Frozen Conflicts or Frozen Governance?
A Role for the Bologna Process in Conflict Regions*

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The article examines connections between reforms of higher education in unrecognised states and their influence to resolution of conflicts. Training student population in critical thinking, analysis and research can be quite powerful factor in conflict environments and a strong tool for civil society development. One of the perspective opportunities for this goal is drawing of these countries in Bologna Process. By deepening higher education reforms in the countries and introducing them in unrecognised states, Bologna Process has the potential to transmit civic values and skills of civic engagement. The article examines case of South Caucasus countries, in particular, Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict. The exclusion of NK from the Bologna Accords and other educational opportunities is a missed chance for conflict resolution processes in the region. The advancement of educational system and policies in NK requires a regional dimension, involving synchronisation with educational policies in South Caucasus in general.

Introduction: Research Rationale

The analytical starting point for this paper: the exclusion of unrecognized territories into the Bologna Accords in conflict/post-conflict settings. Citing Prof. Torosyan[1], the practice of excluding unrecognised territories from structures of global governance creates a social injustice in

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[1] **Torosyan T., Vardanyan A.,** Development Paradigm for Social Sciences and Higher Education in Post-Soviet States, *Armenian Journal of Political Science*, 2014, 1, pp. 5-22.

marginalising the populations living in these territories in economic, social as well as political terms. It creates these "black holes" in governance. The ethical dimension aside, such territories create significant governance gaps in various issues and areas, of which education is only one. The concept of "frozen" (usually used as "frozen conflicts"), gains a whole new undesirable meaning. The processes of global governance and international sources of policy making are completely frozen in such areas which only make conflict resolution in these areas more difficult. Declarations for peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict is often made by Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, other senior statesmen, as well as by the international community. Everybody wants peace, but all disagree as to how to get there. Education is an important tool for fostering civic values and social dialogue. Bypassing NK by the Bologna process is a lose-lose outcome for all involved. Cutting of this population from modernisation processes in higher education is to make future resolution of conflicts significantly more difficult.

While I do advocate for the need to include unrecognised territories in Bologna Accords, I also would like to highlight that I do not necessarily equate the Bologna Accords with improved quality of higher education in the post-Communist world. Educational systems are organizationally rather complex, requiring not only changes in educational policies, governance, but also consistent and patient teacher training. Any modernisation in post-Communist world entails not only changes in curriculum and degree structures, but, most importantly, teaching methods. It is inside the classroom that the "magic" happens. The much criticised top-down Bologna Accords does not always translate into changes inside the classroom – in terms of teaching methods, student-faculty relationships, measuring learning outcomes, skills development, values transmission, etc. In short, I do consider the absence of Bologna Accords from NK as problematic, but I also advocate for conflict-sensitive and decentralised administration of international educational policy in unrecognised territories such as NK.

Looking at NK from Outside In

When it comes to the educational sector in NK, I have more to learn and take from this esteemed audience than to give. Therefore, in an effort to make my comments as constructive as possible, I will attempt to situate educational issues in NK into larger theoretical and policy context. Challenges and opportunities of developing educational policy and practice in NK are not isolated. Indeed, it is imperative to learn from international

experiences, while considering the local specificities. However, it is also important to identify the cases and contexts to which the NK experience is relevant and comparable. Justification and consideration of relevant cases will help in asking the right questions in shaping this research further.

In this respect, NK can be viewed in three major categories. First, the educational challenges and issues prevalent in NK are quite comparable to other post-Communist countries which are not involved in any major conflict. The challenge here is to modernise curriculum, governance of the institutions of higher education, as well as instructional technologies. In this category, NK is comparable to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and many other countries that are trying to unburden themselves from the Soviet legacy. For the purposes of this paper, I will refer to this first dimension as the ***modernisation challenge***. Second, NK experience in higher education is also comparable to societies that are similarly caught up in active or frozen conflicts. Here the examination of the link between education and conflict is important. In this respect, NK is comparable to Timor Leste, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sri Lanka, among others. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to this second dimension as ***conflict-sensitive education challenge.*** Third, NK's status (or lack thereof) as an unrecognized territory highlights other types of issues that stresses the education sector. For example, the lack of compatibility of degrees from the local Universities limits student mobility in the region. In this respect, by being excluded from the Bologna Accords, NK is comparable to Northern Republic of Cyprus, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Kosovo. The frozen governance in the area of higher education on a regional level is a missed opportunity for the international community in supporting social dialogue and sowing the seeds for peaceful resolution of the conflict in NK. This ***regional governance vacuum*** has created lose-lose outcomes for all involved in this region, not only NK.

