

# Training journalists in times of transition: the case of Kosovo

**Abit Hoxha, LMU Munich, Germany; Kenneth Andresen, professor of media studies at the University of Agder, Norway.**

## **Abstract:**

With Kosovo as its case, this article explores the context and challenges of journalism education in transition societies. Journalists in Kosovo have lived through constant changes from authoritarian to democracy. In this struggle, journalism education has never been stable and steady. The past conflict events of the destruction of Yugoslavia haunts present day journalism in challenging human rights, ethics and even business model of Kosovar media. The traumatic past, conflict and ethnic animosity is still present in the public discourse among Kosovar journalists due to political resistance of the leadership of the entire region to take steps towards recognizing conflicting past and the atrocities that happened. Over the last decade, new journalism schools have been founded both in public and private sector which reflects significant increase in quality reporting. By utilizing previous research, including data from the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) in Kosovo, the article discusses the aspect of transitional journalism in Kosovo, which focuses on transitional justice and looks at the problems from a human rights ap-

proach, including the education of journalists in the field of human rights but instead of learning from top down approach. The data in the article show journalistic roles shifting from traditional watchdog to activist role which challenges journalistic professionalism at a time when journalism education in higher education is in its infancy. The article exposes the need for practical, tailored training about the realities of political pressure, history and the transition. As one of the significant gaps in the teaching journalism in Kosovo is in relation to dealing with the past, a lack of taught courses for journalists entering the media market is seen as a weakness of the education system in Kosovo along with other structural problems in the media. Technology, globalization, rapid development of social media leave much to be desired in the journalism education in Kosovo.

## **Introduction: The emergence of transitional journalism in the Balkans**

**Journalists and media institutions in Kosovo have undergone multiple transitions over the last decades; from an authoritarian regime, through war, into a post-war democracy and later into a present transitional stage.**

Throughout this time, the international community has been present with media assistance, including numerous training courses for journalists (Rhodes 2007, Andresen 2015). Yet, after years of attempts to practice perceived western standards, journalists in the region are increasingly applying what can be framed as a democracy fighter-activist role where the journalists are struggling to understand their roles in the intersection of journalistic professional cultures, political and historical influences; dealing with aspects of the troubled past plays a key role here (Andresen, Hoxha & Godole, 2017). Data from the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) in Kosovo reveals, on the basis of a survey of over 200 journalists, that Kosovar journalists experience a gap between their personal ideal perceptions of roles, ethics and working conditions, and the realities they face every day (Hoxha, Andresen & Dobrunaj, 2017). The WJS survey also identifies restrictions on autonomy, ethical dilemmas and political pressure. More significantly, it also uncovers how journalists and editors are in a process of redefining their roles; from professional idealists to democracy fighter-activists, who aim to put central topics on the public agenda. This stage can be framed as transitional journalism.

In his introduction to the book *European Journalism Education* (Terzis, 2010), Hugh Stephenson reflects on the massive change in journalism education in Europe. He lists factors like technology and change in media readership, but the first change he brings up is the political context, especially in Eastern Europe (Stephenson, 2010). In a few decades, journalists educated in the higher education system are not entering

the media world as agents of the state, but rather men and women seeking employment in post-communist, highly transitional societies. Kosovo is one of these societies. There has so far been no academic study of the state of journalism education in Kosovo. This article seeks to first conceptualize the context of Kosovo as a transitional society, setting the stage for journalism education in the country. Secondly, it outlines aspects of current journalism education in Kosovo, including Kosovar journalist's background. Thirdly, we bring recommendations to the higher education in Kosovo as to how to work further in the journalism education.

## Kosovo as a transitional society

The Western Balkans has developed through major changes in recent history and the media has transformed along with political system drastically to the extent that it is still unable to find a decent path to development. Western Balkans has emerged from a communist past and that plays a very important role on today's media model and how journalism develops overall (Andresen et.al., 2017). As such, in post-conflict situations, journalists find it difficult to maintain their independency and neutrality. Similarly, in post-conflict Germany after 1945, journalism focused on its role to de-nazify German society and in the same way, the media in Kosovo took a stand on anti-communism. Post-conflict environments are exposed to dealing with its past through transitional justice and transitional institutional reform as part of "lustration" of institutions and society but the role of media has never been looked upon from this angle. Transitional justice mechanisms do look at the media as partners in reforms and necessary public engagements but don't see a crucial role in the process as media are not part of the state institutions (Hoxha, 2014). Despite this, in many cases, public televisions and radios are state funded or publicly funded and therefore are in a way part of the institutional framework.

