transparency, the Assembly established a special team that brings together assembly representatives and representatives from a number of political parties, and which will monitor the work of the Ministry. This team will face an almost impossible task. In order to monitor the implementation of the Programme, clear reference points must first be determined against which the success of rationalisation will be monitored and analysed. Without these reference points, the Programme cannot be responsibly implemented. The reference points range from general to detailed:

1. The clear purpose of all rationalisation measures must be determined. Rationalisation is needed and desirable in most public sectors as a form of austerity in difficult times, but we first have to determine why, i.e. what will austerity in
education achieve. It is only with a clear purpose that rationalisation can be implemented to the benefit of society – transparently and effectively. The Ministry has already determined the measures, but it has not determined a clear purpose for the rationalisation. One of the aims listed in the Programme document under each of the measures is general austerity and payment of compensations to claimants, as well as maintaining liquidity of the Sarajevo Canton budget. It is, therefore, unclear why austerity is specifically targeted at education and not at other sectors. The only sector-specific purpose given is the relatively broad and generalised improvement of the quality of education.

We must ask the following questions:

a) do the proposed measures cause and justify damage to the community and individuals (and what sort of damage, including damage to the quality of education), and

b) are there alternative areas of austerity (e.g. can the same or larger savings be made at the expense of the Ministry or the government instead of at the expense of schools)?

For example, the Programme foresees banning remuneration for work on committees if the nature of that work falls within the terms of reference of the employee. Most would agree that the same approach could and should be implemented at all levels of government. Also, all other austerity measures (saving on electricity, telephone costs, printing, and accounting) should be applied to all public institutions, not just schools.

2. The purpose of improving the quality of education should be analysed and designed in detail. The key issues for analysis include:

a) what kind of education do we want in the Sarajevo Canton, and

b) to what extent is it possible to apply the strategic directions in education that the Council of Ministers has already adopted for the period 2008-2015, little of which has been implemented to date?

Answers to these questions will be crucial in establishing detailed systemic needs in education in the Sarajevo Canton. Only on the basis of these needs will it be possible to determine meaningful and transparent measures that may (but don’t necessarily have to) include rationalisation.¹

2a. The programme aim of improving the quality of education must be enabled by the adopted Sarajevo Canton budget. This key measure will be applicable only after the government commits to a clear vision of quality in education to be achieved.

Analysis has shown that the 2015 Sarajevo Canton budget for education contains strategically unclear items. Specifically, in terms of quality, for example, if improvement were to be measured through the necessary curriculum reforms, or through the establishment of inclusive practices in all schools, it is not clear why the government has reduced the funds for curriculum development committees (while, for example, increasing funds for committees for the establishment of higher education institutions), or why only 7,300.00 BAM have been allocated for inclusion and intended for Ministry employees.

Also, at the pre-school level, the budget provides for only 6 additional staff to be employed, which will not meet the strategic solution to the situation where some 20% of children in the Canton are still not enrolled in mandatory pre-school education.

2b. The measure to reduce the number of employees in education should be preceded by an analysis to clearly determine the short-term and long-term aim of the measure. In the Programme, the Ministry lists the key measure (within a clear aim) of reducing the number of employees in education, and the Government programme for redundancies. At the same time, the Sarajevo Canton budget foresees employing an additional 166 people in education, but does not specify their professional profile.

The Programme document mentions in passing the need to employ new profiles of professionals and states that one of the models is an inclusive teaching assistant. It does not state when and what measures

¹Školegijum published an article on this very important issue back in 2012. (http://www.skolegijum.ba/tekst/index/159)
will be undertaken to employ new profiles of professionals at schools, how they will be trained, and whether this will necessitate planned enrolment at universities.

2c. Measures should be such that they are applicable in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian system or key settings of that system need to be changed. For example, it says that teachers’ salaries will depend on their performance and the performance of their pupils. How and how often will performance be measured? How do we prevent teachers from giving excellent marks at the end of the term to improve their pupils’ performance and by extension their own salaries?

3. A clear timeline has to be determined for the planned measures so that Programme implementation can be responsibly monitored. Almost all the deadlines in the text are vague. The terms used include in the upcoming period, then, when the government determines that it is no longer needed, etc. It says that teachers’ salaries will depend on their performance (but it does not say when this will become applicable). It says that from then on, schools will be funded based on the number of pupils. When is then? Also what will be the amount per pupil? Who determined, or rather, will determine these figures?

4. We should approach with caution the fact that the Ministry intends to take away a large part of the responsibility of schools for employment and public procurement (with the explanation that this is intended to prevent irregular employment and reduce procurement costs). Namely, this measure will significantly decrease the school’s autonomy, while at the same time, theoretically, failing to prevent the ministry from maintaining the same degree of corruptive behaviour that schools were allegedly guilty of. A better way of solving this problem would be to sanction the schools, or their principals, for abuse of office. This would be a long-term legislative solution to the problem.

In conclusion, although the education system in the Sarajevo Canton and all of BH is in urgent need of quality and far-reaching reform, the planned reform measures of the Sarajevo Canton government require broad and systematic review before they can be responsibly implemented. Until then, any monitoring of these measures cannot be considered meaningful.
Science and technology can boost the growth of practical atheism, especially if a person gets too carried away by their knowledge or technological advance.

When a person gets carried away by their scientific successes to such an extent that they forget all ethical or moral principles, so much so that they do not need God any longer, they start behaving like atheists. (With Christ through Life, Religious Studies textbook for the 8th grade of primary school)

1. To link science with technology is a ploy to reduce science to technology and to reduce technology to inhumanity.
2. Using words and phrases such as can, especially if, too (carried away), to such an extent in the premise is a trick of arriving to conclusions using logically incorrect statements.
3. Using the same logic, we could say: When the authors of Religious Studies textbooks get carried away by political successes to such an extent that they forget the ethical and moral principles so much so that they no longer have use for logic, they become slanderers.
Monology

All Children are Equal, but Some Are More Equal than Others

Private or state school? Parents’ experiences and opinions

Ines Haskić

If he needs to dream in English – he can do it in England

Education doesn’t come cheap, not even at free state schools. I thought about sending my son to a private school, but then I took a paper and pencil and did some calculations. If the school fees for primary school are 6,000 BAM (equivalent to 3,000 EUR) per year, plus other expenses, for nine years I would have to pay more than 54,000 BAM. Textbooks, transportation, and the school uniform are not included in the price. We are offered full day care, teaching, and quality meals. So I subtract. If I give my child 2 BAM per day for food, and the school year has 180 days, that comes out to 360 BAM per year or 3240 BAM per nine years of schooling. Full day care I don’t need because I want my child to develop his independence. As wonderful as school can be, it cannot and should not give parents/guardians the sense of being easily replaceable, not to mention what this would do to the children. I have my grand total of how much private schooling would cost: 50,760 BAM. Given that in terms of the level of knowledge, state schools are still in the lead. Private schools feature foreign language learning in their brochures. An excellent command of English that my child would, I have no doubt, acquire in these schools is not worth that much. For that kind of money, I can send my child to learn English in England or America, which would be an invaluable experience for him. Plus I can enrol him in a good course. He can dream in English in England.

State schools, pure corruption

For some people, who even have the money, Nike knock-off trainers are as good as the original. I see nothing wrong in people making their own evaluations and determining their own priorities. I am glad we have the choice. I am personally very satisfied with the educational programmes and organisation of classes in the private school our child attends. Children are not given bread, cheese and salami, but have quality nutrition. We are offered full day care and quality teacher supervision, as well as organised transport. It all comes at a price, but is a relief to parents who, if they are employed, will have to pay extra not to have to worry about their child’s safety. I did not like the state school where I was supposed to enrol my daughter for the same reasons that some people don’t like private schools – children of officials and rich kids learn half of what the other children learn and always have some privileges, pure corruption. Segregation is alive and well in state schools, believe me. Those with a non-branded school bag, trainers and jeans, or with maybe a not so smart phone, are always targeted by those walking around with the newest iPhone, Nike backpack or Converse sneakers. It is not my aim to have my child feel different, but to provide her with better and more equal education. I want her to enjoy school.

Seemingly a bit run down, and seemingly for free

I am against marks in both primary and secondary school. I think the marking system is catastrophic for the development of the child’s per-
sonality. In essence, it’s counter-productive. That is why I think the quality of both state and private school curricula are questionable. Wherever you enrol your child, it’s the same, except that in one case you pay a hefty sum, and in the other it’s seemingly a bit run down and only seemingly for free. Again, this is questionable! If it were possible, I would send my child to a school that has non-standard principles, that teaches children how to think instead of just how to memorise and be afraid of teachers; a school where the rule would be no taking out your issues on children.

Private schools as a link to universities abroad
It was important for us that our child have excellent command of English so that he can study abroad one day. A quality private school diploma opens doors to all universities. If we’re talking about international higher education institutions, private universities and colleges are absolutely ahead of state institutions; that is our aim. I hope that we made the right choice. So far, we’re very satisfied. The curriculum for subjects taught in the mother tongue is the same as in state schools. The other subjects that are taught in English have modified curricula approved by the Ministry. Religious education is a matter of choice. The school is responsible for full day care, including meals and transport, which is very important for us as working parents. We all arrive home at roughly the same time and then we can have quality time together doing activities or relaxing. There is no second shift in the school our child attends, so there is no coming home later, in the evenings.

Showtime for the quasi-elite
I find private schools inhumane because they teach children to divide themselves into the rich and the poor. They should be abolished, just like our private quasi-universities. Teachers are expected to give pupils high marks regardless of their actual level of knowledge. No one is going to pay 6000 BAM for a school that will give their kid poor marks. Most school absences are never an issue. Pupils are taught to create an image of themselves as know-it-alls, and the reality is completely different – they don’t offer much in terms of knowledge (it has been proven umpteen times that children transferring from a private college to a state gymnasium have a lot of problems catching up), but what they do offer is socialisation at an elite level; like some sort of showtime for the quasi-elite. Schools for the children of foreigners, tycoons of all sorts, politicians, officials, etc.; just making sure they are among their own class. Children often spend the whole day in these sorts of institutions for the creation of snobs, isolated from the real world. Their circle of friends and acquaintances is small and limited. On their websites and promotional brochures, schools feature the results achieved at competitions; but actually they give scholarships to all interested gifted pupils, offering them the royal treatment, while they prepare for competitions they are exempt from a good portion of their regular classes... Well-equipped classrooms, modern teaching resources, a cooked meal, an electronic blackboard, etc. all those frills shouldn’t be what’s most important for parents. I’m not saying that private schools are necessarily all rubbish, but they are not worth the money they charge, and I’m sure there are state schools where the teaching is worse, the same, or better in quality; that’s what should inform your choice.

A happy child at the price of a fairly good car
Children need education with a strong civic foundation, with a good curriculum and organisation, without national and religious prefixes. Schools should teach children to master foreign languages, German and English, as well as natural and social sciences. In state schools, children are taught according to idiotic curricula, the schools are miserable and run down, as are the teaching resources, the teachers have inferiority complexes and are unhappy, the latter being justified, the school management is employed based on political connections and is incompetent...Private schools have good curricula and organisation; it is clear what sort of politics are promoted by the founder, it’s up to you to choose, and you have a choice; children can enjoy full day care with the supervision of a teacher and medical staff; the food is healthy and meals are cooked; classrooms are equipped with modern resources; transport services are safe and well organised – and all of it is quite expensive. Private schools offer everything state schools should have, but they don’t because someone embezzled the money, and I don’t want to have to reconcile myself with that or deal with it at all. If you imagine you are paying instalments on one of the cheaper car models, but you’re not getting a car, you’re getting a happy child, then private school makes sense.

Without privileging
It’s all great, the curricula, the ideas, the organisation, but people just can’t afford it. It’s like someone telling me how great a Ferrari is. I get that it’s great, but I can’t afford it. Except that I don’t need a Ferrari, but I do need school. And because I need it, and because it’s mandatory, it should be equally available to everyone, without privileging some over others. ●
Research

Spaces of Oblivion
Comment on the Analysis of the State of School Libraries in the Sarajevo Canton

Vanja Klikovac

Keyword: School library – entrance (separate entrance from other school entrances) – librarian’s desk – free access to collection for browsing – reading room (for individual and group work) – computers and AVE equipment – exhibition space – kids’ corner for the youngest pupils – at least 60 m² (According to: Kovačević D., Lovrinčević D. Školski knjižničar [School Librarian], Zagreb: Zavod za informacijske studije, 2012)

To what extent are school libraries in primary and secondary schools in the Sarajevo Canton able to respond to the needs of their users, support learning processes, and facilitate cooperation among librarians, teachers, pedagogues and pupils, that is, to respond to the information and communication needs of our contemporary networked society? The answer to this concrete and important question was provided through research conducted for Školegijum by Monja Šuta-Hibert, Ejla Muhović, and Vildana Nurkić. And the answer is not reassuring.

