

NATIONAL IDENTITY IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION. THE BOLOGNA PROCESS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

IDENTIDAD NACIONAL EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EUROPEA. EL PROCESO DE BOLONIA EN LOS BALCANES OCCIDENTALES

Ana M. Jara Gómez

ABSTRACT

The relationship between ‘uniformity’ and ‘diversity’ has been an important front in the debates about the processes of Europeanisation at the general level. This has happened in relation to the way in which the European Union has managed both unity and diversity. The particular dimensions of this management are often relevant, one of which directly affects the field of higher education. This article aims to address the identity politics of the Balkan region and their compatibility with European *uniforming* processes. This work discusses some of the significant difficulties presented by the Bologna Process and pays special attention to the voices that deal with this issue in the relevant Western Balkan countries. The results obtained from the analysis show the relevance of the ethical dimensions of knowledge as opposed to the mere pursuit of growth.

Key words: Higher education; Western Balkans; Bologna process; Identity; European Union

RESUMEN

La relación entre “uniformidad” y “diversidad” ha sido un frente importante en los debates sobre los procesos de europeización a nivel general. Esto ha ocurrido en relación con la forma en que la Unión Europea ha gestionado tanto la unidad como la diversidad. Las dimensiones particulares de esta gestión son a menudo relevantes, y una de ellas afecta directamente al ámbito de la educación superior. Este artículo pretende abordar las políticas identitarias particulares de la región de los Balcanes y su compatibilidad con los procesos de uniformización europeos. Este trabajo analiza algunas de las dificultades significativas que presenta el Proceso de Bolonia y prestar especial atención a las voces que se ocupan de esta cuestión en los países interesados de los Balcanes Occidentales. Los resultados obtenidos del análisis muestran la relevancia de las dimensiones éticas del conocimiento frente a la mera búsqueda del crecimiento.

Palabras clave: Educación Superior; Balcanes Occidentales; Proceso Bolonia; Identidad; Unión Europea.

Fecha de recepción: 6 de diciembre de 2021.

Fecha de aceptación: 25 de marzo de 2022.

INTRODUCTION

The history of European integration has been one of the most visible scenarios where new theories of international relations based on sectorial cooperation have been tested in order to interconnect the interests of member states, expand their relations and consequently increase the degree of peace and stability. This strategy makes the countries link their common interests and mutual relations and turn them into a solid relationship that decreases very effectively the problems and increases the peaceful settlement of disputes (Wunderlich, 2008).

The Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe was the result of the Cologne Conference in June 1999 between the European Union foreign ministers, representatives of the Balkan countries (except Serbia-Montenegro), representatives of NATO and the USA, Japan, Canada, Russia and representatives of many international and regional organizations. This summit was the starting point of increased attention of the international community, especially of the European Union, towards the Balkans. The compact mechanism included a European agenda on the region, which focused mainly on democratization efforts, human rights, economic reconstruction, development, cooperation and regional security issues. One month later, in July 1999, the leaders of the states who were members of the Stability Pact met in Sarajevo to give a further boost to the region's stability. The idea of the Pact was focused on post-conflict peace and stability management based on three approaches: regional security building, sustainability and democratic strengthening, economic development and social welfare (Welfens, 2001).

The Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) was launched in 2000 at the Zagreb Summit to consolidate peace and stability in the region, through the establishment of contractual relations between the Balkan countries themselves and with the European Union. The SAPs were not integration policies but the first phase of rapprochement between the two parties, focused mainly on trade (Bartlett, 2008). Presently there is variation in terms of the Western Balkans' countries accession progress, with some of them negotiating on various chapters of the *acquis communautaire* (Serbia and Montenegro), while others are still waiting for the accession talks to begin (Albania and North Macedonia) or as is the case of Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo, have not yet received candidate status (Jusić & Obradović, 2019).

Especially from the early nineties on, the general processes of European re-unification represented a challenge for national education systems. They had to face, at that time, the need for a harmonized European system that was to be born with the new millennium. The dilemma that revolves around a harmonized European system or multiple European systems based on diversity or national identities has been constantly reproduced in the last two decades in almost all countries, not only of the European Union, but of the whole of Europe. On the one hand, this dilemma was caused by the rapid penetration of globalization and a consequent explicit fear that European education systems were unattractive or uncompetitive on a global scale. On the other hand, it was an expected outcome of the European process and its "extraordinary achievements of recent years" (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The Bologna Declaration unambiguously points "towards the objective of increasing the competitiveness of the European higher education system. Since the validity and effectiveness of a civilization can be measured by the attractiveness of its culture to other countries, we need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a degree of global attractiveness equal to that of our extraordinary cultural and scientific" (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

The Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area also states “(t)he Bologna Process and the resulting European Higher Education Area, being unprecedented examples of regional, cross-border cooperation in higher education, have raised considerable interest in other parts of the world and made European higher education more visible on the global map” (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010). Understanding “Europeanisation” from the angle of globalization (as opposed to *internationalization*, which can only take place among nations) implies considering higher education as part of a global market system and therefore understanding that there is not necessarily a connection between higher education and development at the national level (Teixeira & Hill, 2011).