## Changing roles of media in transitional societies

The concept of transitional journalism has its roots in a history of constant transitions in the Balkans. Media in the region was in part developed under as a state media model in Yugoslavia, with limited press freedom. After the start of breakup of the federation, the media mostly focused on ethnic reporting and reporting about "the other" (Jusic, 2009; Luci & Markovic, 2009). In the words of Dejan Anastasijevic, a former journalist during the 1990s "most media in the former Yugoslavia report on The Hague trials as sports matches, favoring "our boys" over prosecutors and jeering at the "monsters" from another ethnic group"<sup>1</sup>. With the changes in former Yugoslavia and opening up of society came the challenges as well, as Splichal rightly notes, "the freedom of the press increasingly became a freedom wielded by the owners of the means of communication rather than by the citizens. Profitable information was the most important" (1994: 4). The media in Kosovo was a promoter of, for example, Albanian culture, language and politics and was never detached from it. (Andresen, 2015) This is also the case in the broader Balkan region, where media fought for a political cause. The cause shifted away from nationalism until the establishment of Yugoslavia, when the idea of 'unity and brotherhood' across ethnic lines was one of the Yugoslav media's roles in society, given and controlled by the Communist regime (Robinson, 1977). However, the loyalty to ethnic nationalism was an additional parallel force that grew during the break-up of Yugoslavia, giving journalists a double sense of duty. In Kosovo, the Yugoslav identity was fragile and the different national identities came to life quickly as Yugoslavia dissolved during the 1980s. The national identity was always deeper than the Yugoslav identity, although journalists accepted the official socialist line. This has been confirmed in this paper by interviews with experienced journalists in Kosovo that worked in the Yugoslav media during the 1980s. The escalation of ethnic and national conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s led to a shift from media as a promoter of unity and brotherhood into media as active tool of ethnic hatred and war. This was a significant shift and from the 1990s until today is what most journalists interviewed for this research project relate to when referring to media's negative role in Kosovo. Their personal experience with media was one of media as a promoter of ethnic conflicts. Media was used as tools both for the Serbian regime as well as a counter-reaction tool by the Kosovar Albanians. Media shifted from promoting unity to being tools of separation. This is thoroughly documented in studies of how media in the region was used as propaganda instruments in Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia (Thompson, 1999; Kurspahic, 2003). In Kosovo in the late 1990s, media's role shifted to an even more active one; being a tool in war.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ictj.org/debate/article/what-justice> (Accessed on 09/05/2017)

In other conflicts such as in Afghanistan, Saumava Mitra's (2017) work on peace journalism and photo-journalists finds that: "Foreign patronage has played both a positive role as well as negative roles according to the respondents." Although, only working with photojournalists, she finds that peace journalism sponsored by the foreign organizations "has to devise strategies to address the socio-cultural, political, economic as well as practice-related constraints faced by journalists in conflict-affected societies and bring its universal normative goals and frameworks into critical contact with these existing factors." (Mitra, 2017). Furthermore, the importance of journalism education has been looked upon by Sadia Jamil where she finds that: "The role of academia is very crucial in fostering safe journalism and producing well-aware journalism professionals who can work effectively in conflict and non-conflict circumstances in Pakistan. According to a journalism academic from a public-sector university in Pakistan, "universities are the first training place for journalism professionals." (Jamil, 2017) Although looking at it in Pakistan, where cultural context and circumstances are different from Kosovo, the argument that academia is the first line of education provider is applicable in our research as well. In the cases of Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, Umaru A. Pate, Lai Oso and Abubakar Jibril argue that peace journalism and safety education should be taught as part of education curricula as a response to: "personal and professional threats in reporting many of the violent conflicts and terror attacks that frequently erupt in their countries especially in the last fifteen years" (2017). Mariateresa Garrido Villareal makes the claim that International Humanitarian Law has to be taught at schools for journalists in order to ensure that journalists know their rights and have more instruments to their protection. In her research, she concludes that: "Media personnel are considered as civilians during armed conflicts and they are entitled to receive a special protection. However, given the fact that they can be identified as combatants and lose the protection, it is essential that journalists gain the necessary legal knowledge to better protect themselves when covering wars." (2017). Similarly, we have noticed that the relations to human rights is present in Balkans as well but rather from the top down approach teaching journalists general Human Rights Law instead of focusing bottom-up from examples of Freedom of Expression or human rights cases that relate to their work.