For instance, only ten of the 81 school libraries provide pupils with access to a computer. Or another discouraging finding: over 50% of primary schools in the Sarajevo Canton do not employ librarians with a degree in library studies. Or: of the 24 secondary schools, only six have the necessary/stipulated floor space for their libraries. Or: librarians have Internet access in only one in three schools, and the pupils don’t even have that. (There’s more, but first a bit about the methodology.)

The findings resulted from interviews with staff, visit to library spaces and inquiry of collections, and through a questionnaire about the material situation and professional standards.

Of the total of 91 public schools (private and special schools were excluded for good reason), the research covered 81. Of those, 57 primary and 24 secondary schools are located in the Municipalities of Stari Grad, Centar, Novo Sarajevo, Ilidža, and Vogošća. Despite receiving approval from the relevant ministry, eight schools did not allow the researchers access and failed to provide a written explanation for this policy.

The questionnaire and research focused on:

1. the current state, including the working conditions and IT capacities, of school libraries;
2. the current state and size of the library collection;
3. the current staffing policy implemented in primary and secondary school libraries in the Sarajevo Canton;
4. continuous professional development and training for school librarians as stipulated by the Law on Libraries and proposed in the Pedagogical Standards and General Norms of Primary and Secondary Education;
5. the current processes of computerisation of school libraries at primary and secondary schools in the Sarajevo Canton and free Internet access;
6. ways of inclusion in teaching processes and promotion of school libraries, and
7. information literacy implementation processes.

The staffing policy at over 50% of primary schools in the Sarajevo Canton neglects the skills and knowledge of school librarians, which is contrary to the Law on Primary Education and the Pedagogical Standards and General Norms for Primary Upbringing and Education.

The findings are as follows:

1. More than half the librarians described their working conditions as unsatisfactory. The level of IT equipment is poor, libraries are often used as storage for barely usable audio and video equipment (old TVs, cassette recorders, computers up to ten years old, etc.).
2. The size of library collections is generally satisfactory. It is better in secondary than in primary schools. (Here, the researchers failed to obtain data on how new books are purchased, the financial resources allocated for this purpose, and write-off practices.)
3. The staffing policy is practically disastrous; the research devotes special attention to this. The role of librarian is too often entrusted to persons without professional training, relegated to ‘the job to stave being made redundant’ and hastily trained for the job through a problematic course organised by the National and University Library. In brief, a school system exulting and celebrating books in theory, treats books and libraries in practice as unwanted. Without a radical turnabout in its policy, everything it says about the culture of reading and the importance of books will end up sounding hypocritical. That turnabout must begin with an understanding that the issue of staffing is crucial because the focus in library studies has been shifted from books to information. Without professionals devoted to the needs and interests of users, information easily remains out of reach, unknown, or even dangerous if it is used as a means of manipulation.

4. Professional development is sporadic, ill conceived, mostly left to the enthusiasm of individuals.

5. Computerisation, in a word: catastrophic. With few exceptions, insufficient equipment in schools is accompanied by a lack of ideas about how new media can be efficiently used in teaching.

6. Lending books on reading lists dominates library activities in terms of contributing to teaching. Everything else is sporadic, improvised, and far from any systematically designed programme. Librarians are often assigned miscellaneous tasks given that they are perceived as idle (what could they possibly be doing when nothing is expected of them), and are hence entrusted with preparing school recitals or cooperating with non-governmental organisations.

7. Information literacy is at the level of illiteracy – to the point that it is very often confused with computer literacy.

The above summary may sound frivolous, but it is a completely justified emotional reaction to the staggering frivolity with which the community treats the role and importance of school libraries. The report itself is written in a far more serious tone: it is systematic and objective, the methodology is clear, it starts with a brief and contextualised introduction into the topic, referring to the relevant legislation, recommendations and norms, and uses gathered data to formulate a conclusion about the current state, ultimately providing recommendations based on contemporary theoretical literature on school libraries, good practice examples from neighbouring countries, as well as provisions of the current legislation that are often not implemented.

Of the total of 57 analysed school libraries, only seven primary schools have more than one computer that is freely available to users of the school library. It should also be noted that some of these seven school libraries do not have their own equipment, but are successfully linked with IT classrooms. Given that five of the analysed school libraries have no IT equipment at all, and that in the remaining 49 primary schools only librarians have access to the IT equipment, it is easy to conclude that the users of most of the analysed school libraries in the Sarajevo Canton are not provided with the opportunity to work and learn in libraries as befits contemporary developments and the needs of our time.

The recommendations are clear, realistic and feasible: the fact that they sound utopian is not the result of high expectations, but rather of low standards. There is really no reason why the Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Education, Science and Youth should not develop a unique standard for school libraries, to begin with. And implement it within a reasonable time frame. And equip libraries with good Internet connections to the 21st century. And reinstate the mainstreaming authority of the Library Studies Department. So that, together with the rare individuals standing up to defend the honour and standing of their profession, as well as the purpose of its existence in schools (which the report also remarks on), it may embark on a thorough modernisation of school libraries, adapting them to the needs of pupils and their times.

All of this would serve to improve their chances in the competition against ignorance, lack of reading, and illiteracy.
They welcome ministers and they see them off; they advise, submit documents for signature, they suggest, discourage, sabotage; they are anonymous, morally eligible, protected by the (non-)labour law, they are a two-decade constant of our educational policies, they are firmly set in their ways, burrowed in the blind spot of the party vision of the future.

In less than a hundred words:

Ministries as Molehills
Twelve school initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, out of a total of 156 that applied, received support from the Open Society Fund BH in the following areas:

- Pluralism and social justice
- Creativity, critical thinking and experimentation
- Parental involvement in decision making in schools
- Cooperation between schools and local communities
- Citizenship, civic education

The committee tasked with selecting the best projects was comprised of: Dženana Husremović, Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, Beba Šarkanović, Principal of Džemaludin Čaušević Primary School (one of the 10 best schools in 2014), Zinaida Ilaria, Director of the ZI PR Public Relations Agency, and Dženana Trbić, Education Programme Coordinator at OSF BH.

Osman Nuri Hadžić Primary School, Sarajevo

**Comics on the Desk**

The history teacher uses comics in her classes to show how historical facts and events can be learned through different media and how they can be made more interesting and easier to learn.

The First Primary School, Brčko District

**Protect Nature, Raise Your Voice, Make Your Choice**

Teacher Rade Rašeta initiated the Environmental Club at the school in response to the increasing problem of illegal landfills in the Brčko District. Club members first mapped the locations of the landfills and then reported them to the authorities. Then, a separate map-server was developed where citizens can report issues and monitor the situation.

Vladimir Nazor Special Education Centre, Sarajevo

**Wood as Teaching Material**

The Technical Education teacher works with pupils to make teaching aids out of wood and eco-paints that meet the required standards for use in class. The teaching aids are collected in sets (of 10 elements) and are used in class to develop motor skills and intellectual capacities.

Branko Ćopić Primary School, Prnjavor

**Today for Tomorrow**

The Pupils Council decided to use the money raised by selling PET packaging for recycling to buy computers for the Štrpci branch school and a swing set for the central school playground. The recycling drive continues.
Brčanska Malta Primary School, Tuzla

**School for Peace**

At the school, they decided to help the transfer of knowledge and skills to students by enabling study visits to other cities and schools. The pupils visited their peers in Novi Sad and there are plans for the Novi Sad pupils to visit the school in Tuzla.

Jovan Jovanović Zmaj Primary School, Trebinje

**My School – Open Doors for All Children**

The teachers, parents, and pupils work on the inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream education by organising children-centred art, music, and sports workshops. They do this despite the fact that the authorities devote little attention to inclusive education.

Petar Kočić Primary School, Prijedor

**Every Child is an Artist, Be a Child Even When You Grow Up**

The coordinators of the school creative centre started by writing a script, made the costumes, and set the stage. The children acting in the school play talked about what they think and feel, and used lessons from fairy tales and fables to show how we should love and respect our elders, parents, and our peers. Many plays were developed as musicals where pupils demonstrated that school can and should be both fun and educational.

Seonice Primary School, Konjic

**School Cooperative**

The school staff and pupils grow organic fruits and vegetables to help the needy in the community.

Mirsad Prnjavorac Primary School, Vogošća

**Say NO to Ignorance and Discrimination**

Involving Roma pupils in the teaching process is the aim of the school management, who work with the support of teachers, pupils, and parents. One of their activities was to print calendars with important dates from Roma culture.

Fahrudin Fahro Baščelija Primary School, Goražde

**Providing Psycho-Educational Support to Pupils, Parents, and Teachers**

The school regularly hosts AVP (Alternatives to Violence) workshops where children, parents, and teachers learn how to resolve issues in the school and the community. The workshops are facilitated by certified experts who are selected depending on the topic of the workshop. Some of the topics for parents included: what do I want for myself and my teenager and how do I achieve it; am I encouraging or damaging my child’s self-esteem, and independence and initiative.

Enver Čolaković Primary School, Breza

**Accept Me as I Am**

A series of events (workshops, trainings, plays, exhibitions) is organised throughout the school year in which pupils demonstrate what inclusive education should look like and how to achieve it. Among other things, the project coordinator and the pupils put on the play *The Ugly Duckling* and visited the special education centres in Pazarić and Fojnica.

Porodice ef. Ramić Primary School, Semizovac

**Branch School to Meet the Needs of Every Child**

The teacher at the branch school designs lessons to improve the quality of teaching in combined classes, and her lesson plans will be shared with all the schools in the municipality. The plans consist of exercises and problems pupils can choose, suggest, and make themselves. The teacher works with pupils from different age groups concurrently.
The Puppeteer Teacher
Children are having fun and there is no fear of making a mistake.

The classroom is colourful. There are illustrations everywhere – the seasons, fruits, vegetables, trees, etc. The pupils are talking with the puppet Hećim on the teacher’s hand as if it were a real doctor. They are relaxed and eager, as cheerful as their classroom. Hećim is one of the puppets their teacher, Sabit Agić, uses in class. I started this four years ago. I showed the children puppets I had made two or three years before. I first used them when I wanted to make a brief intermezzo. The principle is simple – play. Children naturally play. They learn best through play. While they’re playing, there is no fear of making a mistake. I accept their way of playing, they accept my role. I ask the pupils what the teacher and the puppets have taught them. They reply simply – to be good friends.

I want to create an atmosphere where children will feel free. I always try to make sure my pupils enjoy what they are doing. Good results are sure to follow. There is no imperative that someone must keep getting better. We tend to play. And through play, we create everything else – responsibility, friendship, the sense of self-esteem.

I watch as the children talk, interpreting and dramatizing the story Plamena by Ahmet Hromadžić, playing, taking up roles, becoming someone else, observing. The pupils who are not participating in the performance remain in the audience and learn how to be an audience. They are aware that they may observe and participate in things. Children are artists. They just need support. Often, the problem is that children up to a certain age do not ask themselves whether they know something. They know it and don’t see the issue. At some point of growing up a child that was very gifted might say – I don’t know how to draw. That’s where the trouble starts. The child is no longer free and can no longer tap into creative abilities.

The teacher is constantly moving around and changing the puppets on his hands. The blackboard eraser is a puppet too. (It has eyes, a mouth and a nose.) It dispels stage fright and children are not scared to answer questions about the lesson. I became a teacher intending to do my job as a professional. But I realised it is not just a job. Emotions are integral to this profession. I will remain in someone’s memory for his or her whole life. We all remember our teachers. I try to make sure it will be a good memory. I remember my primary school teacher every day.

Doctor Hećim cares for the health of the children. He has long white hair and a white coat. Children like talking with him.