Today, national higher education systems in Europe are more convergent than ever and yet new challenges are emerging that need to be addressed: questions about the impact of new reforms in individual states, objectives that are subject to revision, economic disparities and so on. There is also ample evidence of tensions between European convergence and national diversities, which not only persist but are increasing when political, social, and economic problems of States become more acute (Meyer, 2004; Dunkel, 2009; Sánchez Salgado, 2018). The relationship between convergence and diversity is conducted through a specific dialectic, using unified concepts. However, only by concentrating on differences can we understand what is common (Zgaga, Teichler & Brennan, 2013).

This article seeks to address the role of *presumptions* about identity in the efficacy of educational policies in Europe. The purpose of the article is twofold: first, it aims to address the construction of the actual Western Balkan states and the role that higher education plays in these construction processes, and second, to analyze to what extent the common European educational rules allow universities to become social, political and cultural agents at the national level.

The paper has three main sections. The first section provides an overview of recent historical developments in the Western Balkans and the construction of national identities. The second section provides insight on what role higher education should play in the Balkan region, and whether the Bologna Process facilitates such a role. The third and final section is devoted to establishing some of the connections between the construction of new higher education systems and the concept of knowledge as a commodity. Jakob refers to the commodification of knowledge as “the process by which knowledge is reduced to a format that makes it possible to make an exclusive package or artefact for which an exchange value may be established. This implies that the process of commodification also presupposes or is dependent on commercialization” (Jakob, 2003, p. 127).

The present work is based on a qualitative methodological approach, analyzing data from direct fieldwork observations, empirical data pertinent to higher education in the region and written documents, and focusing on theoretical analysis. Field research (direct observation) was conducted by the author while living and working in Kosovo and Bosnia Herzegovina, while empirical data was studied mainly from European Union official documents and reports. Such methodology fits the nature of a study that analyzes in particular the situation of higher education in the Western Balkan countries, due to their identity-based politics, their status of European Union candidates, and their recent past of armed conflict. The mainly theoretical approach allows the knowledge and the approximation to the concept of national identity construction, the socio-legal reality of higher education, naturally dynamic, and also includes the observation and understanding of the scenario in which the European Communities develop, attending to the different overlapping levels of identity. It is a perspective that makes it possible to observe and understand the situation of

universities and institutions. We will apply the analysis of critical theories and research reading to interpret the existing theoretical discourses within their corresponding political, legal, and social contexts.

1. THE WESTERN BALKANS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES

The recent reforms and development of higher education in Europe have been closely followed and discussed in numerous forums. There are, however, several countries in Eastern Europe for which education policies have remained under-researched. One example is the area of the Western Balkans, a fairly recent geographical designation used to roughly denote the region that did not take part in the European Union enlargements of 2004 and 2007. This modern geopolitical term encompasses the countries of the former Yugoslavia (except Slovenia) and Albania, all members of the Bologna Process¹.

In the words of Kleibrink,

(M)ost governments in Southeastern Europe rather unreflectively emulated EU lifelong learning policies because they strove for more legitimacy on their way to EU membership. Instead of adopting the specific aspects of EU lifelong learning policies that might fit their context and capacities, they initiated comprehensive reforms geared towards an EU-style lifelong learning policy without having the necessary capacities to implement them or anticipate their implications. (2012, 104)

Following the Second World War, all the countries of Southeast Europe changed their education systems with the primary aim of eradicating illiteracy and extending compulsory education from four to eight years. Access to education improved enormously in the following decades, although all the systems had an ideological basis, of which three types can be distinguished: Albanian, Soviet and Yugoslav. The three systems developed parallel to the fluctuations in political and economic power. By the end of the 1980s, the education systems of almost all of these countries were relatively well developed and the problems that arose during the unstable times of the transition were mere setbacks, not the *normal* state of education and culture. This fact must also be considered when examining the problems facing education in the Western Balkans in the late 1990s (Zgaga, 2005).

Before 1990, the Western Balkans region comprised only two countries and therefore had only two higher education systems: Yugoslavia (composed of the six republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia, as well as the two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina) and Albania. The border between these two states was hermetically sealed, although Yugoslavia's borders were open to the world. When the hermetic border fell in 1990, it was a time for war, not for cooperation or construction. In the post-war period, a different map of the region was drawn, with borders that now divided seven countries and Albania; all prepared to build new national education systems where common elements became less evident and focus was placed on the new national or ethnic identities.