In the current transitions, the Balkans media today stands between 'polarized pluralist journalism' of the Mediterranean and 'democratic corporatist journalism'. This can be determined by studying the current state of the media system. Hallin and Mancini (2004, 2012), argue that to study media system, one needs to look at the structure of media market, political parallelism, professionalization of journalist as well as external interference. The challenges faced by professionalization of journalists in the region take root in the 'current technological, economic, and cultural changes within the context of larger media systems' Role perception depends on 'individual training, socialization, institutional demands, or personal job motivations' (Donsbach, 2008). In these transitional times, the role of the development of journalism must be addressed, and a key aspect is the training of journalists.

## Methodology

This paper uses a combination of methods to obtain the contextual data as well as the current analysis of journalism education in Kosovo. Data from the authors' previous research has been utilized. Andresen's PhD dissertation about the development of journalism in Kosovo (Andresen, 2015) as well as the authors' study in the Worlds of Journalism Study (Hoxha, Andresen and Hoxha-Dobrunaj, 2016) provides vital data. In the Worlds of Journalism study project in Kosovo, 206 journalists were surveyed through 'one to one' survey data gathering about their perception of journalism's roles in society, trust, influences on their work and ethical considerations and the implications of education of journalists in the conflict and post-conflict environment. This survey reveals the current status of journalism in Kosovo, according to the journalists and editors from the cognitive perspective where journalists are asked to rate themselves. As a complementary method for this paper, a follow up desk-based research evaluation on the current curriculums of the public and private education institutions was conducted in order to assess what is being taught and towards what field of studies these programmes are oriented. We examined the curriculums from the "Hasan Prishtina2" University of Prishtina, the only public university, in addition to and AAB3 University and UBT4 as private education institutions providing courses on communication and thus related to journalism. In particular, the case of the former KIJAC (Kosovo Institute of journalism and Communication) was used as an example of an 'international intervention' educational institution set up to increase the quality of journalism in the

2 <http://filologjia.uni-pr.edu/Departamentet/Departamenti08.aspx> (Accessed on 09/05/2017)

3 <https://aab-edu.net/en/faculties/mass-communication/> (Accessed on 09/05/2017)

4 <http://www.ubt-uni.net/?cid=1,395> (Accessed on 09/05/2017)

country. Additionally, four follow-up interviews were conducted with professionals lecturing and working in teaching positions in the above mentioned institutions to provide insight information and commentary on the findings. The interviews were focused also around the questions of subjects are being taught normatively and how these subjects are being taught in classes. The authors wish to emphasize that the interviews are not sufficient for the purpose of fully evaluating the actual teaching, but nevertheless they indicate teaching subjects and quality offered in classes of these education institutions.

## Previous training and education of journalists in Kosovo

### Background from practice

As a point of departure, we want to lay out some of the background that journalists entering the field of journalists in Kosovo have shared. The following was assessed in Andresen's study of journalism development a few years ago (Andresen, 2015). First, many journalists in Kosovo have gained journalism practice during the war in Kosovo. What effect has this experience had on the journalists? In conflict areas, journalists frequently find themselves as members of multiple professional and social communities. Studies of journalists in Ethiopia (Skjerdal, 2012) and Israel (Zandberg & Neider, 2005) reveal how reporters are drawn between a professional cause, such as reporting facts, and one or more political cause, which might be reporting in line with a political or ethnic group. In Kosovo, journalists experienced these shifts strongly when fixers travelled with international reporters during the 1997-1999 armed conflicts. During this period, local journalism shifted from political reporting to eyewitness reporting. Several journalists and editors confirm that the dramatic events changed the reporting in Kosovo. Formerly, the local journalists felt they were under political control, not only by the Serbian authorities but also under heavy political pressure from Albanian politicians. The escalation of violence in Kosovo from 1997 brought a new kind of journalism which the newsrooms had not practiced before. The Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper *Koha Ditore* remembers: "It was the first time that the journalism [here] was like that. The practice of journalism here until then was controlled then and all the journalists were influenced under the parties or under the higher authorities. This was the first time that we were doing something [on our own] and we were refusing to listen to anybody telling us how we do it (personal interview, in Andresen, 2015)".