It is not good or healthy for a child to spend five or six hours in shoes. It is not good for a child to sit for four or five hours at a desk. That’s what our reforms have done – we have not equipped classrooms or adapted them to the needs of children, but we did make children start school a year earlier. We are implementing reforms without a foundation or a roof. My every attempt to adapt the classroom to the pupils has failed because I share this classroom with my colleagues and one arrangement does not fit us all. No one seems to care about what happens in class. No one seems to care that children need to play. Because when they are sent to school, they are expected to be grown-up, they steal years off their lives. These years of freedom, play, and imagination can never be regained. I repeat this to myself every morning.

From Electrical Engineering to Teaching Technique

Sabit Agić ended up in a classroom and in the role of a teacher quite unexpectedly.
I completed the electrical engineering secondary school. I worked in a completely different profession that had nothing to do with education. While there, I tried to make my dream come true and enrol at the Fine Arts Academy. I like drawing, I did caricatures for newspapers, and I like painting. When I didn’t manage this, I enrolled at the Pedagogical Academy thinking I would become an art teacher. When they told me that option was no longer available as a course of study, I became what I am now – a teacher puppeteer. Being a teacher is wonderful. Children are the best motivation. I can tell by the reactions of parents that I am doing a good job. My technique is all about play.

I ask the children who made the artwork on the walls of the classroom, in the hallways. They proudly tell me, this is the work of their teacher. Is the teacher’s profession more than a job?

I do my best. I spend 175 days a year with the children. They are like another family to me. That’s plenty of motivation. I want to make sure they enjoy spending time with me and I with them. I try to give them as much as I can because this system will not give them much. It is easy to invent the saying that the more experienced you are the wiser you are, but it’s not easy to prove it is true. Being a teacher requires commitment and hard work – every single day.

The problem is if you don’t prepare for your job. Every morning, you have to start over, you can’t let your experience be ahead of your vocation. I am trying to make something out of my job. I don’t know how it will turn out. I started with the puppetry to make up for the lack of play. Children get a school bag to carry it on their backs with a heap of things inside. This is an obligation and a burden. I put puppets in their hands and they feel they should play. If they have to learn, it’s easier to learn through play.

Workshop in the Garage
I wanted to see where the puppets are created. As we drove, we talked about...
government participation in creating good quality education. He opened the garage. Inside, there is everything – cloth, Styrofoam, boards, thread, rope... Artwork. Prints. Cutting and polishing tools. Everything a workshop needs. He learns mainly using the Internet, and by watching tutorials. The school administration is satisfied with his work, as are most of the parents.

Today, all sorts of people come to schools offering all sorts of services – from karate coaches to magicians – and they all charge for their services. Meanwhile, education proper is often neglected. It is not difficult to adapt curricula to make it more fun. It just requires dedication. I also did puppet shows in different schools. I realised that various people come to schools selling something that is not educational. That’s when I decided to put on plays at schools with an educational basis. Humour is at the heart of every one of my plays. I write a text that will deal with important issues through laughter. After the performance, we talk about what we have seen. Children ask the most brilliant questions, they think creatively and that motivates me even more. That is why for me, puppetry is a principle and something I love doing. I once went to speak with the Novi Grad Municipality, I offered to organise puppet shows for primary schoolchildren for free and asked them to let me use their facilities. They rejected my proposal. I still don’t know why. Surprise and anger at bureaucratic shortsightedness does not last long, it’s hard to feel defeated when you’re surrounded by puppets and in the company of a man who is palpably sure of his vocation, an increasingly rare sight among his colleagues.

I leave Dobrinja filled with (fleeting?) optimism that there is hope for education in BH after all. Perhaps it is possible if the next round of reforms is formulated and implemented by teachers like Sabit Agić.
Interview

The Colourful Teacher – Their Best Friend
Teacher Sanela Ljumanović drew the public’s attention to her work after she organized a sign language classes for her pupils in order to include a boy with hearing and speech impairment in the classroom work.

Školegijum: The story of the little boy Zejd, published in Školegijum, sparked great interest of the public. How does such media exposure make you feel? Has it made you more aware of the significance of the sign language course now organized for your entire school thanks to you, among others?

Ljumanović: I’m surprised by such a huge public interest because it’s different headlines and articles that seem to be much more attractive in today’s world. I thought that only a few of my colleagues or parents whose children have the same impairments as Zejd would actually read the article. I was delighted when I saw that a few thousand people read the article, commented on it, shared it on their social media profiles. Some of them even sent messages of support directly to me, many TV stations showed their interest. So there is still hope for us despite how bleak the reality appears. We did not think about this when we were organizing the classes and we did not think that anybody, apart from us, would know about our work. I wasn’t even aware that such courses are rare, that they are in fact non-existent in primary schools. We did it to help Zejd and to help ourselves. Still, I’m glad that our story stirred such great interest and I hope that it will be an example to others.

Školegijum: What are the reactions of the children? Media now often come to your classroom – do they feel important because of what they are doing?

Ljumanović: All this is new for the children, naturally. They are happy and proud because they get praise, both from their families and everybody else. Everybody read the article and they all watched about it on the news. They like this new situation, but they are not aware that they are doing something special. For them, Zejd and our sign language classes are completely normal and an everyday thing and they don’t understand why the grown-ups are so fussed about it. They often ask me: do they film other children, in other schools, learning the sign language? They don’t know that there are no such activities in other schools. So yes, we are all glad to see ourselves in newspapers and on television, but both the children and I are asking ourselves – isn’t what we’re doing just a normal thing?

Školegijum: This is not the only thing that makes people think that you are not an ordinary teacher. Zejd’s mum, and some other parents, said that the children, as well as them up to a point, are attracted by your styling, which does not fit into the stereotype. What can you say about that – were there situations when a supervisor told you that you couldn’t come to the classroom with piercings or purple hair?

Ljumanović: Well, now, I don’t come to the classroom with piercings, I leave that for outings and some of our extracurricular activities (loughs). I am trying to nurture the pupil’s need to express themselves the way they want to and the freedom to do it, without ever hurting others or forcing their opinion on others. I am trying to teach them to understand the substance in a world ruled by the form, to teach them not to blend in with the majority, to express their differences and individuality, that our differences are what make us rich, to freely express their views, but always substantiated. This is closely related to my piercings and my clothes. Breaking prejudices and stereotypes, believing in love, work, constant learning and perseverance are the
things that will bring them a better life tomorrow. No, I’ve never had problems with my supervisors, because they know me well and they can see the results of my work. It’s true that when I take over a new generation some of the parents who are used to more traditional teachers find me a bit strange at the beginning, but believe me – only for the first few days. Very soon we start working together really well and sometimes we become friends. What’s interesting is that when the children come to get enrolled in school and run into me on the hallway, they say: Mum, I want to be in this teacher’s class. One of the kids asked the school pedagogue: Can I please be in the colourful teacher’s class?

Školegijum: So, you manage to convince everybody that it is not the appearance what makes a good teacher. What does make a good teacher?

Ljumanović: Love, primarily, love in general. Optimism. A teacher has to be in touch with her inner child. The joy of learning something new, enjoying the little things, the joy of living. Apart from that, it is very important to establish the authority in the classroom. No university degree can help you with that. I firmly believe that you either have it in you or you don’t. I seem to have it, and at the risk of sounding conceited, I have to say that the children want to listen to me, they want me to be their friend and when they mess something up they feel bad for letting me down, not because they would get bad grades or because they are afraid that their parents would tell them off. It is also important for a teacher to keep up with the times, to embrace new technologies and to know what children find appealing and what they spend their time on now. That is the only way if you want to be able to offer them guidance and to keep them in check in today’s world which is filled with temptations. Children should not be treated as babies, and we should not talk to them using some archaic language and lull them into believing in a fairy tale world. You need to be their teacher and their friend at the same time and give them a lot of love.

Školegijum: How long have you been a teacher; where have you worked before; which experience do you find most useful for the work you do now?

Ljumanović: I have been working in the Osman Nakaš Primary School for 13 years now. After about six years of working here I went to Holland where my family lives and worked there for about ten years, four of those in a Dutch school as an assistant teacher. Then I returned to Sarajevo and started working again in the Osman Nakaš School. Life puts us in many different situations and we can always learn from them if we want to. The experience I find most useful is the one from Holland where I worked with children from all over the world, of all races and ethnic backgrounds. All the children together, with only one goal – to become smarter, to learn, to start learning, say, Chinese as the language of the economic future from the age of four, why not?! To play, to go to concerts, exhibitions; without prejudices, without stereotypes. A teacher with piercings is not strange there, what is strange there is if a teacher is not creative and does not speak at least two languages on top of her mother tongue. This is exactly what motivated me to persevere and to insist on the substance over form. And form serves only to dumb down the masses. I want my children not to be a mass; I want them to be human beings.

Školegijum: And this leads us to the subject of the education reform. What would you change? In particular with regards to the classroom teaching. What would be the most urgent and most important thing to do when it comes to the reform?

Ljumanović: First, I would tighten the criteria for admission to the Faculty of Education. I would introduce an IQ test, a general knowledge test and a standard admission interview in order to ascertain whether the future teacher is eloquent, to see how they think, and the way they express themselves. With tighter admission criteria, there would be less of those who study this only because they think they would get a job easier later on. Once we have good teachers a lot could be changed in the Curriculum. It’s in now to say that the Curriculum is too difficult for the children in class teaching, but I don’t think so; I think that children can

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accomplish much more than we think they can; children want more. I believe that we always have to set the goal a little higher so that they had something more to strive for. You wouldn’t believe how important, smart and full of confidence they feel when they succeed. But an effective implementation of the existing Curriculum is hindered by the lack of money in the country in general and thus in schools as well. Imagine if I had teaching materials to complement all my lessons, teaching materials that would make the contents more accessible more interesting to the students. Imagine if every classroom had Internet access, a smart board, and separate rooms for different activities. As it is, we manage any way we can. I have great support and understanding for all the activities I want to carry out with the children, but I also make or buy a lot of stuff I use for lessons with my own money. Apart from that, I would introduce a foreign language in the first grade, and the second foreign language in the third grade. It may sound strange to some people, but little children learn languages really quickly, and languages are their ticket to life. Of course, it would all be adjusted for their age. I would introduce a mandatory sign language course for all children. It wouldn’t be a subject that would be taught for years, but children would learn the basics of the sign language.

Školegijum: You like that joke that teaching is the only profession that makes you steal things from your house to take them to work. What is your experience with that?

Ljumanović: Of course, that’s not a joke, it’s a true story. My student’s parents know exactly when I get my salary because that’s when I use a lot of teaching materials, like colour print-outs, large sheets of thick, colour drawing paper, and then you can see how the salary disappears – as the month goes on such things become scarcer and scarcer. We often joke about it at parent-teacher meetings and they offer to contribute. A month ago I was given 14 sheets of thick, colour drawing paper and I can’t tell you how unbelievably happy it made me. I bring to school my rolling pin, pots and pans, clocks, paintings that I take off my walls, vases, sawing kits, and so on... As soon as I have a look at the next teaching unit I start looking around the house to see what I can take to the class. Children like tangible things, as do I, and I remember when I was little that none of us listened to the long stories our teacher would tell us and that a class would become interesting only when the teacher would take something out of his bag and show it to us. It’s all about concrete examples.

Školegijum: Do you see social inequality as an obstacle to your work? For example, do the children of well off or more educated parents achieve better results? Is this common; what is your experience?

Ljumanović: There are social and economic differences, there is no question
about that, but it is absolutely not true that the children of richer parents achieve better results. The children of more educated parents perhaps have advantage because of the environment in which they are growing up. One could assume that when a child is surrounded by books from a very early age, it is natural that such a child will love books as something familiar, something they grew up with. Of course, there are no rules, it’s all individual. What I’m against is growing up in playrooms and shopping centres, which seems to have become a pattern nowadays. Whenever we have some free time, we run to a shopping centre! This way children fail to develop new interests or to widen their horizons, rather quite the opposite. With regards to our extracurricular activities, which often have to be paid for, those social differences are not noticeable because there are always parents who help the children whose parents cannot pay themselves, and it’s all very discreet, nobody knows apart from me who gave money for whom. That way we can all participate in all the activities.

Školegijum: It is obvious that your success heavily relies on good cooperation with the parents of your students. How do you gain their trust and what can you recommend to your colleagues if they want to achieve this level of cooperation with parents?

