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What kind of citizens? Constructing ‘Young Europeans’ through loud borrowing in curriculum policy-making in Kosovo

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ABSTRACT



Kosovo introduced two major curriculum reforms over the past 20 years – in 2001 and 2011 – each aiming to bring education closer to international trends. Simultaneously, Kosovo underwent major political, social, and cultural changes after the war in 1999, and the declaration of independence in 2008. This article relies on document analysis and uses civic competences definitions in Kosovo and European Commission frameworks to compare conceptions of citizenship for democratic life along three theoretical constructs, namely personally responsible/individualist, participatory/social, and justice-oriented/political. It coins loud borrowing to describe the policy flow into Kosovo education, specifically focusing on the latest 2011 competence-based curriculum reform. The findings show that Kosovo’s curriculum alignment with the European Commission key competence approach in 2011 served larger political goals and aspirations to brand Kosovars as ‘Young Europeans.’ In addition, personally responsible/individualist conception and participatory/social conception of citizenship are dominant in Kosovo, as well as in European Commission frameworks.

KEYWORDS

Competence-based education; civic competences; loud borrowing; curriculum policy-making; Kosovo; European Commission

Introduction and purpose

Since the end of war in Kosovo in 1999, two curriculum reforms have attempted to make education more relevant for Kosovo students. While the first wave of curriculum reform in 2001 was an extension of previously content-based curricula, the latest curriculum reform of 2011 is the most ambitious one as it departs from content-based curricula to embrace competence-based education (CBE) approaches to curriculum making (Tahirsylaj 2018). The introduction of the CBE approach in Kosovo followed the transnational policy flows in education over the past 20 years, which has been widespread but not global, and primarily concentrated in Europe (Anderson-Levitt 2017). The 2011 curriculum reform in Kosovo was heavily influenced by the key competences for lifelong learning

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recommended by the European Commission (OJEU 2006, 2018). Further, international donor agencies and international consultants shaped the curriculum reform agenda (Tahirsylaj and Wahlström 2019). The 2011 curriculum reform followed Kosovo's independence in 2008 when the political agenda included a campaign to brand Kosovo people as 'Young Europeans' (Hapçiu and Sparks 2012), backed up by the visions for a democratic society in the Kosovo Constitution (Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo 2008).

Against this background, the article has three goals: first, to trace the introduction of competence-based curricula in Kosovo, particularly in relation to key competences promoted at the European Union level that Kosovo aimed to be associated with and eventually be part of. Second, the article then narrows the focus down to civic competences¹, with the associated outcome of 'responsible citizen', as one of the six key competences defined in the new Kosovo Curriculum Framework (KCF) (MEST 2011) to compare the conceptions of civic competences in two directions: externally between the 2011 reform and key civic competences recommended by the European Commission (OJEU 2006), and internally in the curriculum policies in Kosovo between the 2001 and 2011 reforms. Third, lower secondary curricula, and specifically the latest civic education curricula of grades 6 and 7, are examined to identify the opportunities that Kosovo students can expect to have to develop into democratic citizens through the curriculum context in their formal schooling.

To meet its goals, the article borrows from the global education policy flows and policy borrowing scholarship that has defined transnational education policy making as either contributing to convergence or divergence of curricula internationally (Anderson-Levitt 2003; Steiner-Khamisi 2004). Next, focusing on civic competences as one of the key competences in the 2011 KCF, the article relies on empirically based conceptualizations of what it means to be a good citizen in a democratic society by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) who distinguish among three types, namely *personally responsible*, *participatory*, and *justice-oriented* citizens, and theoretical conceptualizations of civic competences as framed by Biesta (2007). A qualitative approach relying on document analysis and using Kosovo and European Commission policy documents as data sources is applied to meet the objectives of the study.