The emergency reporting during the war (1997-1999) made the journalists also conscious of a cause, or a purpose, of their reporting, but the main issue was to still bring news about the war to their audience. By travelling with international reporters, they were able to fill a need for information as to where the fighting took place and where the roadblocks were located. As the editor of *Koha Ditore* recognized, the combination of a cause and the reporting of events and facts transformed local journalists into eyewitness reporters. However, they had to do this under cover of being translators and drivers for the international reporters. Their own functions of being reporters for local Kosovar media had to remain a secret at the Serbian checkpoints. A RTK journalist recalls the security challenges: "The situation was very hard and it was much easier to say that you were just a translator for security reasons. If you said that you were a journalist and you were with a foreign journalist, then it was dangerous for both to travel around Kosovo. That's why we used foreign journalists to prevent something from happening to us. So, we preferred to say [to the Serbian police officers] that we were just translators (RTK journalist, personal interview, in Andresen, 2015)".

### Education and background

The majority of young journalists in Kosovo have attended university besides working full-time as journalists, trying either to make up for lost education, or to get a degree (Andresen, 2015). A journalism job is not a secure one in Kosovo, and they feel they need an education. This means that the majority work in the newsroom during the day and studies at night. The result of the unfinished and unstructured education is that journalists in the newsroom will have a formal degree, something that many pursued in order to be more prepared for a difficult job market also outside the media. The combination of a full-time job in the newsrooms and being a full-time student is not uncommon.

Eight of the 50 journalists interviewed in Andresen's study (2015) studied journalism at the 'Faik Konica' journalism school in Prishtina, a small private vocational school with many students, but little equipment. Also, several of the leading Kosovar editors and journalists had been instructors there. Journalists in the newsrooms having attended this school said they got a good theoretical foundation, but no practical experience. However, they claimed the school prepared them for the practical work in the newsrooms.

Most of the journalists started in the profession after the war in 1999. However, a significant number of

the young Kosovar Albanian journalists started working in journalism during the 1990s, during the war, and have thus experience from both war reporting and post-war journalism. They learned reporting ‘on the job’, being recruited into for example, *Koha Ditore*, where they were socialized into an environment where the job was twofold. Job number one was to give the Kosovar Albanian population information about the escalating fighting between UÇK5 (in Albanian: *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*) and the Serbian forces. The documentation of the establishment of the armed Albanian resistance was important, but the most significant reporting became the documentation of the crimes against Albanian civilians. The second task was to follow Albanian politics at that time. There was a deep split between LDK (in Albanian: *Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*), with Ibrahim Rugova at the helm, who opposed armed resistance, and other political parties like LPK (in Albanian: *Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës*), which UÇK to a large part was associated with (Bieber & Daskalovski, 2003; Clark, 2000; Malcolm 2002). The young journalists had a steep learning curve in covering a conflict which they were a part of. Journalists tell of dramatic moments when they travelled into the fighting areas, fearing being stopped at Serbian checkpoints.

Living through war has also given the journalists in newsrooms an unstructured and coincidental kind of training. Many of the journalists strongly maintain that their best war-time journalism training happened via their ‘on the job’ experience. Others worked as fixers and stringers for foreign news agencies such as RAI, CNN and BBC, and have expressed that working alongside international journalists was been the best learning experience for them (Andresen, 2015). In sum, the journalists in the four newsrooms had an unstructured background, characterized by the uncertainties of living through wars and conflicts. Their emotional and traumatic experiences from living under threats were present, although not easy to detect. Their background from living through war became visible when mapping their education and training that happened in an unstructured way where opportunism was a key factor. The journalists took opportunities of education as well as journalism practice.

## Contextualizing the training of journalists in a transitional society

### The impact of international media support in Kosovo

During the early 2000s the international community offered a wide range of short-term training courses for journalists in Kosovo as a remedy for the absence of journalism education (Rhodes, 2007; Andresen, 2015). In assessing the impact from the journalism training part of international media support on the development of journalism in Kosovo, we will partly draw on Silvio Waisbord’s understanding of how professional journalism should be measured by the extent to which it develops as a profession that can resist influence from external powers. “Professionalism refers to the ability of a field of practice to set boundaries and avoid intrusion from external factors” (Waisbord, 2013: 11). Furthermore, “...professionalism represents the refusal to comply with rules dictated by political and economic actors, thereby abdicating control over a distinctive rationality.” (158). Thus, professionalism must also be seen as the ability to develop ideology and techniques of the profession. How has the training contributed to this? There are several conclusions to be drawn from the strategies, international and local evaluations of the international journalism training courses.