Modernisation challenge

The role of the Bologna Accords in modernising educational system and making them compatible with European Higher Education Area is obvious here. The signatory countries have been moving forward in implementing the Bologna Accords at various speeds. At its core, Bologna Accords is a classic case of a policy transfer and attempted policy diffusion from one region to another. It is an example of a policy transfer from

advanced industrialized democracies into mostly hybrid regimes (i.e. political systems characterised with authoritarian and democratic elements at the same time), with persistent use of highly centralised state apparatus in the process of public administration. According to Hargreaves[2], resource scarcity as well as persistent bureaucratic control over educational systems is an unfortunate feature that Armenia shares with other developing countries beyond the post-Communist orbit.

The initiatives of reforming higher education in the post-Communist world within the umbrella of the Bologna Accords have been limited to cosmetic changes and they have been top-down in nature.[3] It is unclear whether there are sufficient capacities for deeper change.[4] For deepening the educational reforms the studies call for a special emphasis on training of teachers, who are ultimately the key implementers of this reform in their classrooms. In depth studies on the implementation of Bologna Accords have been carried out in the context of Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia.

The study in Ukraine in particular has concluded that the disappointing outcomes of the Bologna Process in this country were not only a result of flawed implementation, but also were produced due to the "fundamental mismatch between the existing logic of university governance rooted in a Soviet model of higher education and the logic presumed in the European reforms"[5]. The first argument concerning the flawed implementation of the Bologna Accords highlights such factors as the absence of systematic instructional redesign; the shortage in sufficient training and support for faculty, and one that would be focused on substantive changes as opposed to the appearance of compliance; persistent underfunding. In particular, Kovtun and Stick[6] maintain that there was no systematic and thoughtful consideration on the redesign of the curriculum and instructional processes. Instead, the new requirements were handed

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[2] **Hargreaves A.,** Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1994.
[3] **Karakhanyan S., Van Veen K.,, and Bergen T.,** Teacher Persecptions of Bologna Reforms in Armenian Higher Education, *European Education,* 2012, 44, 2, pp. 65-89.
[4] Ibid
[5] **Shaw M. A.,** Flawed Implementation or Inconsistent Logics? *European Education,* 2013, 45, 1, pp. 7-24.
[6]**Kovtun O., and Stick S.,** Ukraine and the Bologna Process: A Case Study of the Impact of the Bologna Process on Ukrainian State Institutions, *Higher Education in Europe,* 2009, 34, 1, pp. 91-103.

down from the central administration to academic staff in a top-down manner. The instructors simply worked to comply with external requirements, such as course modularisation, new grading systems, etc. However, in interviews they admitted that they do not understand the rationale of what they are asked to do[7]. Lack of training of the academics at various levels of implementation of the Bologna Accords led to many missteps and academic waste[8].

In addition to the flawed implementation, the fundamental mismatch between the university governance in largely post-Soviet institutions and the expectations of governance as advanced by the European Union has also been recognised as a significant problem. The Bologna Accords assume a "two-way cooperation"[9], and it was designed for the members of different universities to take part in adapting the common goals to their own contexts[10]. In short, the universities are expected to respond to the new priorities, but they lack the power within the current governance framework to make changes inside their organizations in order to do that. The new reform content coming from Europe is being filled into the largely Soviet governance structures in the universities. Organisational sovereignty of the universities, as expressed with greater autonomy and decentralisation in educational policy is a crucial precondition for effective modernisation of education in the post-Communist space.

The lessons learned from the implementation of the Bologna Accords in the post-Communist space, which the universities in NK can adopt rests with decentralising the university administration and giving them significant organisational sovereignty in order to implement the requirements from the Bologna Accords. Significantly more support for instructors is also a must. Acknowledging that the learning process is occurring inside the classroom and building the reform process around it, is a necessary first step when thinking about the prospects of Bologna Accords in NK.