The article contributes to the ongoing debates on the influence of global education policy flows into national contexts. Kosovo as a convergent case (Tahirsylaj and Wahlström 2019) represents an example of policy transfer as 'loud borrowing'. This characterisation contrasts with the silent borrowing practices identified elsewhere to describe incorporations of global education policy ideas into national contexts without revealing them as such but as a product of within-nation discussion (see Waldow 2009). Loud borrowing is offered to indicate an education policy-making process in which national authorities deliberately pursue and amplify external policies for both educational and political ends. Further, the article makes an original contribution with regard to conceptions of civic competences and democratic citizens in a developing context such as Kosovo where promotion of international policies is favourably viewed by both local policy-makers and the general public in efforts to bring Kosovar society closer to standards of developed democracies of (primarily) Western Europe. In this regard, the article highlights the policy *content* by focusing on civic competences that shows Kosovo followed the European framing of key competences, and the policy-making *process* that underlines the uniqueness of the Kosovo context with international organisations and consultants

playing a major role in policy-making. This situation of welcoming educational policy solutions from Western-based international organisations and consultants has to be understood within the broader historical journey of Kosovo since the early 1990s when the main call of local politicians was for Western organisations such as the EU and NATO, as well as the US, to intervene to resolve Kosovo's political situation. And the Western nations did end Kosovo's war through NATO's intervention in 1999. As a result, the view of the Western organisations as solution providers extended to many societal domains, such as education and the justice system, for example, after the end of the war in 1999 (Papadimitriou, Petrov, and Greicevci 2007).

In the next sections, first the conceptual and analytical framework is further elaborated, and a literature review related to civic competences is offered, followed by a brief background on Kosovo's context. Next, methodological considerations and data material are provided, then findings and results are presented, ending with discussion, conclusions and avenues for further research.

Conceptual and analytical framework

The article borrows conceptual tools from two main scholarly strands focusing on civic education – the first is US-based and empirical following the work of Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and the second is European-based and theoretical, following the work of Biesta (2007). There are close overlaps between the two strands, and for the purposes of the article, the two are merged to both frame the study and to create an analytical tool to examine conceptions of civic competences and citizenship dominant in the Kosovo curriculum.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) studied ten programmes aiming to advance democratic purposes of education through civic education across the US, and empirically forwarded three main conceptions of effective citizenship, including *personally responsible*, *participatory*, and *justice-oriented*. A *personally responsible citizen* is one that primarily 'Acts responsibly in his/her community' (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, 240). A *participatory citizen*, is an 'Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts; Organizes community efforts to care for those in need; [...] Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks' (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, 240). And, a *justice-oriented citizen* is the one that 'Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes; Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice; Knows about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change' (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, 240). This framework maps well with the goals of the present study; however it rests on a larger assumption about education as a 'producer' of certain types of citizens, and by extension, society. This is where Biesta (2007) is helpful as he develops another set of three theoretically-grounded conceptions of citizens for a democratic society.

The three conceptions of democratic subjectivity advanced by Biesta (2007) include the *individualistic*, the *social*, and the *political*. According to Biesta, conceptions of democratic subjectivity need to be built upon a broader definition of what democracy is in the first place. Following John Dewey's social conception of democracy, Biesta (2007) concludes that democracy is about inclusive social and political action, in part, to negate the individualistic and instrumentalist approaches to civic education specifically, and education more broadly construed. Further, Biesta (2007) distinguishes between education

for democracy and education *through* democracy, where the first approach assumes that democracy can be taught and thus acquired through formal schooling. The second approach counters that democracy cannot be learned if schools themselves are not democratic institutions where students are able to participate in democratic practices.

Turning to the three conceptions, Biesta (2007) defines an *individualistic conception of democratic subjectivity* relying on Immanuel Kant's philosophy (Kant [1784] 1992), itself rooted in the European enlightenment, a period that advanced rational thinking and autonomy as key qualities of individuals. The individualistic conception of democratic subjectivity rests on the understanding that 'The democratic subject is the person who can think for himself, who can make his own judgements without being led by others' (Biesta 2007, 6). Next, Biesta advances the *social conception of democratic subjectivity* following John Dewey's philosophy (Dewey [1916] 1966), which highlights social interaction, participation, and association, and by extension, the idea that being a democratic person involves acting and participating in the social context. Lastly, Biesta (2007) develops a *political conception of democratic subjectivity* building on Hannah Arendt's philosophy (Arendt 1977, 1958) centred around