As a result of these recent historical developments, there is consensus around what the role of higher education should be in building the state or nation or, rather, an understanding that higher education, plays an effective role in these processes. Specifically, we are referring to perceptions or beliefs that should not come as a surprise in a region that has witnessed major upheavals and

¹ The Kosovo Higher Education Strategy gives priority to the implementation of the Bologna Process, although Kosovo cannot officially be a direct member of the Process. Kosovo attends ministerial meetings as an observer and all its higher education legislation is fully in line with the Bologna Declaration (Tahirsyzaj, 2010).

numerous inter-ethnic armed conflicts in the not-so-distant past. Yet, there are certain differences between states in this regard. In Kosovo for example, higher education is associated with both national emancipation and the construction of *statehood*, while in Croatia stronger emphasis is placed on the role universities play in the nation, including the country's economic competitiveness (Zgaga et. al., 2013)².

1.1. The Construction of National and Ethnic Identities

It is often said, especially among those who defend nationalist and/or ethnic politics, that certain social categories, mostly cultural, ethnic, or national, are inevitable and unchallengeable facts, a product of human nature rather than social practices (Geertz, 1973). This sort of beliefs, labeled as *primordialists*, are rooted in alleged dogmas of biology, theology, and morality. On the other hand, *modernist* theories of identity challenge primordialism showing how the content and even membership rules of solid identities have changed over time. Primordialists seem to believe that conflict between two ethnic groups is inevitable because of unchanging, core features of the identities of the members of these groups. The modernist position, which we share, rejects the notion of fixed or essential features and emphasizes the impossibility of such fully distinctive identities. As Fearon & Laitin (2000, 848) describe it, “it even verges on tautology. How could social categories be something other than socially constructed?”.

It is when a certain social identity is of chief importance to most members of a group that we can speak of a collective identity. When the members of the group accept a social classification that *makes* them different as a group from the rest of the world, they begin a process of enhancing the group's worth, which allows each individual to benefit in terms of his or her own self-esteem. Identities are constructed, but not for that less relevant, or less real. The need of every person to have a positive social identity can be seen as the basic motivation for the construction of collective identities (Weller, 1997).

Ernest Gellner, and his theory of nationalism published in the 1980s, has become a benchmark on national identity construction (Faraldo, 2001, 940). One of the strengths of Gellner's theory is the analysis of the intense emotional power involved in nationalism and the development of explanations why these emotions exist and why they feel authentic and powerful in the hearts of those who belong to a nation (Gellner, 1964, 1992, 1995 and 2009).

Along with Gellner, the works of Miroslav Hroch are significant, as he began to use the tools of social history, stressing the function of elites in the creation of national social and political space (Hroch, 2000; Faraldo, 2001). Eric Hobsbawm, not so influenced by Marxism as Hroch, sustains that “nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round” (Hobsbawm, 1992, 19). This author especially emphasizes the use of ancient materials for the construction of recently *invented* traditions, which serve new purposes. The invention of a tradition would happen more often in societies undergoing swift transformations or in the process of destroying the social structures for which old traditions were developed (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). In a parallel direction, Benedict Anderson developed the concept of nation as the cultural creation of limited

² The Dayton Agreements, which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, established three Constitutions to regulate the country: The Constitution of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Constitution of Republika Srpska. The Republika Srpska occupies 49% of the territory, 90% of its population is Serb despite the fact that some of its territories were predominantly Muslim before the ethnic cleansing orchestrated by Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić. The Agreements gave Republika Srpska the right to maintain its own police and army, as well as to have a ‘special parallel relationship’ with Yugoslavia (now Serbia). The Constitution establishes a structure of common state institutions based on equity and parity of representation of Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, collectively defined as communities, and limited these institutions to a narrow range of competencies (see Burg and Choup, 2000).

imagined communities. The nation imagines itself as a community despite the inequalities that dwell within it, creating a kind of unifying horizontal fellowship: “Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible (...) for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson, 1983, 50).

However, the greatest success in the resounding and decisive overcoming of primordialism, which has occurred in practically all the human sciences, must necessarily be attributed to ethnopsychiatry. An important part of Georges Devereux’s contribution consists in having established: 1) that individuals, young and old, sick and healthy, primitive and civilized, have at their disposal only a set of cultural materials that are everywhere absolutely identical; 2) that these materials are manipulated by a psyche that functions in all of us in a rigorously similar way (Laplantine, 1979, p. 42)³.

Therefore, starting from the assumption that identity is not the manifestation of a material truth, we will move, without suppressing the transdisciplinary character of the subject, to higher education politics. It is a matter of analyzing whether identity in higher education in Europe serves a “a function within a discourse that seeks to reinforce given power structures” (Blumi, 2003, 214).

2. THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In the shared discourse on nation-building, the universities located in capital cities are viewed as the future flagship institutions of national knowledge, while other universities must diversify to take on a secondary role. In some cases, minor universities show greater ambition for leadership at the national and international scale. This is the case of the University of Novi Sad in Serbia or the University of Banja Luka in Bosnia Herzegovina (Zgaga et. al., 2013).