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[7] **Shaw M., Chapman D., and Rumyanstseva N.,** Organizational Culture in the Adoption of the Bologna Process: A Study of Academic Staff at a Ukrainian University, *Studies in Higher Education,* 2014, forthcoming.
[8] Ibid
[9] **Zgaga P.,** External Dimension of the Bologna Process. edited by First Report Working Group on the External Dimension of the Bologna Process, 2006.
[10] **Shaw M. A.,** …

Conflict-Sensitive Education Challenge

The second dimension in thinking about the Bologna Accords in the context of NK has to do with the recognition of conflict environment in this entity. In this respect, looking at educational policies in other societies that are currently in conflict or are coming out of it, is necessary. The relationship between conflict and education is currently being advanced in the academic and policy-oriented literature. Indeed, according to the UK government White Paper on Globalisation, violent conflict is one of the biggest barriers to development in many of the world's poorest countries. The study also highlights that of the 40 poorest countries in the world, 24 are either in the midst of armed conflict or have only recently emerged from it.[11] The pervasiveness of conflict as a challenge of underdevelopment is also recognised in the academic scholarship.

Within this emerging field of study, education is recognised as potentially both part of the problem as well as the solution in conflict societies. It can be used as a political tool for ideological development and nation-building, developing liberal ideas, and indoctrination in extreme cases. It can also have economic benefits in providing the knowledge and skills needed for economic development, in addition to transmitting negative stereotypes and attitudes condoning violence and generating conflict[12]. Understanding the "conflict-sensitive education" in politically divided areas can be conceptualised as educational policies and systems that "do no harm', but also seeking to contribute towards 'making things better'[13]. Advancing and implementing 'conflict-sensitive education' requires its careful calibration to the stage of the conflict and its type, in a given society or between societies. In particular, there are distinctive challenges in developing conflict-sensitive education, depending on "whether education is provided within relatively peaceful and stable environments; during times of violent conflict; as part of reconstruction following conflict or political transition; or as part of longer term peace and reconciliation processes"[14]. A UNESCO study differentiates between education for prevention, in cases of

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[11] United Kingdom Government. Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor. London: HMSO, 2000.
[12] **Smith A.,** Education in the twenty-first century: Conflict, reconstruction and reconciliation, *Compare,* 2005, 35, 4, pp. 373-391.
[13] Ibid
[14] **Smith A.,** …, p. 378.

non-conflict and relative peace; education in emergencies, in cases of internal trouble, social unrest and "pre"-conflict; and education for social and civic reconstruction, in cases of "post" conflict[15].

The functions of educational systems during times of violent conflict (i.e. education in emergencies) are more limited than those in the aftermath of a conflict and in relative stability. International humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions in particular, make specific provisions for protecting children's rights during times of war. These includes protections for children under fifteen, orphaned or separated from their families, to have access to appropriate education; occupying powers facilitating the maintenance of education; education being provided to interned children and young people; and education being provided for children throughout non-international conflicts.[16] However, one should note that the Geneva Conventions were developed after WWII, when the formal state of war being declared by countries was the norm. Since then, the nature of warfare has changed dramatically, and conflicts are currently fought by groups that are not state-entities and therefore are not subject to international accountability[17].

Developing conflict-sensitive education in a post-conflict stage (i.e. education for social and civic reconstruction) can be an important tool in promoting peace processes. There are several precedents of cases of education in a post-conflict social and civic reconstruction, starting from WWII Europe to more contemporary examples, such as Lebanon (Taef Agreement, 1989)[18], Guatemala (Peace Accords of 1996)[19], Rwanda and its government of National Unity established following the 1994 genocide and, Mozambique (Peace Agreement in 1992)[20]. However, in all of these cases there has been a lapse of time that has helped to advance curriculum policy dialogue, policy formulation and policy making. According to the UNESCO Report, in contrast to these examples, in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka

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[15] UNESCO International Bureau of Education. Curriculum Change and Social Cohesion in Conflict-Affected Societies Geneva: UNESCO. 2003.

[16] **Smith A.**, …

[17] **Tawil S.,** International Humanitarian Law and Basic Education, *International Review of the Red Cross,* 2000, 82, 839, pp. 581-600.