There are some good results from the training. A positive sign of influence that can be linked to the training seminars in Kosovar newsrooms is the individual awareness of professional journalism. In Andresen (2015) journalists and editors expressed the kind of news they wanted to practice; they had a genuine desire to practice independent news production, to set the news agenda and not simply follow the politicians. However, the journalists often failed in daily life to practice their desires because of several factors such pressure and self-censorship. Furthermore, another important effect, especially during the early training, according to the interviews with editors and journalists, was a reduction of hate speech in the media. There were serious examples of hate speech that even led to the closure of a newspaper, *Dita*, in 2000 (Hoxha, 2007). Training, combined with OSCE establishing regulations against it was a crucial step against attacks on identified people in some parts of the Kosovo Albanian press.

5 Also known as KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army).

The training courses also raised the level of professional reporting techniques for many journalists. The informants said they learned various methods of reporting in early training seminars. The ability to produce a story from idea to published text improved after the trainings. However, the technical part of the training is at the same time part of the criticism against the international media support. The journalists' and editors' feeling was that the international community was very good at supporting the local media with technical equipment (especially RTK) and the technical side of reporting.

The international trainers failed to a large degree to address professionalization of journalism as a counter-strike to media patrimonialism (Waisbord, 2013). The historically close ties between media and politicians dominate media history in Kosovo. The 'old' mindset of political discourse is present in the newsrooms and, according to editors, the international trainers could and should have addressed this in the training. However, they failed to address this question, partly because they had no strategy to systematically influence this discourse. This can be blamed on both lack of historical-political knowledge and apprehension to deal with the complicated political discourse, which is much more complex than a question of conflict between Albanians and Serbs (Di Lellio, 2006; Bieber & Daskalovski, 2003; Duijzings, 2000; Andresen, 2015).

Through a study of media support strategies, international evaluations and local evaluations by the recipients of the training, it can be concluded that professionalisation of journalists has only to a limited degree been shaped by the journalism training offered by the international community in Kosovo (Andresen, 2015). The positive outcome of the training linked to professionalization was that the journalists attending the training became conscious about the potential of professional journalism and learned various reporting techniques. Second, the focus on reducing hate speech in Kosovar media also bore results. Furthermore, the international community's support and donations contributed to upgrading technical equipment. Thus, professionalism has developed on some levels.

However, on a more fundamental level of development of journalists, it seems evident that the international journalism training courses offered after the war failed for the following reasons: first, the training failed to address the significance of the historical-political context and its effect on journalism in Kosovo. Thus, the training did not adequately deal in depth with the historical links between politics and the media (Waisbord, 2013). Too much focus was put upon importing western journalism philosophies and reporting techniques without addressing the deeper challenges the media faced. Second, the training missed the opportunity to take advantage of the already professional aspirations and practice that several of the journalists and editors had attained through the 1990s, especially during the 1998-1999 war when working as fixers for international reporters. Third, the trainers did not seem to be sensitive to the risky environment of reporting in Kosovo after the war. The pressure from politicians, possible threats, self-censorship, low payments and risks of losing their jobs were issues that were not amply addressed in the training.

These risk factors made it difficult to practice the lessons learned in the training when the trainees returned to their newsrooms. Furthermore, the chaotic disorganization of the training in the first years also reduced the potential of impacting the training on the professional level of journalism in Kosovo. There was little coordination between the trainers; the selection of trainees was to a large degree coincidental and very often young and inexperienced journalists attended the trainings.

They had little chance or motivation to change the practice of their newsrooms to which they returned. The journalists and editors admitted that their motivation for the training was at times low, and that their input was lower than it could have been. They also took some of the blame for the failures of the training sessions. When they felt that the training courses were not what they had expected, or even irrelevant, their motivation sank and they attended the trainings often only out of duty. Finally, it is significant to note that the training sessions that the journalists said had worked best were either in-house training, where the trainers visited the newsrooms or the training programmes where the journalists were able to learn in a newsroom abroad.

## **Findings: Assessing today's journalism in transitional Kosovo**

The triangulation of data from previous research of one of the authors for his doctoral research of the newsrooms of Kosovar media, the data gathered from the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) and the analysis of curriculums of education institutions in Kosovo along with the interviews with journalism teaching instructors in Kosovo suggest that one of the crucial developments is that Kosovo is developing its own

model of media that is based primarily in the western model of pluralism but with the local hint of both influences from the past as well as from the journalism education that is currently being done in both public and private schools. The education touches upon the issues of human rights and freedoms in relation to Kosovo situation specifically from where the ethics derives into the curriculums that are being taught at schools but to some extent that teaching fades away once journalists are on the job.