Ljumanović: At the first parent-teacher meeting, a day or two after the first grade starts, I talk openly with the parents. I explain to them that we are not two opposing camps, that we should support each other, openly tell each other what we think, to trust me even when I criticize something their child does, because it’s natural that I’m less biased then them. I tell them what they can expect from me, what it is that I want to achieve in the five years I will spend with the children, I tell them truthfully what I think. I expect the same from them. I ask them if they would like to have joint or individual meetings explaining that my experience shows that joint meetings are much better. Firstly, parents get close to each other. Secondly, that way they can see that they are not the only ones having problems sometimes. We resolve every issue together, we exchange advice, and they exchange experience. Anything that happens between two people, behind a closed door, does not reflect the real situation in the classroom. And everything we do is for our children. I really have never had a bad experience with parents, we simply become true friends. You need to work on it from the very beginning. As early as September we organize a family day somewhere near Sarajevo – all the children with their families and my husband and I are there and we get to know each other better and they get to know me better in a more relaxed atmosphere. All parents have my phone number, and we have a Facebook account where we exchange day-to-day information. I try to make things easier for the parents, the children and for myself.

Školegijum: You have a FB account Učiteljica Sanela where we can see the activities you carry out with the children. What are the positive and what are the negative experiences in using Facebook as a means of communication and promoting student’s work?

Ljumanović: All the experiences are positive. I really have not had one negative experience. While they are still little, they don’t have their own profiles, so I’m in touch with the parents and I let them know what we did at school every day. I’m sure that every one of them would like to be able to have a peek into the classroom to see what their kids are doing, what it all looks like. That’s why I show them. I post pictures of all our activities and they are delighted. Nobody expects anything like that, and as a result they are much more at ease and know much more about the teaching process and they don’t worry as the first graders’ parents usually do. And when the kids grow up a little and have their own FB profiles, which usually happens in the third grade, both their parents and I keep an eye on them. If I see that they liked something unsuitable or that they joined a group which is not appropriate, I ex-
plain to them why they shouldn’t do it, I explain the dangers of the Internet if not used properly, just as is the case with anything else in life. I have to say that they always do as I tell them, because they feel that I’m not just *preaching* that what they did was wrong. Therefore, we teachers have to keep up with the times in order to know what the children are doing, in order to guide them and to help helm grow up into happy adults.

Školegijum: Is there a book that you would recommend to parents from which they could learn which mistakes they are making in parenting and in their attitude towards school? If you don’t know of such book, do you think that there should be one?

Ljumanović: There isn’t a book that contains all the experiences and theories I believe should be compiled into one publication. There are excellent bits and pieces in different books, and some fantastic papers that parents should read in order to see whether they do things the right way. Bojana Kozomara and I collect such materials and distribute them to parents at parent-teacher meetings. Bojana is a colleague of mine with whom I have been working very closely for years and with whom I also conduct various surveys and present the results both to the Teachers Council and to the parents. Or maybe I should write a book?

Školegijum: Good idea. But for a start, can you at least share with us a quote that you like?

Ljumanović: *Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.* Anthony J. D’Angelo. I think this one is really cool.

Školegijum: You mentioned surveys – what kind of surveys are they? When did you conduct the latest one and what were the results?

Ljumanović: We conducted the latest survey a few months ago, as we were seeing off the fifth graders to the sixth grade: *The transition from class to subject teaching*. The students of fifth and sixth grades, their parents, all class teachers, and all subject teachers teaching the sixth grades were included in the survey. It was really useful and interesting because this transition represents a big change and is very stressful for children as they have to leave behind their class teacher. The survey showed that we all make mistakes in this process – teachers, parents, children, and subject teachers. It showed what we need to change in our work and behaviour in order to make this transition from the class to subject teaching easier for children. It also showed some positive experiences. Since the surveys were anonymous, children talked openly about their problems, as we all did, after all. Better cooperation of class and subject teachers is needed. Parents have to take the children’s responsibilities more seriously and they have to work on developing good cooperation with new teachers. We shouldn’t gener-

Picture at the top:
Teacher Sanela at the sign language class
alize, of course, but the survey showed that some teachers do not prepare the children adequately for subject teaching. They cover only the basic units from the Curriculum, they do not insist on true understanding so that children can take that knowledge to the sixth grade and continue seamlessly to take in new materials. For a student to be successful in the sixth grade they need good foundations, they need the knowledge and skills acquired in class teaching, the ability, motivation, work habits, learning techniques, cooperation between class and subject teachers, and cooperation with parents.

Školegijum: You also have professional development courses, seminars. Do you attend them and if you do, do you find them useful? Would you change or recommend something in that area?

Ljumanović: Yes, it is mandatory for all the teachers in our school to attend professional development courses every year. All the topics are very interesting and we discuss them extensively afterwards. We also have professional development seminars organized by the Education and Pedagogical Institute, teaching staff seminars that are held regularly and that we attend regularly and then report to the Teachers Council on the topics covered at these seminars. Then there are seminars organized by different governmental and non-governmental organizations, all with the approval of our Ministry and the Education and Pedagogical Institute. These seminars are not frequent, and the quality of the topics varies. Sometimes we are really happy with them, sometimes we learn something new or we are reminded of something we had already known, we hear of new developments and research around the world. However, sometimes it seems that some of the seminars are there only so that somebody can earn some money, so we often get the feeling that we could be the trainers at some seminars instead the other way around. The conclusion is that in education, like in all other areas, some people do their jobs well, some less so and some are bad at it.

I remember a few years back, there was this seminar, I don’t remember the topic anymore; the trainer was telling us what our schools should look like and how we should conduct lessons. She was showing us hundreds of slides depicting American, Finish or Swedish classrooms and the activities carried out with their children. We just watched the pictures in silence thinking that we would know much better than her how to teach a class if we had such working conditions. Unfortunately we don’t, and it renders all talk pointless, so these two days of seminar were pointless as well.

Školegijum: Is there something that you would like to improve in your approach to working with children?

Ljumanović: Of course! I could do so much better. I teach children that we have to appreciate our positive qualities, but that we should not become complacent. To recognize what you are good at but never just stop there but push yourself and explore your abilities further. I do believe that I have to strive to always be better and to learn more.

And, as somebody, I don’t remember who, said: *The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change.*

Školegijum: I thought maybe you could give a concrete example; what are you working on now?

Ljumanović: For instance, I would like to learn the sign language really well and share that knowledge with other teachers in my school. I think this is something the current inclusive education needs – for all the teachers to take the sign language course.
One of the few teachers I remember with a smile is my Bosnian Language and Literature professor from the first grade of gymnasium. After so many years of sitting at a school desk and so many different teachers, Mirela Udovičić is a teacher I like to remember because in her classes I could say what I really thought, even if it was far from being correct, and even if it was not what I thought I should say. (1st star!) In time I learned to express myself more clearly and support my views with more logical arguments. This made me feel less and less afraid that what I had to say was stupid, boring, less worthy, or irrelevant. (2nd star) In her classes, what was important was what each pupil thought about what we read, and even more important was why they thought so. (3rd star) We were allowed to disagree with her, and even say we found the assigned book boring, stupid, or unreadable. (4th star) I bet she still sits at the edge of her desk, swinging her legs and saying, “Convince me of it.” Mirela Udovičić is a teacher who never mocks, never slights, and never underestimates pupils. (5th star) I respect her also because she built her authority on respect, not on fear (6th star), and because she maintained discipline in the classroom through creativity, games, and imagination. (7th star) In literature classes, she developed our sense of other art forms: film, drama, dance, and music. (8th star) She is not cold, off-putting, unapproachable, or uninterested in life beyond school. (9th star) She doesn’t care about the Great Vowel Shift, but she certainly does care about the great shift from school to life. (10th star) 

Anes Osmić
Quick information, sharing useful links, discussing important teaching theories and practices, recommendations, interests, announcements for seminars, trainings – Facebook makes all of this possible, in principle. The social network seemed to be an excellent platform for educating pupils, too; they were interested in the new medium and spent a portion of their free time there, it was just a matter of populating it with educational content. However, the sluggish and aimless domestic education system succumbed to consumerist addiction, retreating before a wave of primitive and deafening content.

Upbringing and Facebooking
During my years teaching in primary school, I saw off a few generations of students. Some of them, having completed primary school, added me as a friend on Facebook. Thus, over time, on my News Feed I could follow the growing up of a generation in whose education I had been directly involved. Did that also make me directly responsible for some of their statuses and comments exhibiting hatred, animosity, ignorance, or vulgarity? Should I react, warn them, explain? Or should I shut both eyes, unfollow them or even unfriend them? Should I still be a teacher even on Facebook, or just another social network consumer absorbing content?

I reacted to some posts by my former pupils, to some I didn’t; I once asked a former pupil to delete a status expressing regret that Hitler had not killed all the Jews because that would have prevented them from committing crimes against Palestinians. In private messages, I tried to explain that one crime or act of animosity couldn’t be defended by regretting that another crime was not completed; that the current political leadership of Israel does not stand for all the Jews, and especially not for all Holocaust survivors. My former pupil deleted the status (which had already been liked by dozens of his Facebook friends). I realised that the numerous class hours we spent on literary works that touched upon the Second World War and the Holocaust were not enough to develop empathy in pupils. The empathy exists, no doubt, but in part due to our ill-conceived education system, it is voiced only over the suffering and needs of our own – those we recognise as such based on their religion and nationality.

Pupils are partly excused by their youth for sharing their daily activities. But a teacher has no reason to use social networks in the same way, especially if he or she is a Facebook friend of current pupils (and their parents). A teacher’s photos from a trip, vacation, or night out, which are available to pupils, his or her comments on TV singing competitions, or on photos of pupils and other teachers only reinforce the lack of awareness about the aims of his or her profession. In addition, this kind of behaviour demonstrates shameful ignorance of the possibilities of new media in education. Can teachers help pupils use social networks differently, to learn the difference between privacy and public posting and action, if we do not ourselves demonstrate an understanding of the nature of that process?

Attempts at Discussion
I used Facebook as a member of the Školegijum team and co-author of the
Svezame, otvori se textbooks. I created a group and shared links to articles on the Školegijum portal, but apart from likes, there were no reactions from teachers to the posted articles. A few accolades or confirmations of what the article was saying was all that could be expected from teachers – members of the Školegijum group. Discussions, challenges to views presented in the articles, one’s own experience in the classrooms... these were all absent. Evidently, the social network is not a place where they will exchange views and ideas. The question is: where is that place? Where do teachers discuss their practices publicly, where do they expose their work to professional critique supported by arguments, where do they themselves, professionally and with arguments, critique educational policy and practice? In a word: nowhere. Their invisibility on social networks testifies to one of the largest gaps in teaching practice – those that educate others do not educate themselves. (The few exceptions only prove this general rule.) A few months ago, on Školegijum’s official Facebook page, I had a discussion with Mirsad Kunić, a university professor, former education and science minister in the Tuzla Canton, and co-author of the textbooks for the 3rd grade of secondary school.

Kunić posted a comment about an example from the 8th grade language and literature textbook by Azra Verlašević and Vesna Alić (published by NAM Tuzla and Vrijeme Zenica) of an unclear sentence of little use to students that accompanied the interpretation of the poem “Hana” by Oskar Daviço: Through unusual associations, the poem evokes the “burst” of love, connecting mutually very distant semantic fields and thus enriching spaces of the imagination. Kunić’s comment read: Now, this is really ridiculous, this is becoming a dirty campaign of one group (or just one publisher?) against other publishers. Please, you doctors for language and literature textbooks and you learned scholars; do advise me how it should be done, if this is incorrect! (The complete Facebook-discussion can be found on the Školegijum portal.)

The university professor and ex-minister of education calls five years of pointing out scandalous errors in language and literature textbooks such as the above example (dozens of similar and far worse examples have been published, the most recent in September 2015 in Oslobodjenje) a ‘dirty campaign.’ And he does so on a Facebook group as a semi-anonymous citizen. Throughout those five years, he never spoke up either as minister or as a university professor. As minister he should have been obliged by public interest and as an academic he should have been obliged to speak up due to the importance of the issue. Nowhere, not even in this brief stillborn polemic, did minister and professor Kunić contest the claims or state that the textbooks he is defending DO NOT CONTAIN erroneous, superficial, incomplete or imprecise definitions or inadequate examples (1); topics incompatible with the experience of children or formulated with poor style into unclear expressions (2); choice of excerpts without a clear topic or purpose (3); ideological and national bias in the approach to content, including political commentary (4); arbitrary or superficial analyses (5); unfamiliar words wrongly or poorly explained (6); plagiarism or indiscriminate changes to original texts (7); incorrect citations or citing sources whose credibility is unclear; reference to obsolete sources (8); errors caused by editorial negligence (9). Instead of presenting counter-arguments to the presented arguments, professor and minister Kunić, in his irritable Facebook incarnation, avoids answering direct questions and uses vague irony to conceal the motive of his comments and his unfamiliarity with the problem. And instead of explaining his initial position and insinuations (about the ‘dirty campaign’), he retreats from the social network, letting other members of the group try to figure out what the issue was. Apart from a few brief comments, not one of the many (more than 6000) group members – including a large number of teachers – joined the discussion to support or contest the arguments; the discussion soon died down with Kunić’s decision to block me.