[...] an understanding of human beings as *active* beings, as beings whose humanity is not simply defined by their capacity to think and reflect, but where what it means to be human has everything to do with what one *does*. (Biesta 2007, 8, emphasis in the original)

For Biesta (2007), a political conception of democratic subjectivity built on Arendt's philosophy assumes that democracy is exercised in the public sphere where everyone has the possibility to act and be a subject, and at the same time, everyone has the possibility to take up actions and beginnings of others in a diverse and plural world.

To summarise, the two sets of conceptions presented here following Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Biesta (2007) show clear overlaps. To be personally responsible, one has to be able to think and act based on rational thinking and autonomy; to be a participatory citizen, one has to participate in social contexts; and to be a justice-oriented person, one needs to engage actively and deliberately in the political life. In all conceptualizations, action is crucial for democracy; what varies is the level and degree of action, and there is a rising progression in the level of engagement from being a personally responsible, to a participatory, to a justice-oriented citizen, and correspondingly from an individualistic, to social, to political conceptions of democratic subjectivity. As a result, for the purposes of the present study, the six conceptions are condensed into three by merging *personally responsible* and *individualist*, *participatory* and *social*, and *justice-oriented* and *political*. In turn, these three categories constitute the analytical framework to examine the European Commission and Kosovo curriculum policy documents with the focus on prevailing conceptions related to civic competences.

Literature review

With a few exceptions, research into education reform and recent curriculum reform in particular within the context of Kosovo is limited. For example, Tahirsylaj and Wahlström (2019) have examined the role that education policy context plays in mastery of critical thinking competences. Saqipi (2019) analysed the role that context plays in challenging environments such as Kosovo in adopting far reaching educational reforms such as competence-

based curriculum. Zylfiu (2014) surveyed eighth graders across Kosovo regarding their perceptions of participation in democratic life, and found that students felt schools prepared them well for active participation in democratic life; however, about half of the sample reported their membership in political parties was not important. Still, no prior study has examined the conceptions of civic competences in the latest 2011 curriculum policy reform in Kosovo, and therefore, the present article fills a significant gap in the literature.

Internationally, educational research focusing on civic education is abundant, including the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), a major large-scale assessment administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The ICCS focuses on how countries prepare students for political participation and citizenship (IEA n.d.). Not surprisingly, considering the role that civic education is routinely ascribed to play, research in the field is dominated by the role that civic education plays in political participation and engagement (see, for example, Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo 1999; Galston 2004; Biesta 2008). Indeed, after reviewing civic education conceptions in the Scottish curriculum using Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) theoretical framework, Biesta (2008) found that the *personally responsible/individualistic* conception was dominant.

Civic education conceptions gain increased relevance in post-conflict societies such as Kosovo for the purposes of democratising the society (Quaynor 2012). Since 2000, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has promoted democratic citizenship education as an overarching value of education (UNESCO 2008). Studies on civic education in post-conflict societies offer a unique lens into idiosyncrasies of schooling in challenging contexts. A review of literature focusing on citizenship education in post-conflict societies identified the avoidance of controversial issues, the unique role of ethnicity, a lack of trust in political parties and authoritarianism, and to a lesser degree, a movement towards global or regional identities as key findings (Quaynor 2012). More specifically, in a multi-country study that included Kosovo, Weinstein, Freedman, and Hughson (2007) found that segregation of Kosovo's society (and education) along ethnic lines – primarily between an Albanian majority and a Serbian minority – posed challenges for building interethnic social networks that in the long run would overcome historically persisting ethnic divisions. In this regard, the present study contributes to the literature on the opportunities that civic education curricula offer students to master competences to fully participate and engage in democratic life and develop democratic citizenship by identifying dominant conceptions of civic competences in Kosovo curriculum policy.