## Media model and journalist co-habitat with politics

Kosovar journalists struggle in their working environment in many levels but one of the more important struggles is the demand for change in last few decades. Although many of working journalists are too young to remember last changes of the 1990s, the profession of journalists has never caught on as a well-respected position in society mainly because of cultural reasons of being part of politics but lately also because of many journalists switching sides adhering to political parties and public relations positions and above all mostly because of historic reasons of journalists cohabiting with politics under the rule of communist Yugoslavia and party/state media model that engulfed journalistic pieces being cleared by the more senior members of the party appointed in the editorial rooms for example in the case of Rilindja<sup>6</sup> but also throughout the so called 'parallel system' where news outlets such as 'Bujku<sup>7</sup>' was based upon the model of cohabitating with party politics. In mid 1990s, with the establishment of Koha Ditore, journalists started slowly finding themselves into new territories with more pluralist media and after the major changes in 1999 in post-conflict Kosovo, media emerged in a new pluralistic environment.

In post-conflict Kosovo, a challenge for the Kosovar society was to establish politically independent media and the international community (namely OSCE) established the first public broadcaster channel, RTK which was publicly funded until 2009 and after that it continued as state funded broadcaster where its budget is allocated by the National Assembly of Kosovo. This is very important to the journalists and influences as journalists in Kosovo perceive their role as activist and agenda setter with around 74.9% of respondents saying that it is extremely and very important to educate the audience and 38.2% of journalists declaring that they have to set the political agenda. Furthermore, one of the important findings which corresponds with interviews as well is the low degree of trust of journalists in the political elite and high prioritization of journalists to play an adversary role on the government. Only 2.1% of journalist declared that they completely trust or had a great deal of trust in politicians in general with 74.5% claiming that it is extremely important or very important to serve as an adversary to the government (WJS).

Kosovar journalists are looking at the 'Euro-American' model of journalism by claiming that it is very important to report things as they are but also take things in hands by themselves in lack of trust in politicians (Andresen et.al., 2017). Struggling to adapt to changes in the media model and the role they have in society, journalists adapt to the market needs along with their perception of what is important to report. Kosovo is creating its media model that stands between independent and pluralist media that checks and balances between politics, media and society.

## Journalists and human rights

In post-conflict Kosovo, human rights trainings poured in from top down approach throughout all institutions, schools and even primary schools but always explained through a vertical impose of such values. One of the interviewees for this article recalls that while working for an international organization to provide trainings and advice for Kosovar media, they encountered situations where human rights programmes suggested by the organization for the local media was received with skepticism by journalists claiming that they do not have minority communities and hence they did not need human rights programmes in their air time. The highlight on minority rights was always part of the training and education programmes for journalists so it became a key word for the approach. Even today, human rights is synonymous with minority rights in the eyes of journalists. A lecturer at one of the private universities claims that most students are not very interested in the subjects of human rights because it is not attractive enough and is so overly covered by the demands of international organizations such as UN and OSCE in Kosovo. Another lecturer claims similarly but adds that the influence of oral traditions in Kosovar society is far more important than literacy and critical discourse and this is what influences journalistic outcome in the media. Both informants in this argument

<sup>6</sup> Rilindja as main newspaper in Kosovo until 1990s when it was closed down

<sup>7</sup> A LDK/QIK founded newspaper called Bujku (The Farmer) which later was used as political media outlet.

have a deeper knowledge of Kosovar journalist education system.

As previously noted, Most Kosovar journalists have gone through trainings sponsored by international organizations. In the judgement of the IMC8 in 2004, it was demanded that the RTK spends 250 thousand euros training journalists in the aftermath of bad reporting on the events which caused violence. The OSCE report claims that: “the media, specifically the broadcasting sector, displayed unacceptable levels of emotion, bias, carelessness, and falsely applied “patriotic” zeal. (OSCE, 2004)” Ever since 2004, journalists are constantly invited in trainings organized by the IREX, OSCE, UN, EU and other organizations but often without a proper needs assessment and a bottom approach. One of the interviewed lecturers confirms the criticisms (in Andresen, 2015) that these trainings had little success because of overloading such trainings with irrelevant curricular cases and little practical and local knowledge.