[18] Lebanon: Taif Agreement (1989), http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/mideast/LB/lebanon-taif-agreement-1989/view

[19] Peace Agreements: Guatemala, http://www.usip.org/publications/peace-agreements-guatemala.

[20] Peace Agreements: Mozambique, http://www.usip.org/publications/peace-agreements-mozambique

educational policy reforms were being undertaken in parallel with the peace processes, and were even integral part of peace processes.

There are arguments for and against embarking on educational policy in the immediate aftermath of a conflict. Shah cautions that many fragile states "unwisely prioritize radical curriculum reform in a context that is not ready for it. In the early recovery stages after conflict, such projects frequently occur in a context where conflicts remain submerged and are likely to resurface; and principles of inclusiveness and democracy may be more about ideological rhetoric rather than political reality"[21]. Moreover, conducting educational reform in the early stages of post-conflict reconstruction is also complicated due to the lack of capacities in a given entity. At the same time, delaying such reforms too long can crystallise and lock-in hostilities between the conflict sides, thereby making any subsequent educational reform more challenging.

Often the research on education-conflict relationship views education as a tool for reconciliation, which, I would argue, creates very high standards for policy development and implementation. Instead, any curriculum renewal in the aftermath of a conflict can have more realistic goals in focus on values of human rights and tolerance, but equally importantly, on the skills of critical thinking and independent inquiry. The latter two require intensive teacher training, in addition to curriculum renewal. It is unrealistic to expect that teachers in educational systems that are recovering from conflict will possess these kinds of skills and instructional technologies. As it is evident from the previous section on "modernization challenge", this is also a problem in other post-Communist societies that are not involved in a conflict. Therefore, there is a clear and necessary path for the Bologna Accords in unrecognized territories and post-conflict societies: to create a professional network on educational reform, that can provide teacher trainings and can offer space for negotiations and dialogue over curriculum, involving conflict parties. Whether Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Abkhaz or South Ossetian, learning to teach in complex and increasingly globalised environments is necessary. As I argue later in the paper, such a network focused on a concrete need in the region can help to de-politicise the issue and subsequently will make political

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[21] **Shah R.,** Goodby Conflict, hello development? Curriculum reform in Timor-Leste, *International Journal of Educational Development,* 2012, 32, pp. 31-38.

negotiations much more manageable. As an anonymous respondent one expressed quite eloquently, "peacebuilding is not a sprint: it is a marathon". Education is a key tool in sustaining this marathon.

Regional Governance Vacuum

The third challenge on educational reform in NK rests with the governance vacuum. Being cut off from the international governance structures, NK, like other unrecognised territories, becomes marginalised not only in political terms, but also in socio-economic ones. A more obvious implication of excluding NK from structures of global governance is the socio-economic marginalisation of this unrecognised entity, which can further perpetuate poverty among the population, subsequently locking the population into extreme positions in respect to the resolution of the conflict. Indeed, President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, likes to tout quite frequently that Azerbaijan has succeeded in alienating and isolating Armenia and NK from regional projects, and this predicament is viewed by the President as a victory for Azerbaijan.

However, I would like to advance a more nuanced argument. Contrary to what President Aliyev likes to believe, the exclusion of NK from structures of global governance does not produce win-lose outcomes, with Azerbaijan gaining ground in the conflict dynamics. Instead, it produces lose-lose outcomes, by crystalising political cleavages through stagnant educational systems. Two specific points are needed in this context:

1) the exclusion of NK from the Bologna Accords and other educational opportunities is a missed opportunity for conflict resolution processes in the region;

2) the advancement of educational system and policies in NK requires a regional dimension, involving synchronisation with educational policies in South Caucasus in general.

In regards to the first point, there is significant research that links educational expansion with conflict prevention and durability of peace; echoing Putnam[22], Ishiyama and Breuning note that increased educational

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[22] **Putnam R. D.,** Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1993.

opportunity "helps build social capital and civil society – and civil society organizations are crucial in mediating conflict"[23].

Education is one of the most powerful influences on political behavior almost anywhere. Historically, education may have played an important role in strengthening the foundations for the civic community[24].