The Western Balkans education systems represent a sort of mixture of the standard system in the former Yugoslavia and a combination of policies and institutional frameworks established in the aftermath of the wars. In this region, perhaps more so than others, higher education plays an important role in the social cohesion and development of the new states that emerged after the conflicts in Yugoslavia and, in the case of Albania, after forty years of a brutal communist dictatorship. In this regard, it is the new higher-educated elite that has been entrusted with the mission of stabilizing and improving both the economy and society. However, integration into Europe and the global economy does not occur in the same way for a state coming in from the outside as for one that has suffered the destruction and hardship of war.

Today, we must inquire what role public universities should play in the process of abandoning one path—that of Yugoslavia or Albania’s absolute isolation, each with their specific characteristics and dynamics—to undertake the difficult task of following that of the European Union, and how to do so after massive barbarity.

The uniforming processes that have taken place in recent years have been wrought with difficulty; the Western Balkans is a diverse region and the problems affecting it have not arisen nor been solved in a parallel manner. The countries that suffered the atrocities of war faced similar problems to reconstruct their national systems, but Bosnia Herzegovina began its reconstruction program when the conflict in Kosovo had not yet broken out, and Croatia began the process of negotiation

³ Reference is made to Georges Devereux’s works: *Ethnopsychanalyse complementariste* (Flammarion, 1972) and *Essais d’ethnopsychiatrie générale* (Gallimard, 1977).

for accession to the European Union in the spring of 2005, while other countries were stuck in various phases of the Stabilisation and Association Process, with accession set for a more or less distant future. Such differences should not be viewed as an obstacle to strengthening higher education and cooperation among the countries of the region, but simply as a fact. In fact, in light of this non-parallelism, regional cooperation practices could be more transparent and useful for both the Western Balkan countries and the international community (Zgaga, 2005).

When imposing reforms in general, and changes in higher education policies in particular, the European Union often ignores the idiosyncrasies, elements, and specific characteristics of these countries, thus making such changes ineffective or causing them to be implemented only superficially or incompletely (Noutcheva, 2009). The countries of the Balkans are not, to this day, only dependent on the European Union in terms of economic support but have also progressively relied on Europe for developing their government policies. Indeed, the political agenda of the region is decided primarily by the European Commission. A key characteristic of the current state-building system is evident in the discourse of its builders. Policymaking is generally understood to be the task of foreign specialists and experts, rather than the result of a political process based on popular consensus, which is why there is little or no room for local contributions. One of the main criticisms of the European Union's involvement in the Western Balkans is that the policies promoted or imposed on the region are more indicative of issues of interest to the EU than of interest to those to whom they are targeted: these political forums that depend on the exterior have little knowledge of the economic and social limitations that affect their ideal solutions, and those involved in political processes have little concern for more far-reaching social issues (Chandler, 2006).

In this regard, and to better illustrate the dilemma presented in this article, the words of the sociologist Michael Daxner (2006), may shed some light on the issue. In a seemingly rhetorical question, he inquired:

(D)oes anyone need another proof that the Balkans' way towards the new Europe is also a way to themselves; isn't it obvious that higher education is one among the few central hinges that will enable the region really catch up with the more advanced, and with the luckier partners in Europe, inside and outside the European Union? (Daxner, 2006 quoted in Zgaga, 2011).

It can be discussed whether the Balkans' path to the new Europe is in fact a path to themselves. This is due to the belief that the region's countries must, first and foremost, write their own history in order to forge their own path. Here we are referring to both the region's shared history and each country's specific history. It is also a thorny question to define exactly what the new Europe means; perhaps an entity to which one must aspire even if one already forms part of Europe, the geographical one.

There is no general agreement on the history of the Balkans or the origin of the hostilities in the 1990s. Indeed, it seems an impossible task to write a single, objective history of Yugoslavia, not only because of the different interpretations of these past events but also due to the lack of documents and factual evidence.

The prior and relative homogeneity of the Yugoslav state has given rise to an overwhelming diversity and much more complex social composition in which ideas of personal and collective identity are becoming increasingly evident, while multiculturalism has been introduced into legal structures at all levels. Relevant aspects of identity such as sexual orientation, gender, or disability have lost importance in the public sphere as well as in the legal system and legal education and

given way to notions of national identity. In a certain manner, this has allowed education to be built based on cultural heritage, religion, language, and even the diaspora, resulting in the alienation of the society's minority identities from the legal system of the majority ethnicity. For example, when Macedonian Albanians are able to use their language in official documents and courts, they may come to believe that the state in which they were born and the legal system meet their needs and that legal education is all but exclusive.

One of the main features of the legal systems resulting from the peace agreements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Macedonia is the institutionalization of ethnicity. Ethnic groups are represented as such in the institutions and the State administration. This form of representation may spread down to the lower levels of governance (Bosnia and Herzegovina) or limited to the state level (North Macedonia). Such systems are described as power-sharing and ultimately mean that ethnicity will be a determining factor in deciding who becomes a civil servant, a candidate for Parliament, or a member of a government. Both popular perceptions and legal frameworks elevate ethnonational identity to a primary criterion of political and social life.