## Journalism curriculums and ethics

The curriculums of journalism education in Kosovo are struggling to adopt needs and change in accordance with the new political and technological demand. Several reasons are serving as a barrier to this change and one of them is that teaching plans must be accredited every three years and new subjects cannot be brought in without agreement by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). Furthermore, the current curriculums are mainly focused on academic strand of journalism with little practical subjects. Especially in the field of ethics, the focus remains in the level of media regulation, law and theoretical ethics although the public university stands out with organizing debates and guest lecturers from the regulatory bodies of media in Kosovo and from the civil society. The overall journalistic education in Kosovo remains politics oriented with the focus on government, political communication, and a misbalance in favor of public relations and communications versus journalism and ethics. The offered programmes in Kosovar schools are in all three levels of studies (BA, MA and PhD) but having reviewed the curriculums that are advertised in the web pages, we can see how little attention is given to the ethics and media regulation and how much more is given to the politics and literature (Albanian literature, genres of journalism etc.). Ethics is offered in the BA level of studies for only one semester whereas no ethics course is offered in the MA level neither in the public university courses nor in the private colleges.

## Journalism curriculum as business intelligence

It has been unexpectedly noted that often universities avoid transparency in their public records with regard to who is teaching which subjects. Normally, universities only publish subjects without names of instructors in their web pages and that could be different from official documents in the KAA. When KAA was contacted to receive official copies of accredited curriculums taught at universities in Kosovo, they refused to give away such information under the pretence that it was valued as “intellectual property of the submitters (i.e. Universities) to the KAA and therefore could not be distributed” for the third parties. This is an indication of the attempts to not report and advertise the course list as accredited because it would most likely not fulfill the conditions for such accreditation. The institutional framework in Kosovo demands faculties for each accredited education programmes to have at least three lecturers with completed doctoral studies.

## Conclusion

As journalists and media in Kosovo have passed through multi-level changes from authoritarian to pluralistic models of functioning in constant change and struggle, journalism education has never been stable and steady. Over the last decade, new journalism schools have been founded both in public and private sector which reflects significant increase in quality reporting. Nevertheless, technology, globalization, rapid development of social media leave much to be desired in the journalism education in Kosovo which lacks European and international aspects of journalism teaching and approaches.

Furthermore, the past conflict events of the destruction of Yugoslavia haunts present day journalism in challenging human rights, ethics and even business models of Kosovar media. The traumatic past, conflict

and ethnic animosity is still present in the public discourse among Kosovar journalists because of political resistance of the leadership of the entire region to take steps towards recognizing conflicting past and the atrocities that happened. Journalists feel like they are very much part of the struggle and along with that, they have a role to reveal 'the truth' to what has happened to the past. Historic jargons characterise present coverage of reporting when ethnic minorities are in the scope as a reminder of bitter past.

One of the ways to overcome such challenges of the past is transitional justice and along with that in the field of media is transitional journalism as argued largely in this paper. Such idea puts journalism in perspective of transitional justice and looks at the problems from a human rights approach including the education of journalists in the field of human rights but instead of learning from top down approach of what is globally needed, the learning programmes would be from the bottom up approach of starting from local cases of media coverage of human rights violations and abuse and how to solve them.

As one of the significant gaps in the teaching of journalism in Kosovo is in relation to dealing with the past, lack of taught courses for journalists entering the media market is seen as a weakness of the education system in Kosovo along with other structural problems in the media. The data shows journalistic roles shifting from traditional watchdog to activist role which challenges the journalistic profession and aspired objectivity in fair reporting. Such shift is related to the lack of trust in the institutions for the reasons of institutional corruption and misconduct, non-transparency and lack of access to information. Journalists want to take matters in their hands by actively participating in decision making, causes and even advocacy by teaming with non-governmental sector in attempt to change policies and the situation. Here, non-governmental sector plays a crucial role because it is more trusted due to its effectivity.

As Kosovo is a transitional society where institutional and social change have moved from authoritarian regime through conflict and post-conflict into the current stage where journalists are defining their own role in society vis a vis other institutions responsible for the country development and progress. In absence of both desirable development and progress, journalists are willingly taking more responsibilities into their own hands. In this regard, also the current higher education system in Kosovo that provides young journalists to the market is in its infancy when it comes to journalism education. It fulfills basic needs for journalism programmes but is dominated by traditional thinking and focus. The article sheds light on the need for practical tailored training that provides hands on knowledge that combines realities of political pressure, history and the transition for better success.