Soon after that, I shut down my Facebook profile. Communication with pupils, parents, and colleagues can be achieved via other platforms – e-mail, Prezi and eDnevnik are quite sufficient to receive and send messages without getting bogged down in numerous useless posts a teacher must wade through so as to maybe, at some point, somewhere, try to teach, instruct and discuss.
Pope Francis in Sarajevo, 6 June 2015: The Holy See welcomes everything that has been achieved in the past years and promises its support in promoting cooperation, dialogue and solidarity, with the awareness that peace and mutual care in civilised and organised coexistence are the necessary preconditions for permanent and real development. (Fena)
An example of promoting cooperation, dialogue and solidarity: Travnik, 6 June 2015. To the right is the Petar Barbarić Catholic School Centre, and to the left is the Travnik Medical Secondary School and the Travnik Gymnasium. In between is a fence.
The Dositej File:
The Computerisation of Education in Republika Srpska

St. Sava on the Wall, Dositej in the Closet
At first glance an e-classroom looks like any other classroom. Only by careful observation among the desks, chairs, blackboard, other school furnishings and pupils’ works of art do we notice a cupboard in the corner. When the teacher unlocks the cupboard, we see that it contains two-dozen neatly stacked mini laptops for pupils and one standard laptop for the teacher. There is also a router and other equipment to charge batteries and provide the classroom with wireless Internet.

At the beginning of the class, the pupils take their laptops and the teacher takes his. The pupils’ laptops are numbered so that each pupil always uses the same laptop. After turning on their computers, through a wireless network they can find and connect to each other so that the teacher can use his laptop to post content onto pupils’ laptops and monitor what each pupil is doing. He can store the lesson materials on the laptop and bring them along on a USB stick, be they a Word document, an Excel spreadsheet, images, films, links, quizzes, tests, etc. Depending on how the teacher has planned the lesson, pupils may read texts, fill out tables, make PowerPoint presentations from image material, or watch video clips on topics related to the lesson. Teaching can combine working with a textbook and notebook, although the entire textbook may be scanned and saved on the laptop becoming part of the content.

The possibilities are many. The teacher may have pupils work in groups, with each group having its own task and the groups presenting their work to the rest of the class when they are finished. Pupils can do tests on their laptops and the teacher can mark them on his. Pupil laptops have Internet access, but the teacher controls which websites pupils can access. Also, pupils can ask the teacher questions through a type of chat program, and the teacher can log off one or more pupils or remind them to maintain discipline in the classroom. When the bell rings, the pupils and teacher return their laptops to the cupboard where their batteries are charged for the next class.

**INTEL’s Initiative**

The whole story started in 2009 when Intel offered entity ministries a pilot project that provided two schools, one in each entity, with equipment for an e-classroom, as well as teacher training for organising and conducting interactive classes. Following the pilot project, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska decided to continue equipping classrooms for interactive teaching at all primary schools in the entity. It is not clear to what extent experts and practitioners were consulted because there are no written analyses or recommendations. The Education Development Strategy of Republika Srpska for the period 2012-2014, under Strategic Direction B (Investments in the Education System) lists computerisation of education as one of the strategies, but takes it to mean *establishing an integrated information and communication system in education.* The Project, symbolically named *Dositej*, found itself on the agenda of the intergovernmental meeting between Republika Srpska and the Republic of Serbia, where it was decided that it should be implemented. The two governments selected the Belgrade-based company Comtrade (CT Computers) to implement the project, and the company worked through its partner in BH – the Lanaco Company from Banja Luka. Comtrade is

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**Key word: Dositej**

(Real name Dimitrije Obradović – Serbian philosopher and enlightener. Considered one of the most important figures of the Serbian and South Slav Enlightenment. His famous works include *Pismo Haralampiju* [Letter to Charalampos], *Saveti zdravoga razuma* [Counsels of Common Sense] and *Život i priključenija* [translated as The Life and Adventures of Dimitrije Obradović].

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**Enes Kurtović**

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a leading IT company in Southeast Europe, a member of the Com Trade Group. The Director of Com Trade Group, Veselin Jevrosimović, is considered one of the most successful managers in Serbia, as well as a well-connected person in Serbian political circles. A cursory knowledge of the workings of political connections and business in our region necessarily leads to doubts about the extent to which Project Dositej arose from actual care for the quality of education in Republika Srpska, as opposed to being part of a wider corporate-political scheme.

From Phase to Phase
The implementation of this very ambitious project was planned in phases. The first phase included equipping 65 schools during the 2012/2013 school year. A further 60 schools would be equipped during the second phase in the 2013/2014 school year, and the remaining 62 schools would then be equipped in the third phase in the 2014/2015 school year. The first phase was financed by a loan taken out by the Republic of Serbia. According to the Republika Srpska Minister of Education at the time, Goran Mutabdžija, the loan for the procurement of goods taken out by the Republic of Serbia amounted to EUR 4.5 million (Source: Portal Novosti). Within this phase, 408 classrooms in 65 primary schools in Republika Srpska were equipped with 10,200 mini laptops for pupils (ClassMate Personal Computer – CMPC) and 800 standard laptops for teachers. Trainings were also organised for teachers as the future users of the provided software and hardware. The project was praised as a giant step forward of the Republika Srpska education system towards the modern computerised society of the future. Even Intel, in its study on the computerisation of education, praised this project as a promising start. In terms of technology, Dositej is based on Intel’s Teach Advanced Online platform (ITAO), which is an adaptation of their Moodle 2.x learning platform. Versions in Latin and Cyrillic script were developed to suit local needs. From that perspective, the praises of Intel for this project are understandable because Dositej uses their products.

What is the Dositej Project? According to the website of Lanaco Company, which is implementing the project, it is concerned with e-learning based on a 1:1 model in primary schools in Republika Srpska, which aims to promote interactive learning through information and communications technology. The idea is that all primary schools in Republika Srpska would be provided with computer equipment that would enable them to implement interactive teaching, the testing and marking of pupils, and would also make it possible for teachers and parents to monitor pupils’ progress in school. Sounds fine, almost Finnish. It is a revolutionary project given the conditions of our education system because interactive learning is not just a laptop with an Internet connection, it also entails a fundamental change in the approach of the teacher to planning and organising each lesson.

The second phase of Dositej suffered some setbacks because the Government of the Republic of Serbia, as one of the partners, withdrew from the project citing financial problems that resulted in budget cuts. This, however, did not discourage the Government of Republika Srpska, which in early 2015 announced a new loan of BAM 9 million for the implementation of the second phase of the Dositej Project. The public call for bids for the procurement of equipment for the second phase of the project was published on 24 March 2014 (Official Gazette of BH, 22) and the Lanaco Company was selected as the best bidder. A contract was signed with the Ministry in June 2014. By the end of November, 310 classrooms in 60 schools were equipped with 7750 laptops for pupils and 550 laptops for teachers.

The E-learning Solution
Thus, the Lanaco Company secured a good deal for decades to come of delivering goods worth millions and millions of BAM, trainings for teachers, and servicing
the delivered computer equipment. It is worth noting that it will also be light years ahead of other IT companies in any future job that will necessarily be based on their already delivered hardware and software. The Lanaco Company is also implementing the project e-Records for the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska, which has involved more than 30 primary and secondary schools to date. Lanaco is seriously counting on continuing with the implementation of the Dositej Project, and is also preparing new software solutions for the education sector, so they see a future for themselves in that part of the market (and state budget). They have already prepared software solutions for EDUIS (National Integrated Information System to Support Primary and Secondary Education), Prometej (distance learning system), and an e-Learning Portal [e-Obrazovanje] (created based on the need to collect and organise all information and content related to education in Republika Srpska). In order to promote and improve electronic learning, Lanaco is also financing the e-Classroom Portal [e-Učionica] and publishing the electronic magazine Dositej through which it offers assistance to teachers, pupils, and parents for using information technology in education.

**Ctrl+Alt+Down+BAM**

Since the first two phases of the Dositej Project cost BAM 9 million each, it follows that the project will cost a total of BAM 27 million. Given that the 2015 Budget of Republika Srpska allocated BAM 7.44 million to the Ministry of Education and Culture, we see that Dositej will cost almost as much as four annual entity budgets for education and culture. Many European countries with stronger economies and far larger education budgets could hardly afford to take such a big bite. It is realistic to ask whether, given the current conditions of education in Republika Srpska, Dositej is truly a good and prudent investment?

The implementation of the project will cover primary schools, but the problem remains that in secondary school, pupils will return to the blackboard, chalk and textbook, and at university to crib notes and exam questions. How much will Dositej do for improving the quality of education as a whole, even if it is used in...
its fullest capacity in primary schools? According to the results of an online survey on the Lanaco website, after the implementation of the first phase of Dositej, of the 303 parents that responded to the survey, 35% believe pupils should use computers in class every day, 55% somewhat agree, and 10% disagree. Parent responses ranged from: I think pupils should use computers in class. The lessons would be more interesting, the learning would be easier, and they will need computer skills in life for the future; to: I think it’s better to use books than computers because scientists studied from books and it didn’t bother them. The survey also received responses from 48 school administrations, and according to them, the percentage of teachers who use computers in class ranges from 10 to 40%. Compared to the number of teachers who used electronic classrooms at the beginning of the project, this survey found their number had increased by 55.32%. Electronic classrooms are most often used in the 3rd and 4th grade and for the subjects of science, social studies, and mathematics.

**e-Teachers and e-Tax Payers**

A TV report on RTRS about Project Dositej included a statement by Ranka Bohić, a Science and Social Studies teacher from the Borisavo Stanković Primary School in Banja Luka, who said that the equipment is used for teaching twice a month. Tarik Mujagić, a German Language teacher at the Branko Copić Primary School in Prijedor is one of the teachers who underwent training for Dositej in the first phase of the project. His school has developed a plan for using the equipment and encourages its teachers to use it. For Školegijum, he demonstrated how the system works and presented the possibilities available to teachers and pupils during class. I observed that Dositej required a certain level of computer skills that most teachers still lack. The best way to overcome this is to use Dositej as frequently as possible. Only then will this project make sense. Apart from regular use, Mr. Mujagić noted that it has been shown in practice that a certain degree of creativity on the part of the teacher is also needed to create and present content. Mutual cooperation is also important, so teachers have formed a Facebook group Intel – Class Mate – Teachers to share experiences. There are also teachers who view Dositej as a needles novelty, just another obstacle on their path to an (un)earned pension. There is no system in place to motivate teachers or even mandate the use of information technology in teaching. And a separate problem is posed by the fact that the whole successful IT-operation was done on a dying patient, a school curriculum that is out of date, ideologically impassioned, conservative and bureaucratic, with a medieval priest serving as an icon of education.

Did we as taxpayers buy our precious child of an education system an expensive toy it does not quite know what to do with because chalk, blackboards, and textbooks are the sorts of toys everyone is used to? Computer equipment becomes quickly out-dated and it is questionable whether it will survive to greet a new generation of teachers that could increase the percentage of teachers using Dositej in class from 10 to 40 up to 90 or 100%.
In less than 100 words:

**Mirrors Instead of Windows**

If parents of Serb pupils in Sarajevo, for instance, demanded that their children be taught in Serbian, the cantonal ministry would find itself without a suitable curriculum or textbooks. The only practical solution would be to adopt the curriculum and textbooks that parents of Bosniak children in Konjević Polje, Vrbanjci, and many other schools in Republika Srpska find unacceptable. Metaphorically speaking, the current policy of reciprocity in education could then be described as a classroom with mirrors instead of windows, where the teacher’s most important role would be to explain that the enemy faces outside belong to the others.
In May 2015, the media were resounding with news that, given the political climate in Serbia, was to be expected. Judge Trešnjev at the High Court decided that: The application to rehabilitate Dragoljub Mihailović Draža is hereby approved, and it is further determined that the decision of the Supreme Court of the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, Military Council...pertaining to Dragoljub Mihailović is hereby annulled as are the legal consequences of this decision, including the sanction of confiscation of property, and the criminal record of the rehabilitated person Dragoljub Mihailović Draža shall be expunged. The media were soon filled with various reactions, from interpretations of the ruling as an act of correcting decades of injustice against Serbs and Chetniks, coming from Vuk Drašković, to pointing out that this was a precedent in international justice, as explained in a text by Vesna Rakić-Vodičk. Srpske Dveri see the western allies as traitors and blame them for Mihailović’s death, while Obraz is calling for the rehabilitation of Nedić and Mušicki.