History is often explained from the “others and us” perspective, using an artificially divided view of the past, that ignores the commonalities and the interaction between nations. The State and the Law, on the other hand, are learned in many ways, none of which is ethnically blind or allows for movements towards other than those that reinforce the sense of identity. This is so for two main reasons: the injustice which is embedded in procedural democracy and the continuum of ethnonationalist mobilization caused by fear and resentment (Bieber, 2004).

The injustice of procedural democracy means that in systems where political choice is determined by ethnic, national, or religious identity, the result is often the exclusion of certain relevant groups (Simon, 2001). Even if the ethnic majority is divided, it can be governed by a consensus on the exclusion of other ethnicities or the retaining of power. Neither the Dayton Accords nor the Kosovo Constitution provide for state institutions to express the multiple identities of citizens through interest groups such as farmers, entrepreneurs, or parents. It is the ethnic identity that governs the structure of the State, which “beforehand excludes almost all the substance of democratic activity” (Wedgwood, 1999, 16). In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an ethnic veto exists, which allows for a passive tyranny in which the government ceases to act. This is the design of constitutionalism based on ethnic boundaries. In any case, there are no rules for determining who belongs to an ethnic group in the former Yugoslav Republics and there is no accommodation for voters/citizens/students who choose to identify themselves in non-ethnic terms (Wedgwood, 1999; Chandler, 1999; Bose, 2002).

Concerning the continuum of nationalist mobilization, it should be noted that this often provokes fear of exclusion or domination by the majority group. A state with marked ethnopolitical identities in the social and legal spheres is the perfect breeding ground for the decline of peaceful coexistence and inter-group tensions.

Daxner was right to say that higher education has an important role in the region's transit to the European Union, or Europe as he prefers to describe it, but this statement serves little purpose other than to hide the many other roles that higher education in the Western Balkans may have. To broader outline this point, we will use the words of the father of modern economics, Adam Smith, who had great confidence in the power of education to modulate and improve human behavior. According to Smith, education is important because it provides certain “social benefits”: it raises moral standards, offers people material for thought and speculation, and promotes peaceful

temperament and thus stability in society. Education also allows for better understanding and judgment of government policies and makes powerless classes less vulnerable to political intrigues and conspiracies (Smith, 1996).

3. DESIGN ISSUES OF THE NEW KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

It is not possible to make a detailed study of the *knowledge society* or the Bologna Process in this article. We can, however, develop some striking aspects that will allow further reflection on the role that higher education institutions in the Western Balkans can play, and more particularly the space left for public universities in social, political and cultural cohesion, and development.

The creation of the European Higher Education Area was based on a series of fundamental objectives: implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); restructuring of the degree system; adoption of a system based on cycles (undergraduate and postgraduate including master's and doctoral degrees); recognition or standardization of degrees at the European level; promotion of mobility; development of a European dimension of higher education and the enhancement of European cooperation to guarantee the quality of higher education.

Certainly, the construction of the European Higher Education Area has brought about a change in both the form and the substance of university education. This new organization implemented after the convergence process does not only respond to a change in the structure of university teaching and degrees but goes beyond this and drives a change in teaching methodologies, focusing on the student's learning process and the final aim of employability of graduates.

Bologna was a project that proposed the revitalization of the European University with the aim of improving its educational quality and achieving greater competitiveness with North American and Asian universities. This was to be done through the establishment of similar bases in terms of degrees, competencies, lifelong learning, etc. The aim was to create a shared space with common criteria that would put an end to the multiplicity of degrees and systems in the different European countries.

The EU's strategic documents relating to the Western Balkans show that vocational education and training is particularly highlighted. The 2020 Western Balkans Strategy states, for instance, that "the EU's financial support to employment, education, social inclusion and health has been enhanced through a number of new bilateral assistance programmes, as well as a mobility scheme for vocational education and training for the region, with two calls published in 2019 and 2020 respectively" (European Commission, 2020, 26-27). Instruments of pre-accession assistance (IPAs) and Indicative Strategy Papers for the Western Balkan countries, revised in 2018, promise support for inclusive and quality education and training systems that are better adapted to the needs of the labor market (Radulović *et. al.*, 2018). These are an expression of European Union (EU) support offered as financial and technical help to undertaking required reforms in the countries envisaged to join the EU in the future.

Pavel Zgaga (2007, 30), director of the *Centre for Educational Policy Studies* in Ljubljana states that "one of the greatest civilizational problems of our time is the fact that knowledge is increasingly valued, created and usually also understood through only one of its dimensions: as applicable knowledge". And he adds:

Of course, because we live in – or at least very close to – the knowledge society (...) we nowadays often hear that "knowledge contributes both to economic stability and social cohesion". However,

an emphasis solely on applicable (“useful”) knowledge – a knowledge useful to me – brings with it problems which may in future years only get worse; they will certainly not disappear off their own accord. The complex goals of education can not be reduced to “useful to me”, to private interest only or to instrumentality, without endangering the very foundations of education. Education by its very nature is not just functional strength, but the power of the analytical (i.e. critical) recognition and transcending the reality. We are challenged by the “knowledge society”, by the “knowledge-based economy”. (...) (A) number of serious problems are arising, of which we as a culture are not well enough aware. Knowledge is becoming a commodity to an extent that the twentieth century only dreamed of: it is sold as a commodity on a gigantic scale (Zgaga, 2007, 31-32).