Concurrently, it should also be noted that education has also been known to be used as a tool to foster cleavage and perpetuate conflict. While Schell-Faucon (cited in Ishiyama and Breuning) has maintained[25] that more education contributes to more democratic attitudes, Bush and Saltarelli[26], Smith and Vaux[27], Tawil and Harley[28] (cited in Ishiyama and Breuning) have challenged this claim in the context of ethnic conflicts. Therefore, when linking education and peace prevention/peace durability, variety of factors need to be considered (such as curricular content, level of education, type of the conflict, the levels of job creation spurred by educational opportunities, etc). In very big brash strokes, the rapid reconstruction and expansion of the educational system can accelerate the economic recovery in post-war settings because expanded educational opportunities tend to lead to better paying jobs in an economy[29]. Others highlight that increased educational opportunities when unmatched by job creation can fuel civil unrest, which many argue has been a key driver behind the Arab Spring.

The above cited study conducted by Ishiyama and Breuning[30] offers a more focused analysis on the linkage between education and peace durability. This study has differentiated between primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education. It concluded that while investing in primary and

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[23] **Ishiyama J., and Breuning M.,** Educational Access and Peace Duration in Post-Conflict Countries, *International Interactions,* 2012, 38, pp. 58-78.

[24] **Putnam R. D.,** …, p. 188.

[25] **Schell-Faucon, S.,** Conflict Transformation through Educational and Youth Programmes, *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation.* Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management. 2001. Available at http://www.berghof-handbook.net/articles/schell_faucon_hb.pdf.

[26] **Bush K. D., and Saltarelli D.,** The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children. Florence: UNICEF. 2000.

[27] **Smith A., and Vaux T.,** Education, Conflict and International Development. London: Department for International Development. 2003.

[28] **Tawil S., and Harley A.,** (eds.) *Education, Conflict, and SocialCohesion.* Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education. 2004.

[29] **Murdoch J. C., and Sandler T.,** Civil Wars and Ecoomic Growth: A Regional Comparison, *Defense and Peace Economics,* 2002, 13, 6, pp. 451-464.

[30] **Ishiyama J.,** …

secondary education is important, the benefits in higher education investments for peace durability are tangible and significant. The authors[31] of the study found the following:

> Increased access to education generally, but early access to higher education in particular, acts to diminish the likelihood of civil war restart. Although certainly it may be the case that the content of education (or what is offered as part of the curriculum) is an important consideration in whether or not a civil war restarts.[32]

The authors conclude their study with an explicit call for researchers and policymakers to pay greater attention to the unexplored area of the specific impact of higher education on civil war and its reoccurrence, but the relationship needs to be explored for all types of conflicts. A particular emphasis needs to be paid between higher education curriculum focused on practical skills versus liberal arts education.

For young nations in particular, education is widely used as a tool for nation-building. In conflict settings, such as in NK, peace education can be a hard-sell because it is often viewed as a contradiction to nation-building processes through curriculum, particularly when there is a shortage of trained teachers and civil servants in the sphere of education. Nation-building approach to education is more limited in terms of the values and skills it conveys, focusing on passive transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. The states and political authorities always maintained the ultimate right to shape their educational system, in order to reflect their own values, preferences and perceptions of national interests. In contract, when coupled with values of human rights and peace education, the process of teaching becomes more complex, active and student-centered.

The passive transmitting of knowledge between generations is increasingly an old-fashioned and unsustainable model of educational systems. Regardless whether in conflict societies or not, modernisation of educational systems first of all requires sharpening the emphasis on skills-based teaching. In the information age of 21st century, the role of the professor in the classroom is completely transformed. The information is popularised and accessible, which requires the professor to teach the students

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[31] **Krueger A. B., and Maleckova J.,** Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection? *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 2003, 17, 4, pp. 119–144; **Tawil S.,** …

[32] **Ishiyama J., …**

as to how to transform that information into knowledge; how to make sense of that information in general. Critical thinking, challenging and questioning the material by the student is a core competency in teaching peace education, in addition to being an important professional skill in the 21st century workplace. In short, peace education is more amenable to such skills-based educational models because it also calls for critical thinking, skill-building in debate and deliberation. It is built around the agency of the student. As such, it is in contrast to top-down, hierarchic and narrowly defined models of teaching, which are focused on passive transfer of knowledge.