The number of those satisfied or indifferent towards the ruling gives the impression that the majority in Serbia and Republika Srpska doesn’t have qualms about right-wing revisions of history. This is, no doubt, in large part thanks to a television programme portraying the Chetnik movement in a positive light, such as Radoš Bajić’s mega-popular series. But what is the contribution of education from this side of the Drina River?

In primary and secondary school history lessons in Republika Srpska, Mihailović was rehabilitated immediately after the war. Serb politics and ideology taught generations of post-Dayton pupils that the Chetniks were antifascists and defenders of Serbs, but that they were slandered by Tito and the hateful communists whose only goal was to destroy the Serb national being. This tendency has been maintained to date. In the 9th grade history textbook, authors R. Pejić, S. Tešić and G. Gavrić write about the antifascist resistance in the former Yugoslavia (mostly Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia), citing the Chetnik and Partisan movements as equal, different only in terms of politics and war tactics. The Chetniks are characterised as a movement that refrained from attacking Nazis to protect the people from German retribution. According to this textbook, the units of Draža Mihailović defended the Serb people from the Ustaša, as opposed to the Partisans who relied on mobility and undertook offensives against the Nazis, thereby exposing the Serb populace to retribution. With these interpretations, the authors resolve one of the greatest paradoxes of Chetnik resistance, namely, their inactivity and restraint in fighting the Nazis. The equality between Chetniks and Partisans is illustrated by two photographs showing their cooperation (Photo 1: Partisans and Chetniks staging an ambush together; Photo 2: Partisans and Chetniks leading German prisoners of war in Užice), while photographs of Chetniks with the Ustaša, Nazis, and fascists have been left out. The authors explain the conflicts between Partisans and Chetniks as purely political, without providing context about the way Chetniks fought against the Partisans and with whose support. In describing Mihailović, the authors cite the reasons for his execution in quotation marks (for treason against the people’s liberation struggle and collaboration with the occupier).

The attitude of the textbook authors (and by extension the pedagogical institute) towards the Chetnik movement and its role in the Second World War unequivocally shows that pupils are presented with selective information in order to portray the Serbs as victims of a political conflict that led them into fratricidal war. Chetnik crimes against Serb and non-Serb civilians, and Mihailović’s responsibility for these crimes as the high commander, are almost entirely left out, apart from rare instances that are explained away by the nature of war, necessity, and circumstances. Thus indoctrinated, generations of pupils in Republika Srpska were by and large made incapable of establishing a critical distance with respect to the Second World War and taught to recognise fascism in others, but not on their own side. It is understandable that with such (un)critical capacity, that same majority remains blind to the crimes of the Serb side in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and equally unable to recognise and condemn them. The rehabilitation of Draža Mihailović further complicates the task of teachers whose consciences would not allow them to go against the truth and material evidence. Apart from deceitful textbooks and seductive series, they will now also have to stand up against objective jurists.

Marko Ban
The issue of religious education in public schools will not be suitably resolved as long as religion classes are used to propagate the politics of their respective faith communities.

Nenad Veličković

This story about an example of the abuse of religious education in a school begins with a letter by a young Bosnian Language teacher to Školegijum. In the letter, she describes an event from her classroom that left her dumbfounded. After five years of teacher training, she did not know what to tell her pupils or how to react to their comments. While she was writing the title for class discussion on the blackboard – Ivo Andrić, *The Book* – the first remark she heard was: “What do we need him for?” Pretending she had not heard the question, the teacher used magnets to attach information sheets to the blackboard that the pupils were meant to use to compile a short biography: Travnik, Belgrade, 1961 Stockholm, *The Bridge on the Drina*, *The Travnik Chronicles*, the Nobel Prize... “And hatred of Bosniaks,” added a voice behind her back. She turned around to see a few boys watching her and the rest of the class watching them. “Can I give you a quote?” one of them asked. When she nodded, he proceeded to read from his notebook: – ‘I too am smothered by this place of stench, tallow, laziness and turpitude of the followers of the Arab imposter, so I spend more time in Belgrade than in Bosnia.’ End of quote. There, you see how he hates all followers of the Arab imposter, i.e. the sublime Prophet.” Another boy added,
“He was a member of Young Bosnia. They wanted to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia. That’s why he got the Nobel Prize.” The teacher tried to correct their erroneous claims, but the thirteen-year-olds refused to believe her. They believe their effendi, the religion teacher from whom they heard what they had written in their notebooks. They had not read anything by Andrić, but they know that in The Darned Yard, he spoke against the Prophet. She corrected them: “It’s not the darned but the damned yard and it is not located in Bosnia but in Constantinople, in Istanbul…” Her pupils interrupted her.

“You can tell us anything, because we haven’t read it.”

“You haven’t read it, yet you claim the novel speaks ill of the Prophet?”

“But the effendi told us…Besides, the whole world knows he’s a Serb writer, and there’s also Andrićtown. Why is Kusturica not building some other town, why Andrićtown?!”

The discussion continued until the bell rang. The pupils all admitted that they would rather have a barber cut their hair than a tailor because they would want to go to a professional. However, they refused to accept the argument that the literature teacher is the professional on Andrić, and not the effendi. The effendi probably told them that because he’d read an article in the 2006 Takvim by Aziz Kadribegović entitled “On a Poem of Hatred Dedicated to Andrić.” (1) Kadribegović quotes part of Andrić’s letter to his colleague, Niko Mirošević. A copy of this letter is kept in the A-Z Archives in Freiburg. Andrić thanks Mirošević for the book he sent him and writes:

“Thank you for the books you sent me. I was especially glad to see your lovely poetry collection with one poem dedicated to me. It is nice that you remember your old friend and colleague… I too am smothered by this place of stench, tallow, laziness and turpitude of the followers of the Arab imposter (underlined by A.K.), so I spend more time in Belgrade than in Bosnia. Ivo Andrić”

At the end of his article, Kadribegović discloses the reason for publishing this letter as an illustration of Andrić’s anti-Bosniak sentiments:

“Either way, the fact is that as I wrote this marginal text, newspapers are publishing stories about how followers of the Arab imposter in Travnik, his birthplace, are preparing to mark the 60th anniversary of the first publication of The Travnik Chronicles. Among other things, there will be a marathon reading of The Travnik Chronicles in continuity, day and night, and it will all be streamed online. This (once allegedly) place of stench, tallow, laziness and turpitude, despite everything, does not forget its great author.”

And that is certainly one of the magnificent paradoxes of Bosnia.

“Or, as the folk saying goes – the miracle of Bosnian resistance!”

Apart from the fact that due to an error in syntax the point of the article is utterly obscured, because it turns out that Andrić is the Arab imposter, which is again the result of hastiness on account of ideological passion, the article does not cite a single source. We don’t know the publisher of Mirošević’s book, but what is more important, and more interesting, is that the article is not accompanied by a copy of the original document, even though this would be the strongest argument for ascribing Islamophobia to Andrić.

In the three archives in Freiburg, they could not tell us what sort of letter this might be; the letter is not mentioned by either Rizvić or Mahmutčehajić. The Andrić Foundation in Belgrade has never heard of it. Preporod has no knowledge of the letter either, and the author of the article himself, Aziz Kadribegović, cannot remember who owns the letter or where it is kept. (2) Does the letter exist or has it been invented, and if it exists, is it authentic? This is the important question for current debates about Andrić’s Islamophobia and Greater Serbhood. For a discussion on the quality of public education and the role of religion therein, the question must be formulated differently: why is a religion teacher concerned with the opus and ideology of a writer who is not included in the curriculum for religious education?
The decision on the choice of laureates for the Nobel Prize in Literature was made on 26 October 1961. The short list, apart from Andrić, included the British writers Lawrence Durrell and Graham Greene, the American John Steinbeck and the Italian Alberto Moravia. [...] the Nobel Diploma consists of two parts, and in addition to basic information about the Laureate and the composition of the Nobel Committee, it also contains the decision to award the prize and a citation explaining why. It is printed in gold letters on parchment mounted in a blue leather cover. [...] On 17 May 1962, Andrić spoke to the Council for Culture of the People’s Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and announced his decision to donate 50% of the monetary amount of the Nobel Prize to improving libraries. (Excerpts from the article on the Ivo Andrić Foundation website)

It is the right and professional obligation of teachers to keep abreast of periodicals in their subject area, thus also of the Islamic religion teacher to follow the Takvim periodical of the Islamic Community Riyasat. On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of this periodical, it was said, among other things, that the articles published therein, for the most part, represent the essence of what the Islamic Community wishes to convey to its members. (3) Why the Islamic Community feels the need to convey to its members that Ivo Andrić is their enemy and why in this particular case it resorted to doing so with such low professional standards is a matter of the Community and its members. But religious education classes whose thinly veiled politics indoctrinate pupils concern society as a whole and cannot be dismissed as internal matters of religious communities, which have been allowed and are being allowed to create (their own) curricula and appoint (their own) teachers independent of the competent education institutions. This legal provision introduced double standards into schools which produce, as illustrated by the case above, confusion in pupils, or more broadly speaking, suspicion of science and contemporary scientific achievements. Given that the literary work of Ivo Andrić is not part of the Islamic religious education curriculum for the 8th grade of primary school, who can and should invite a religious teacher to explain the educational and pedagogical aim he had in mind when deciding to include a discussion of Andrić in his teaching?

Once we arrive at a definition of these pedagogical and educational aims, we shall also face the question, the valid answer to which the public has yet to receive, of: which of these aims (4) is secular education unable to achieve so that it necessitates the engagement of religious communities and providing them with special privileges?

It is evident that none of the aims listed in the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina make it necessary for the state to engage religious communities in education and to guarantee them exclusive rights to develop curricula and appoint teachers. The reason, it would seem, is the so-called hidden curriculum whose main aim is to strengthen national identity, which is crucially shaped by religious affiliation. Religious education is, thus, not expected to achieve international standards of knowledge. On the contrary, it is expected to sabotage them by methods based on dogmatic claims and not on academic inquiry. This is the only possible explanation of why pupils place their trust regarding matters of literature with the effendi and not the teacher with a degree in literature.

Notes

(1) Aziz Kadribegović was born in 1947 in Pljevlja, Montenegro, where he completed secondary school. He studied Slavic languages at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. For almost two decades, he served as secretary of the Islamic Community Riyasat. He has authored numerous works and publications, and edited many publications of the Islamic Community. He also worked as an author on a number of shows for Radio Sarajevo, and since August 1993, he has been the Editor-in-Chief of the Islamic Information Newsletter Preporod. For ten years, he was an editor with Glasnik, the periodical of the Islamic Community Riyasat. He has authored numerous works and publications, and edited many publications of the Islamic Community. He also worked as an author on a number of shows for Radio Sarajevo, and since August 1993, he has been the Editor-in-Chief of the Islamic Information Newsletter Preporod. For ten years, he was an editor with Glasnik, the periodical of the Islamic Community Riyasat. He has authored numerous works and publications, and edited many publications of the Islamic Community’s Takvim periodical. Excerpts from a biography published on: http://www.mizkalesija.com/vise.php?id=4804

(2) Archives with no information about the letter: 1. Universitätsarchiv Freiburg, Alexander Zahoran- sky (University Archives) 2. Stadt.Freiburg.de, U. Ecker (Freiburg City Archives)
3. Ub Uni Freiburg, Doris Schweizer (University Library)
In all the responses, the contact persons allowed for the possibility that further research might find something. However, without additional information, further research is not possible.