The notion of knowledge as a commodity drives us to the Bologna Process and the root of the question: whether the common European educational area and the rules it imposes allow universities to play the differentiated roles in the social, political, and cultural fields that each of the countries of the Western Balkans needs.

To understand its current foundations, the Bologna Declaration must be placed in the context of the Lisbon Agenda, whose best-known objective was to make the European Union “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” (Lisbon European Council, 2000), In this way, the confluence integration and synergy of knowledge, research and innovation in the service of economic growth, become the most valuable axes in all areas, as in the policies to be developed by the European Union from now on (Luzón & Sevilla, 2010).

Grahame Lock and Hermínio Martins explain the same more creatively, pointing out that the objective of the Lisbon Agenda was to be achieved through various policies that included the radical shift of the higher education system in a *neo-Taylorist* direction, i.e., “its transformation into a standardized, homogenized, ‘efficient’ producer of whatever the European labor market happens to require”. In the process, “it was important to wrest control of the education institutions from the teachers, academics and researchers, who tended to have the ‘wrong’ – ‘outdated’ – idea of what education is about” (Lock & Martins, 2009, 168).

Since Lock and Martins’ *creative* account of some aspects of the Bologna Process is more intelligible than the official dialectic, we would like to continue with their argument:

(A)s in the Taylorized factory of a century ago, now academic ‘labour’ was to be similarly subjected to ever greater fragmentation (called ‘specialization’), while overall regulation passed into the hands of the new public managers, themselves in the service of external political and economic forces. These managers now armed themselves with ever more extensive instruments of surveillance and control, vaguely perceived by the older generations of academics as ‘interference’ in the domain of their own professional competence, yet de facto unstoppable, even in their most absurd versions, by any complaint or protest (Lock & Martins, 2009, 168-169).

Another key element to embed higher education in the labor market and move it away from the *res publica* is employability (Haug, 2005). Employability is directly connected to the inflexible educational specialization and seems to send a message that tells us that unemployment rates are directly connected to the poor quality of education (Schopf & Hirsch, 2002).

Also, in the creative academic line, Burkard Sievers, an expert in organizations’ psychoanalytical studies concludes (we cannot know how accurately) that the Bologna Declaration not only subverts traditional academic values but seems to be connected with a significant flight to *psychotic thinking* by the respective European ministers since “it is apparently motivated by the megalomaniacal and

unbridled drive to reinvent European universities for the sake of global domination” (Sievers, 2008).

4. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FIELD

Reconstruction and rehabilitation after the wars in the Former Yugoslavia could be assessed, with all the precautions deemed necessary, as fast and effective in general. But this does not mean there was no serious disruption of education for all students at all levels, and it does not mean there was immediate availability of adequate buildings, books, equipment, and human resources. Only from incompetence or ignorance could it be thought that the reforms foreseen in the Bologna Agenda could be implemented in post-war countries just like in the rest of Europe. Any legislative imposition that the European Union has required in these territories has been approved without hesitation. But approving a piece of legislation does not make it immediately effective, nor does it miraculously finance the measures it provides for. Nor does the need for these countries to come closer to the European Union immediately imply the true approval of their populations, or their governments, of the measures in whose negotiation they have not been included.

Certainly, public universities and traditional institutions in the region are academically very impoverished. Neither crises nor transitions have provided them with much capacity for response or modernization, but there is no evidence that private institutions offer a real alternative.

As a conclusion, we can say that, perhaps, it is not entirely sensible and meaningful for the features and changes in education policies to be uniform throughout Europe. The role of the international community and, in particular, of the European Union, in pushing and promoting change, often with very tight time frames, has been a challenge for the reconstruction processes. Not only that, it has proved counterproductive by creating both political and popular resistance. The course of educational policies, like many others, has to be the result of the interaction between society and institutions, power relations, social, political, and economic development, and the historical cultural-national-ethnic burden of the territory. If education decisions are made based on interests and subjects that are thousands of kilometers away from the recipient States, sustained on agreements in which neither the recipients nor their representatives participate, what is at stake is that which enriches any educational strategy: diversity and the respect that should rule it.

Many people, in the academic world and society in general, defend concepts that are now almost forgotten: the consideration of the ethical dimensions of knowledge, knowledge as wisdom, research as the search for truth versus the search for growth, knowledge as an end versus knowledge for economic growth. It seems a reasonable proposal that of recovering the historical, cultural, and social role of disinterested and independent knowledge, based on research not corrupted by the market. The Western Balkans will not be able to walk the path to themselves, if higher education is reduced to only money.