## References

- Andresen, K. (2015). Journalism under pressure. The case of Kosovo. PhD dissertation. Oslo: University of Oslo, Faculty of Humanities.
- Anastasijevic, D. (2015) What Justice?. ICTJ <https://www.ictj.org/debate/article/what-justice> (Accessed on the 25.04.2017).
- Andresen, K., Hoxha, A., & Godole, J. (2017). New Roles for Media in the Western Balkans: A study of transitional journalism. *Journalism Studies* 18(5), 614-628.
- Bieber, F and Daskalovski, Z. (2003). Understanding the War in Kosovo. Front Cover.. Psychology Press.
- Clark, H. (2000). Civil resistance in Kosovo. London: Pluto Press.
- Di Lellio, A. (Ed.) (2006). The case for Kosova: Passage to independence. London: Anthem Press.
- Donsbach, W. (2008). "Journalists' Role Perceptions." In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, edited by Donsbach, Vol. 6, 2605–2610. Malden: Blackwell.
- Duijzings, G. (2000). Religion and the politics of identity in Kosovo. London: Hurst & Company.
- Gashi, D. (2004) The Role of the Media in the March 2004 Events in Kosovo. OSCE; The Representative on Freedom of the Meida Miklosz Haraszti. Vienna. <http://www.ian.org.rs/kosovo-info/zajednicke/vesti/OSCEviolance.pdf> (Accessed on 05.05. 2017).
- Hallin, D.C., & Mancini, P. (2004). Comparing Media Systems: The Models of Media. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hallin, D.C., & Mancini, P. (2012). Comparing Media Systems beyond the Western World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoxha, A., Andresen, K., and Hoxha-Dobrunaj, A. (2017) Journalists in Kosovo: Country Report. <https://>

[pub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/31986/7/Abit\\_Hoxha\\_Kenneth\\_Andresen\\_%26\\_Arbesa\\_Hoxha-Dobrunaj\\_Journalists\\_in\\_Kosovo.pdf](http://pub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/31986/7/Abit_Hoxha_Kenneth_Andresen_%26_Arbesa_Hoxha-Dobrunaj_Journalists_in_Kosovo.pdf) (Accessed on 25.04.2017).

- Hoxha, Abit. (2014) "Changing Roles of Journalist in (Post) Conflict" presentation at the ECREA, Lisbon.
- Jamil, S. (2017). Freedom of expression and threats to journalists' safety: an analysis of conflict reporting and peace journalism education in Pakistan: Unpublished manuscript.
- Jusić, T. (2009). Media Discourse and the Politics of Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Yugoslavia. In Kolstø, P. (Ed.). *Media Discourse and the Yugoslav Conflicts. Representations of Self and Other*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Kurspahic, K. (2003). *Prime Time Crime. Balkan Media in War and Peace*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Luci, N., and P. Marković. 2009. Events and Sites of Difference: Marking Self and Other in Kosovo. In *Media Discourse and the Yugoslav Conflicts*, ed. P. Kolstø.
- Malcolm, N. (2002). *Kosovo. A short history*. London: Pan Books.
- Mitra, S. (2017). Adoptability and acceptability of Peace Journalism among Afghan photojournalists: Lessons for PJ training in conflict-affected countries: Unpublished manuscript.
- Pate, A. U., Oso, L., and Jibril, A. (2017) Status of training and research in reporting conflict, peace journalism and safety education in English speaking West Africa: The cases of Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Unpublished manuscript.
- Rhodes, A. (2007). *Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans: An Assessment*. Amsterdam: Media Task Force of the Stability Pact for South East Europe and Press Now.
- Robinson, G. J. (1977). *Tito's maverick media: The politics of mass communications in Yugoslavia*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Skjerdal, T. S. (2008). Self-censorship among news journalists in the Ethiopian state media. *African Communication Research* 1(2), 185-206.
- Splichal, S., & Sparks, C. (1994). *Journalists for the 21st century: tendencies of professionalization among first-year students in 22 countries*. Norwood: Ablex.
- Stephenson, H. (2010). Forward. In Georgios Terzis (Ed.) *European Journalism Education*. Intellect. Bristol.
- Thompson, M. (1999). *Forging war: The media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- Villareal Garrido, M. (2017). *Journalists Not Spies. The importance of the legal distinction for the protection of journalists during armed conflicts*: Unpublished manuscript.
- Waisbord, S. (2013). *Reinventing Professionalism. Journalism and News in Global Perspective*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Zandberg, E., & Neiger, M. (2005). Between the nation and the profession: Journalists as members of contradicting communities. *Media, Culture & Society* 27(1), 131-141.