Reply from the Andrić Foundation:
No. 649-2
Dear Mr. Zukić,
Thank you for your letter to the Ivo Andrić Foundation.
With regard to your question, we hereby inform you that we are aware how some authors cite a sentence from a letter Andrić allegedly sent to Niko Mišojević Šerba without, however, citing precise bibliographic data about the document so that the citation may be verified. We do not possess any relevant information about the existence of the alleged letter, nor have we found a photocopy or reprint of the letter in any of the literature to determine its veracity.
Sincerely,
Dragan Dragojlović,
Director of the Ivo Andrić Foundation

Reply from Preporod:
To Whom It May Concern:
We are sorry that we cannot help you find the document you are looking for. As you know, Takvim is the annual periodical of the Riyasat. It publishes authors, texts, and in these texts authors cite literature and sources available to them. Takvim does not collect and does not maintain an archive of documents cited by these authors. We suggest you contact Mr. Kadribegović and see whether he can help you out. He is retired. You can check with Preporod to see if they have his number or whether they can contact him.
Sincerely,
Ibrahim Begović

Reply from Aziz Kadribegović:
Škollegijum Magazine
To Whom It May Concern:
Let me say at the very beginning how touched I am by the “fact” that you relate in your letter that a small text published in Takvim a decade ago had such a planetary effect that even today in 2015, pupils refuse to discuss Andrić’s short story “The Book”? You do not, however, say how many pupils refused the discussion: two, five, ten, fifty... or whether they had at the same time read the disputed text... If it were not sad, it would be funny... as it is, it’s quite pathetic.
As it is pathetic and arrogant of you to seek “more complete information” ten years after the fact from a man who has been retired for three and does not know what happened yesterday, so how can he possibly be expected to remember an archive or catalogue number for a document he held in his hands for only a few hours some ten years ago! I am sorry I cannot help you shorten your “search” and I sincerely hope that ten years from now there will not be any more “pupils” refusing discussion on account of my article.
Sincerely,
Kadribegović, Sarajevo, 6 October 2015

Text of the letter sent to Mr Kadribegović:
We are contacting you in connection to an article we are preparing about pupils refusing to discuss Ivo Andrić’s short story “The Book” included in the curriculum for the 8th grade. The pupils explained their refusal by quoting a sentence that is allegedly Andrić’s: “I too am smothered by this place of stench, filth, laziness and turpitude of the followers of the Arab imam, so I spend more time in Belgrade than in Bosnia.”
We have found that the possible source of this quote is an article published under your name in Takvim in 2006 with the title “On a Poem of Hatred Dedicated to Andrić” which cites as the source Andrić’s letter to Mišojević, whose photocopy is kept at the A.Z. Archives in Freiburg. We have contacted the Freiburg University Archives, the Freiburg City Archives, and the University Library, but were told they did not have such a document.
To shorten our search, we kindly ask you to provide us with more complete information about where the quoted letter is kept and under which archive or catalogue number. Of course, if you have a copy of the letter, we kindly ask that you send it to us.
Sincerely,
Magazine for Justice in Education Škollegijum


(4) The general goals of education are:
a) enabling access to knowledge as a basis for understanding oneself, others and the world we live in,
b) ensuring of optimum development for each person, including persons with special needs, in line with their age, abilities and mental and physical capacities,
c) promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and preparation of each person for life in a society that respects the principles of democracy and rule of law,
d) development of a sense of belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one’s own cultural identity, language and tradition, in a manner appropriate to civilizational heritage, by learning about and respecting others and their differences, respecting diversity and fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all people, nations and communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and worldwide;
e) ensuring equal opportunities for education and choices at all levels of education, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, social status, religion, psychophysical and other personal characteristics;
f) achieving quality education for citizens;
g) achieving standards of knowledge that are comparable at international and European levels, ensuring inclusion and continuation of education within the European education system;
h) encouraging lifelong learning;
i) promotion of economic development;
j) inclusion into the European integration process.

Source: Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the session of the House of Representatives held on 27 June 2003 and the session of the House of Peoples held on 30 June 2003, Article 3)
Education & Popcorn

The School of Falling in Love
One of the reputable British dailies was the scene of a brief exchange of opinions between its film critic and a script writer in which the two debated whether romantic comedies have a future. The critic, of course, premised his argument on the fact that the times have changed and that in these new circumstances the British film industry simply cannot count on big profit as was the case in recent history with films like *Love Actually* (2003), *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001) or *Notting Hill* (1999). A few weeks later, a script writer responded. She believes that there is no reason to worry, and that romantic comedies are still – thank you very much for asking – alive and well. Although their views of the (market) fate of romantic comedies are essentially different, the critic and the script writer still agree on one important thing: romantic comedies, as a serious (i.e. seriously profitable) part of the popular culture industry (i.e. entertainment) ultimately depend (since they are in the market) on the changing social circumstances.

The critic illustrates this by quoting a film director he talked to: *These are cynical times. Some of the romantic comedies I thought worked best in recent years were 500 Days of Summer* (2009), *Celeste and Jesse Forever* (2012) and *Like Crazy* (2011). *All these films reject the standard happy-ever-after formula. We all try to make films in keeping with the times. And the times right now just aren’t that romantic.* Elaborating on the critic’s argument on the changing times, the script writer drew our attention to the audience: *People are often very quick to claim romantic comedies a failure financially, without stopping to consider some quite obvious things. For a start, has anyone noticed the changing tastes in cinema and viewing habits?*

Based on the figures showing the decline in the sales of popcorn, the script writer concludes that people do not go to cinemas any more, but watch movies at home instead. Therefore, although the box office numbers are dwindling, people still watch movies, romantic comedies included. *(The plummeting profit in movie theatres can be, at least to a point, explained by the recent greatly increased production of TV series that bank on home audience and advertisements.)* Because of the dire situation with the movie theatre market, film studios are turning to highly profitable cinematic products capable of initiating a cycle of profit outside movie theatres, such as in toy and video games shops. This is why movies about super heroes, cartoons or horror movies push out romantic comedies and other, less marketable genres from the market. The *Transformers* or *Hunger Games* movie series illustrate this process really well. Yet, the script writer concludes that she, as well as other people, still wants to know what makes people happy and what makes them sad, especially when it comes to love. In her opinion, romantic comedies on career girls getting alpha guys are dying out, but that does not mean that the entire genre will be consigned to history. Love plots and main characters have indeed changed (nowa-

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2. Tess Morris, “*As long as there is love, there will be romcoms*”, *The Guardian*, 2 September 2015. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com. Tess Morris wrote the script for “Man Up”, a romantic comedy finished in 2015.
3. This has already been discussed in the Školegijum. See Školegijum, issue 9, 2014.
days, films are made, for example, on love affairs of partners with mental health issues [Silver Linings Play Book/2013; Jennifer Lawrence won an Academy Award for best actress in this film; the film had eight nominations in total/], but this change actually reflects the new lease on life for the entire genre. This little argument on the future prospects of romantic comedies is interesting insofar as it echoes the understanding of popular culture and entertainment industry. If we understand the popular culture, as opposed to high culture, to be a business whose main goal is profit, it is to be expected that the products of popular culture take into account the changing tastes and viewing habits of the audience and respond to them accordingly. The problem is, however, that these changes apply to that which we do not normally perceive as a part of regular financial transactions: namely, it is the way we see the world that changes, the balance of power between different groups, as well as the opinions whether such balance is fair and whether it is possible to make it more fair. Although profit is always at its focus, popular culture thus becomes a mirror of the popular understanding of the society we live in as well as of the popular explanations as to why it is supposed (or not) to be that way. In this sense, in addition to popular culture being an instrument for entertaining the masses, it also has another important role – education.

2.
What is true for popular culture in general is also true for romantic comedies in particular. On the one hand, they are made with the aim of earning as much money as possible; on the other hand, they are the central part of the (lover’s) discourse through which we learn to recognise and transfer the feeling we attach to love for another person. This is why they are especially interesting to the audience comprising young people in the last stage (adolescent) of growing up and maturity. What is love; how people in love are supposed to behave; how do you recognize someone in love and how do we show that we are in love; how a relationship between people who are in love with each other is established and built; what makes that relationship a good one; what is allowed in such a relationship, and what is not – these are all questions the young audience wants answered.

Generally speaking, there are two general theories which explain, among other things, the way young people learn from romantic comedies. The social cognitive theory suggests that young people actively watch behavioural patterns in romantic relationships in order to learn how to behave in similar situations: a young person will try to memorize this model in order to emulate it in their own relationships. It is particularly likely that the behaviour of romantic comedy characters who are generally considered as good looking as well as the behaviour which leads to a positive outcome (considering the happy ending formula in romantic comedies, it can be assumed that young audience is particularly attracted to the behaviour patterns represented in such films) will be accepted as a role model. The cultivation theory relies on cumulative effects of exposure, in this particular case, to romantic comedies. Exposure to the media images, over time, subtly “cultivates” viewers’ perceptions of reality. Thus the young people of both sexes who watch romantic comedies develop beliefs and expectations in accordance with the concrete representations they find in love stories with happy endings (which, in fact, should encourage them to engage in such relationships in the first place).

As unconvincing as they may seem because they fail to take into account numerous other influences young people are exposed to, or the fragmented audience (audience is not a homogenous entity, it consists of members of different groups and different individuals, so one

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3 On what could be lover’s discourse, see Roland Barthes, A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments, (Fragmenti ljubavnog diskursa / Roland Barthes; translated from French by Bosiljka Brlečić (Zagreb: Pelago, 2007)). See also Niklas Luhman, Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy, (Ljubav kao pasija: o kodiranju intimnosti / Niklas Luhmann; translated from German by Darija Domic (Zagreb: Naklada MD, 1996).
message will not have the same effect on everyone), yet these two theories still reveal the circular motion the popular culture industry is obviously counting on (and so is the educational system): this industry is trying to meet the expectations of as wide an audience as possible; in doing so, it also forms behaviours and expectations of the new audience – the young people growing up and maturing; this way popular culture (thus fulfilling the educational role as well) transfers the same or similar values and behavioural patterns from one generation to the next essentially protecting the entire society from any significant changes. This role of popular culture as an instrument of maintaining the status quo – of which, for example, Eric A. Havelock⁵ and Marshall McLuhan⁶ wrote convincingly in a somewhat different context and for a different reason – is particularly interesting when we talk about romantic comedies. As far as defending the status quo goes, the potential effect of romantic comedies is far reaching and goes beyond shaping the relationships of individuals as participants in a romantic plot. In fact, romantic plot is here merely a vessel for illustrating deeper social conflicts, while happy ending is an ideological mechanism that serves to appease those conflicts and to provide their apparent resolution.

3. Wanting to clearly establish what is it we are talking about when we talk about romantic comedies, the script writer from the beginning of this article wittily proposed three crucial questions: is the film romantic; is it funny; if you took the central love plot out, would it still work as a story? If the answer is yes to the first two questions and no to the third one, we are dealing with a romcom. But no matter how attractive in its simplicity this test may be, in fact, it misses the essence of the romantic comedy plot. To have a plot at all, it is not enough for the scenes to be funny, and for the story to be a love story; there needs to be a reason why we have a story at all – there must be an obstacle to the course of potential love. The story then develops around overcoming these obstacles on the road to a happy

⁵ That which could be considered the popular culture today, Havelock compared to Homer’s epic poems and their role as catalogues of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in ancient Greek culture. See Eric A. Havelock, The Muse Learns to Write. Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present (Yale University Press: 1986).

⁶ At the same time, Marshall McLuhan also thought similarly to Havelock, with a difference that he placed more of an emphasis on technical means of communication. See Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man (McGraw-Hill: 1964); See Marshall McLuhan, the Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of the Typographic Man (University of Toronto Press: 1962).
ending. In contemporary romantic comedies obstacles are often a consequence of class or world-views differences or conflicts. What used to be (in Shakespeare’s works, for example) a conflict that starts in the private sphere which then spills over to the public sphere (in Romeo and Juliet, a love tragedy which could have easily turned into a comedy, the feuding, but equal in status, Montague and Capulet families stood in the way of love), in the last decades of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century turned into a conflict between concrete social groups (with often enormous differences in status; for example, the Jane Austin novels from the beginning of 19th century were the historic forerunners of such type of love stories) or world-views. The obstacles around which plots are developed in romantic comedies therefore reflect the deep social divides, and the story becomes an ideological narrative which must overcome or reduce those divides. The brutal example of such type of a story is the extraordinary box-office hit *Pretty Woman* (1990). In this romantic comedy the girl (played by Julia Roberts whom this film propelled to superstardom), a down-on-her-luck prostitute, gets a chance to improve her position by engaging in a relationship with a successful and very wealthy businessman (Richard Gere). This is a business transaction of sorts; hence it is not surprising that the female character in the film is a prostitute. Thus the ironic observation about marriage uttered as far back as the 18th century literally comes to life: marriage is seen as a type of legalized prostitution – just like a prostitute, a wife gives her body to her husband in exchange for economic security – an arrangement supported and imposed by the society.\(^7\) The variation on the almost two centuries old feminist subject in this film sees the prostitute giving not just her body, but also humanity to the wealthy businessman; in other words – she makes him a better man. The authors of the film, however, in no way distance themselves from such *business contract*; on the contrary, the fairy tale ending of the movie in which the wealthy businessman shows up like a knight on a white horse rescuing his prostitute, essentially humanizing the otherwise utterly inhumane material differences that pushed the girl into prostitution in the first place, thus shielding them from critical questioning. On the other hand, of course, as it typically happens in the works of popular culture, the film is a kind of emancipating attempt to recognize the humanity and elementary dignity of the people providing sexual services.