It appears increasingly difficult to empirically analyze social identities while avoiding the theoretical parameters defined in the paradigm of modernism. Nonetheless, it is only through the theoretical study of the many different processes and events that take place to shape a given identity that we may be able to understand today's societies. It is an indisputable fact that there are different cultures, civilizations, or ethnicities and this fact does not in itself hold violent potential. It may be the announcement of their incompatibility that prevents coexistence among certain social identities, which could be beneficial to all.

Much remains to be said about the necessary balance between identity and uniformity in the European Union's educational policies. For obvious reasons some issues that will inevitably have to be addressed in the future have escaped the scope of our work: the question of violent nationalism, which can arise from identity conceptions managed to produce exclusion; the privatization of higher education in the Western Balkans; the compatibility between human rights and identities based on otherness; and ways of managing identity as a constructive element in the classroom. The Western Balkans is a very broad and diverse unit of analysis, and it will be necessary, in our future research, to focus the issues on specific territories, where particularities can be given the specific attention they require.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Comunidades Imaginadas. Reflexiones sobre el Origen y la Difusión del Nacionalismo*. México D. F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Bartlett, W. (2008). *Europe's troubled region: economic development, institutional reform and social welfare in the western Balkans*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bieber, F. (2004). "Institutionalizing Ethnicity in the Western Balkans. Managing Change in Deeply Divided Societies", *European Centre for Minority Issues*, Working Paper 19, Flensburg-Germany.
- Blumi, I. (2003). "Ethnic Borders to a Democratic Society in Kosovo: The UN's Identity Card" in Florian Bieber, F. & Daskalovski, Ž. (eds.) *Understanding the War in Kosovo*. Portland: Frank Cass Publishers.
- Bologna Declaration (1999). Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, signed June 19, 1999. Available at: http://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf
- Budapest-Vienna Declaration (2010). Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education on the European Higher Education Area, 12 of March 2010. Available at: https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration.pdf
- Bose, S. (2002). *Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention*, London: C. Hurst & Co.
- Burg, S. L. and Shoup, P. S. (2000). *Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*. New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc.
- Chandler, D. (1999). *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*, London: Pluto Press.
- Chandler, D. (2006). *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building*, London: Pluto Press.
- Daxner, M. (2006) "The Balkans on their way to Europe and to themselves—an agenda for higher education". EUA Conference *Strengthening Higher Education and Research in SEE: Priorities for Regional and European Cooperation*, Vienna.
- Dunkel, T. (2009). "The Bologna process between structural convergence and institutional diversity" *European Journal of Vocational Training*, n°. 46 vol. 2009/1.
- European Commission. (2020). Communication on EU Enlargement Process. COM(2020) 660 final. 6 October 2020. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20201006-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy_en.pdf
- Faraldo, J. M. (2001). "Modernas e Imaginadas. El Nacionalismo como Objeto de Investigación Histórica en las dos últimas Décadas del Siglo XX". *Hispania*, 61 (209). Available at (01-03-21) <http://hispania.revistas.csic.es/index.php/hispania/article/view/284>
-

- Fearon, J. D., and Laitin, D. (2000). "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity", *International Organization*, n°. 54/4.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *La interpretación de las culturas*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Gellner, E. (1964). *Thought and Change*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Gellner, E. (1992). *Reason and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gellner, E. (1995). *Encuentros con el Nacionalismo*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Gellner, E. (2009). *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Haug, G. (2005). "The Public Responsibility of Higher Education: Preparation for the Labour Market", in Weber, L. E. y Bergan, S., (eds.), *The Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research*, Strasburg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1992). *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hroch, M. (2000). *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mirna Jusić, M. and Obradović, N. (2019). *Enlargement Policy and Social Change in the Western Balkans*, Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/15801-20191120.pdf>
- Jakob, M. (2003). "Rethinking Science and Commodifying Knowledge", *Policy Futures in Education*, Volume 1, Number 1. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2304/pfie.2003.1.1.3>
- Kleibrink, A. (2012) "Lifelong Learning Policies in Southeastern Europe: From Emulation of Life-Long Policies to Tailor-Made Reforms?", in Arandarenko, M. and Bartlett, W. (eds), *Labour Market and Skills in the Western Balkans*. Belgrade: FREN - Foundation for the Advancement of Economics.
- Laplantine, F. (1979). *Introducción a la Etnopsiquiatría*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Lisbon European Council (2000). Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon 23-24 March 2000. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm
- Lock, G. and Martins, H. (2009). "The European Universities, Citizenship and Its Limits: What won't Solve the Problems of our Time", *European Educational Research Journal*, vol. 8(2).
- Luzón, A. and Sevilla, D. (2010). "La Agenda de Lisboa en el Proceso de Construcción Europea", *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, vol. 16.
- Mertus, J. A. (1999). "Nationalism and the Liberal State" in Wedgwood, R., (ed.), *After Dayton: Lessons of the Bosnian Peace Process*, New York: Council of Foreign Relations.
- Meyer, C. O. (2004) "Theorising European Strategic Culture: Between Convergence and the Persistence of National Diversity", *CEPS Working Documents* No.204, 1 June 2004.
- Noutcheva, G. (2009). "Fake, Partial and Imposed Compliance: The Limits of the EU's Normative Power in the Western Balkans", *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 16.
- Nóvoa, A. (2010). "La Construcción de un Espacio Educativo Europeo: Gobernando a través de los Datos y la Comparación", *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, vol. 16.
- Radulović, M.; Brnović, M.; Lubarda, M.; Knežević, I.; Mujkić, E.; Blagovčanin, S.; Murati, A.; Kolekeski, A. & Maxhelaku, A. (2018). *Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and the Countries of the Western Balkans*. Podgorica: European Movement in Montenegro. Available at: http://www.emins.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2018_IPA-and-the-WB-Countries.pdf
-