The Bologna process, by relinquishing any role in development of higher education in NK and other unrecognized territories or de facto states, ignores this important avenue of peacebuilding at its own peril. Education provides the best bridge to the population, thereby holds the prospect of diversifying stakeholders and actors of peace processes. The Bologna Process would have allowed the international community to access and activate this important dimension of a peace process.

Echoing the calls of the Ishiyama and Breuning[33] study for investigation of higher education as a conflict management strategy, I would argue that a truly regional approach to such a policy path is needed. Whether the emphasis is on building skills and competencies, or values and attitudes, higher education allows for economic development of a given territory, thereby raising the stakes of a violent conflict, according to liberal approaches to conflict management. However, the more targeted, conflict-sensitive curriculum changes can help to advance and emphasis norms as well as competencies on compromise, civic engagement and social dialogue. This latter component cannot be carried out only in NK alone. Unilateral adoption of curricular changes for peace education will not gain much political traction to begin with. The incentives for any nation, particularly one caught up in a conflict with a neighbour, to unilaterally implement peace education, are not very many. Such a strategy is associated with insecurities, some real and others perceived. Therefore, a more realistic recommendation in this case is a trilateral-regional approach, targeting Armenia, Azerbaijan, in addition to NK, with conflict-sensitive higher education reforms. A key stipulation is the trilateral approach to the NK conflict, targeting Armenia and Azerbaijan in addition to NK, with conflict-sensitive higher education reforms. Peace education in politically divided areas is a contentious topic.

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[33] Ibid.

Developing a regional approach to peace education or liberal arts education in universities is an underexplored area, which policy-makers ignore at their peril.

Trough the development of conflict-sensitive *and* regional models of higher education in South Caucasus the Bologna Process can enable a mechanism for developing a regional network of higher education. As such, it can help to create regional structures of governance in the sphere of education, which can become a new, technocratic, apolitical forum bringing together educators and policy-makers from the region. The experience with regional governance in the conflict-ridden Balkans offers range of lessons for South Caucasus, which are worthy of further exploration.

Conclusion

The specific case of the Bologna Accords in unrecognised territories, and in South Caucasus in particular, is a study of frozen structures of global governance. By deepening higher education reforms in the countries and introducing them in unrecognised territories, Bologna process has the potential to transmit civic values and skills of civic engagement. Training the student population in critical thinking, analysis and research can be quite powerful in conflict environments and a strong tool for civil society development. UNESCO study recognises that curricula change can advance changes in "types of knowledge, value, competencies, attitude and behaviors that encourage respect for human dignity and diversity" and that such potential is mainly located within "normative areas of learning such as social studies, civics, religious studies, history, values education that touch upon the often sensitive issues of collective memory"[34].

As mentioned earlier, the Bologna Process has failed to deepen its reforms in the countries in South Caucasus. Extending the Bologna Process to unrecognised territories offers an opportunity for genuine region-building, in which all entities, state and non-state, introduce the basics of liberal arts education, with a focus on human rights, tolerance and peace education. Such a regional approach eliminates fears associated with unilateral application of peace education by a single entity: if one nation introduces

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[34] UNESCO International Bureau of Education. 2003. Curriculum Change and Social Cohesion in Conflict-Affected Societies Geneva: UNESCO, p. 8.

elements of peace education into its curriculum, while the other continues to portray that nation as a de-humanized enemy, the first nation can find itself in a rather vulnerable situation. Against this backdrop, the multilateral nature of the Bologna process can help to ease such fears as it tailors educational policies for conflict settings, such as in the case of South Caucasus, and NK in particular.

Narrow and top-down educational models that do not allow for student engagement will not hold the test of time in the 21st century. Developing conflict-sensitive educational models in South Caucasus also allows to modernise educational systems at the same time. The Bologna Accords offer a unique opportunity to address both goals at the same time. Staying out of unrecognised territories is to freeze global governance and relinquish the great potential of social change in conflict-ridden settings. Whether statesman or international policy-makers, peaceful solutions to conflicts are highlighted as important. Yet, peaceful approaches need to be cultivated patiently, from the ground up: expecting "peaceful solutions" to come out from behind closed doors through narrow political negotiations is a mirage. It is high time to prepare and sew the seeds of coexistence in South Caucasus, and higher education is a solid tool to that end.