We find an almost identical, only even more brutal story, in the excellent romantic comedy *As Good As It Gets* (1997; both Jack Nicholson and Helen Hunt won Academy Awards for best performance in this film), a harsh social criticism specifically targeting the unjust health-care system, which is indifferent to social differences. In this comedy, a poor, single mother literally buys health for her sick son by giving the rich novelist love. The authors of the film did their best to show that that was literally the only way for the mother to ensure a decent life for her son (the fact that she works hard as a waitress does not in any way enable her to ensure adequate care for her son). The scene at the end suggesting that the couple will live happily ever after only serves to show that entrepreneurial people who fall in love easily can overcome the shortcomings of the otherwise deeply unjust system involving public institutions such as healthcare services. Another detail in the film carries a strong ironic effect: the novelist enjoys material privileges because he became rich writing none other than – romance novels. He, therefore, produces the ideological support for an unjust system whose privileges he enjoys. The humanization of that system, as the film suggests, does not come from changing the patterns of the division of goods, but from the humane and unbiased individual acts of those who unjustly enjoy the privileges. In other words – the system is as humane as the rich are merciful.

\(^7\) See Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792).
4.

These examples clearly show that social differences go hand in hand with gender stereotypes. And while the class aspect of romantic comedies is well protected from any questioning, the gender patterns and roles have changed with time (perhaps also because this change does not have much impact on the established patterns of class division). An exceptionally entertaining example of such type of change is *Notting Hill*, one of the most popular romantic comedies, at least in the last twenty years. Instead around a wealthy man, the love plot revolves around an extremely rich and successful woman – an actress who earns large sums of money for playing roles in popular movies (fittingly and touchingly convincingly played by Julia Roberts). Her partner is the owner of an antiquarian book shop on the verge of financial ruin (played by the forever confused and irresistibly charming Hugh Grant).

*Notting Hill* story has a mythical structure: on the one hand we have the actress’s world, which is in fact the world of gods (this is explicitly said in the film); on the other hand we have the world of ordinary people embodied in the character of the financially ruined antiquarian book dealer. The whole plot is then built on this potential transgression: is love relationship between a goddess and a mortal (i.e. ordinary) man possible; and if it is – how and under which conditions? In addition to that main mythical structure, the story also has a series of narrative subcurrents and elements also characteristic for a myth. For example, the antiquarian book shop owner shares his house with a downright unusual and socially dysfunctional friend who, on the mythical plane, is in fact his doppelganger, his other self. This close connection between them is also emphasized by the similarities between the flat mate and the hero’s sister who will also end up in a relationship by the end of the film.

And while on the one hand the success of a love story depends on the decision of the *goddess* to leave the *world of gods* and come down amongst ordinary people, on the other hand it is crucial that the hero rejects his social dysfunctional *other self* and to enter into a relationship with the person he is in love with. Thus the film makes us not only wait with trepidation for the outcome of the love story; the tension is also built through constant juxta-

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posing the two options between which the hero must choose: either he is going to start living a normal life, or he will remain a loser like his mythical flat mate.

This way *Notting Hill* successfully brings together two possible narrative patterns of romantic comedies: one originates in the differences brought on by social inequality of groups the protagonists belong to; the other stems from the personalities of the two people around whom the love story revolves that can thwart its happy ending. A good example of the second pattern can be found in a very unusual and, up until the very end, very successful (thanks primarily to the exceptional Sandra Bullock barely managing to keep up with her), the film *Forces of Nature* (shot in 1999, the same year as *Notting Hill*), where forces of nature are not a metaphor for spontaneous behaviour and attraction that naturally develops between the hero (the groom) and the heroine (with whom the groom will cheat on his fiancée); here the institution of marriage is seen as natural (embodied in the fiancée), which is shown as stronger than any real or potential moral aberration.

As for the first pattern, *Notting Hill* is also interesting because in this film, popular culture depicts itself as the winner over high culture, in their fight for the audience (and human souls). The owner of the antiquarian book shop is undoubtedly the embodiment of traditional high culture which falls before onslaughts of the popular culture products. The conflict between those two cultures is resolved, of course, through the marriage of the two of their representatives, basically sending a message to high culture to conform to the popular forms of entertainment instead of challenging and rejecting them. The same formula is followed in the also very popular *You’ve Got Mail* (1998), albeit told much more clearly, i.e. much more literally (independent book shops disappearing before the wave of book shop chains, which is resolved through a love affair between the former owner of the independent book shop and the owner of the book shop chain, who will affably employ his new sweetheart in the children department of one of his many book shops). The gender roles were also kept within the traditional patterns of patriarchal power.

5.

Without doubt, it would be wrong to interpret romantic comedies as a mere instrument of ideological fight whose purpose is to whitewash or hide the existing social differences and inequalities, together with that which caused them. If it were only that, not only that romantic comedies would not be this popular, but no one would actually watch them. Their popularity stems from our basic need – the hope for a happy ending. And in this sense *Notting Hill* is a representative example of popular culture. What seems impossible at the beginning of the film, like an unattainable happiness (just as love in real life seems unattainable to us) – a love affair between a goddess and an ordinary man – comes true at the end and even becomes normal. The fairy-tale like quality of romantic comedies is probably their trump card in the market competition with other genres. Therefore, in a way, they are a kind of an escape from uncertain (love) reality.

On the other hand, identification with the heroes of romantic comedies makes us re-live and question our own feelings and actions in love relationships. In 2001, David Lodge, a famous literary theorist and an even more famous novelist, published *Thinks.*9, a novel that, without a doubt, belongs to the genre of romantic comedies. After watching a romance movie (it was *Ghost*, a 1990 movie balancing between a comedy [thanks to the brilliant – in that particular film – Whoopi Goldberg] and a tragedy), the heroine of the novel, Helen Reed, a writer, re-lives all she was feeling after the death of her husband Martin. She herself says that she was aware that the movie was cheap, sentimental, commercial rubbish, but she instantly adds that that did not matter to her. She found links between what she saw in the movie and her own life, which shook her deeply, and she even almost fainted with the transferred pleasure and yearning. To her,

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watching that particular movie was a cathartic experience.
If we have in mind the nature of Lodge’s novels, which are always literary critique studies under the guise of witty and entertaining plots, this experience of a literary heroine can be interpreted as a reliable critic’s insight into the effects of products of a distinct genre of popular culture. Even more so since the novel Thinks... deals with the problems of human consciousness from two different angles – the angle of literature and the angle of cognitive science. At the same time, it also contemplates the possibility of establishing a connection between those two domains of knowledge on people – the literary and the scientific.

6.
Still, no matter how much the social cognitive theory (just like the cultivation theory) tries to explain the educational effect the works of popular culture can have on its young audiences, these insights have to be taken with caution. And not only for the reasons that we have already mentioned, but also because romantic comedies themselves cannot be a reliable source of knowledge on anything. Using a sample of 40 representative romantic comedies, two researches proved that messages they send on love relationships are different, inconsistent and often contradictory and that no coherent knowledge on love can be gained from them (which, of course, is not their purpose in the first place and which is probably not possible).\footnote{See Kimberly R. Johnson and Bjarne M. Holmes, “Contradictory Messages: A Content Analysis of Hollywood–produced Romantic Comedy Feature Films”, Communication Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 3, 2009, pp. 352-373.} And yet, there is no doubt that they perform a very important job, which, to a large extent, relates to the forming of the lover’s discourse (which, of course, does not have to be consistent and ordered in any way, because that would render it inapplicable; human emotions, be it only love, are too complicated to be covered by any one ordered discourse), and also to the ideological interpretation of problematic societal point of contention. It would be a shame that children coming out of school do not have any insight into such, dual and unusual nature of this popular genre: without that knowledge, children will try to learn from it something this genre cannot teach them; and they will become susceptible to manipulations they could easily resist with just a little literary and media skill of reading texts and interpreting messages.
Dear future minister,

Up until this point, a single teacher taught you and she (it was probably a she, there are very few male teachers at that level) assessed your knowledge in all your subjects except for your foreign language and religious education classes, if you take them. I believe you and all the other pupils in your class had good marks and that most of you completed the previous grade with excellent results. Although you were little, you quickly realised what the teacher liked and you pandered to her tastes without mistake. It wasn’t difficult.

You now have subject teaching. Each subject has its own teacher. They all give marks, but each in his or her own way. I know, they use the same marks from 1 to 5, but you’ll see how in some subjects you get a 5 simply for repeating the answer someone whispered to you. In others, however, you can’t get a five even after 45 minutes spent in front of the blackboard giving all the right answers. Try to adapt. Start from the fact that it is marks that matter, not knowledge. To advance later in life, what is said about you on paper and what other people say will be more important than who you are and how much you know you’re worth.

Some Advice for Adaptation

Ask your parents to try to find out if the number of children in the school you attend is decreasing. If it is decreasing, don’t transfer – the teachers will do all they can to keep the pupils they have – so you’ll get higher marks than you deserve.

It is important that your parents check the average mark in the school at the end of the previous school year; if it is more than 4.50, you’re in a good place; chances are you too will have a high average no matter how little you learn.

The social status of your parents and your wider family is not unimportant either. Teachers make sure they don’t step on the toes of important people, and they are glad that the marks they give can pave the way for them to cut the line in health centres, clinics, and administration offices, and that such important people may help them find a new job that pays better than being a teacher. And don’t feel ashamed, you’re in school to get good marks, not to learn.

Getting a good mark will be much easier if you have relatives among the teachers. The closer your kinship with the school staff, the closer you are to excellent marks.

But all is not lost if you don’t have the above preconditions. It will be difficult in the beginning – subjects and teachers’ faces rush by as if on a conveyor – but in a few months you will know exactly how to secure a teacher’s favour. Once you have that, you’re in the clear. The teacher will turn a blind eye when you don’t know something, help you remember the right answer, wink to tell you which answer to circle, and add all your previous achievements to the marking scale each time.

To ensure this favour, keep in mind the following: never question a teacher’s authority, pretend you can’t see the teacher’s mistakes, and be quiet about the unjust treatment of others. If you listen to the sobbing of the pupil from the third row who can’t seem to get a 5 in maths no matter how hard she tries, you won’t hear the teacher cite you as an ideal pupil.

You Can Improve Your Mark after School is Over

A teacher’s favour is good, but a class teacher’s favour is better. That person knows how to say the right things about you at the right time. You don’t have to know anything about it, but you will notice when other teachers suddenly start noticing you. Securing the favour of the class teacher is particularly important when it comes to end-of-term marks. There is no average mark a class teacher cannot secure, even a day after the end of the school year. Actually, that’s when they’re at their most active. Don’t be surprised if at the end of this first year of subject teaching, when school reports are handed out, it turns out that the marks in the school reports are not the same as those read out by the teachers during the last lesson. Quiet diplomacy has been at work. If your school report also has higher marks than what you were told at the end of the school year, you’re on your way to choosing the secondary school where you will continue your education.

It is important that you know this little teachers’ business secret: your teachers never learned how to mark your achievement. They do it by listening to an inner feeling – swimming between the expectations of the administration, clear demands of parents, and children’s tears. All justice has been wrung out from the mark.

But you won’t need any of this advice if you have rich parents and influential relatives. In that case, you can even have a successful career without good marks. Which ministry are you interested in?●

Namir Ibrahimović
IMPRESSUM

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