- Sánchez Salgado, R. (2018). "Learning from cultural diversity? The case of European Union-funded transnational projects on employment", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 26(4).
- Schopf, J. W. and Hirsch, W. Z. (2002). "Strategies to Foster Interdisciplinary Teaching and Research in a University", in Hirsch, W. Z. and Weber, L. E., (eds.), *As the Walls of Academia Are Tumbling Down*, London: Economica.
- Sievers, B. (2008). "The Psychotic University", *Ephemeris*, vol. 8(3).
- Simon, T. W. (2001). "The Injustice of Procedural Democracy", in Sokolović, D. and Bieber, F., (eds), *Reconstructing Multiethnic Societies: The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Smith, A. (1996). *Lecciones de Jurisprudencia*, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales (ed. A. Ruiz Miguel), Madrid.
- Tahirisyaj, A. (2010). "Higher Education in Kosovo: Major Changes, Reforms, and Development Trends in the Post-Conflict Period at the University of Prishtina", *Interchange*, n. 41.
- Teixeira, P. N., and Hill, D. D., (2011). *Public Vices, Private Virtues? Assessing the Effects of Marketization in Higher Education*, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Wedgwood, R. (1999). "Introduction", in Wedgwood, R., (ed.), *After Dayton: Lessons of the Bosnian Peace Process*, New York: Council of Foreign Relations.
- Welfens P. J. J. (2001). *Stabilizing and Integrating the Balkans: Economic Analysis of the Stability Pact, EU Reforms and International Organizations*. Berlin-Heidelberg: Springer.
- Weller, C. (1997). "Collective Identities in World Society", in Mathias A., Lothar Brock, K. D. W. (eds.) *Civilizing World Politics: Society and Community Beyond the State*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Wunderlich, J. (2008). *Regionalism Globalisation and International Order. Europe and Southeast Asia*. London: Routledge.
- Zgaga, P. (2005). *The Importance of Education in Social Reconstruction*, Ljubljana: Centre for Educational Policy Studies.
- Zgaga, P. (2007). "University Mission Between Searching for Truth and Commercialization", *Der Öffentliche Sektor*, vol. 3.
- Zgaga, P. (2011). "The Role of Higher Education in National Development. South-Eastern Europe and Reconstruction of the Western Balkans", in Gladman, A., (ed.), *The Europa World of Learning 2011*, London: Routledge.
- Zgaga, P., Klemenčič, M., Komljenovič, J., Miklavič, K., Repac, I. and Jakačić, V. (2013). *Higher education in the Western Balkans: Reforms, developments, trends. Key findings from field research*, CEPS- Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana.
- Zgaga, P., Teichler, U. and Brennan, J. (2013). "Challenges for European Higher Education: 'Global' and 'National', 'Europe' and 'sub-Europes'", in Zgaga, P., Teichler, U. and Brennan, J., (eds.), *The Globalisation Challenge for European Higher Education*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

SOBRE LA AUTORA

Ana M. Jara Gómez

Profesora de Filosofía del Derecho de la Universidad de Jaén. Doctora en Derecho. Máster en Derecho Europeo e Internacional por la Universidad de Bremen (Alemania). Actualmente es experta del Joint Research Centre de la Comisión Europea en el proyecto “Science of Values and Identities in the Political Process”. Ha sido profesora de la Escuela Nacional de la Judicatura de la República Dominicana, profesora visitante en la Universidad de Prishtina (Kosovo). Ha trabajado para la Organización para la Seguridad y la Cooperación en Europa (OSCE) en Kosovo y en Bosnia i Herzegovina. Es autora, entre otros, de los libros ‘Kosovo en el laberinto’ y ‘Mujer y guerra en los Balcanes’. Cuerpo del texto.

Información de contacto: Universidad de Jaén, Departamento de Derecho Penal, Filosofía del Derecho y Filosofía. Campus Las Lagunillas s/n. Tlf. 953 212294. Correo electrónico: ajara@ujaen.es