Overview of Kosovo context

Constitutionally, Kosovo is defined as a democratic republic, and its constitutional order is based on principles of '[...] freedom, peace, democracy' (Assembly of Republic of Kosovo 2008, 2). The Law on Pre-University Education in Kosovo states that one of the main purposes of pre-university education is, 'to prepare the pupil for a responsible life in the spirit of good understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship with members of all communities in the Republic of Kosovo' (Assembly of Republic of Kosovo 2011, 1). The 2011 Kosovo Curriculum Framework notes that one of the main aims of education

in Kosovo is to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of pupils required by a democratic society (MEST 2011).

Educationally, a number of reforms have been initiated in the Kosovo context over the past 20 years, including introduction of external assessments at the end of Grades 5, 9, and 12, adoption of a competence-based curriculum, and participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for the first time in 2015 and again in 2018 – where Kosovo was ranked the third from the bottom of all participating countries. These reforms have been heavily supported by the international donor community, including the European Commission, the World Bank, and individual government programmes from Germany, Canada, the US, and the UK to name a few. Schools play a crucial role in new and emerging democracies in establishing a democratic culture (Biesta 2007), and thus it is worth examining Kosovo's curriculum policy while efforts are ongoing to build a democratic society.

Introduction of competence-based curriculum in Kosovo

Over the past 20 years, the national and international political processes in and about Kosovo have largely determined curriculum reform. First, with the end of the war in 1999, Kosovo became a protectorate under the United Nations, with all sectors, including education, administered by international organisations. Initially, the department of education was run by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as a lead agency, coordinating a number of other international donors who provided technical assistance and other resources for the education sector. Introduction of a new Kosovo Curriculum Framework in 2001 was one of the first major curriculum reforms that attempted to modernise curricula and bring the education sector closer to international trends.

The declaration of independence in 2008 created a new momentum in Kosovo's society, and another phase of establishing stronger institutions run and managed by local authorities was initiated. This brought curriculum reform to the forefront of policy initiatives. The process was initiated in 2009 with a revision of the prior curriculum framework. It ended in 2011 with adoption of a new curriculum framework based on competence-based education approaches in line with the 2006 EU recommendations for key competences (Tahirsylaj 2018). Again, international organisations played a crucial role in the new curriculum reform since; as in 2001, UNICEF was the lead agency in providing technical assistance. They mainly brought in the same international educational consultants who had written the 2001 curriculum framework as noted in the list of contributors in DES (2001) and MEST (2011).

Two phases – as a policy and as a practice – are observed when we refer to introduction of competence-based curricula (CBC) in Kosovo's education system. The policy phase pertains to the formal adoption of the Kosovo curriculum framework (KCF) by the Kosovo Government and Assembly in 2011. Because the decision coincided with the changes in Kosovo's political status as well as with change in the leadership of the education sector in Kosovo, the KCF document as such has been labelled as a 'political statement' (Tahirsylaj 2018, 45) in efforts to demonstrate to the international community Kosovo's aspirations to eventually join the EU. Harmonising educational goals with those of the EU was the first step to show Kosovo's pro-reform and pro-European orientation (Tahirsylaj 2018). The practice phase related to the slow introduction of CBC into classroom practice. The implementation of CBC was initially piloted in a small number of schools across

the country, while full implementation only started in 2017 when the new CBC was rolled out in Grades 1, 6 and 10 to correspond with the first grades of elementary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary respectively. In the meantime, the 2011 KCF was slightly revised in 2016; however its core focus on key competences was maintained.

Methodological approach

Methodologically, the article uses document analysis as a qualitative research method to meet its aims (Bowen 2009). 'Primary documents' (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011) produced by respective authorities in Kosovo and the European Commission are reviewed in the analysis, which are in the public domain and accessible online. For the purposes of the study, the focus is on two documents published by the European Commission on key competences (OJEU 2006, 2018), primarily on the 2006 document since it was the basis for Kosovo competences adopted in the 2011 curriculum framework. The two Kosovo curriculum frameworks of 2001 and 2011 are first reviewed, and in addition, the focus is also on Core Curricula for Lower Secondary Education (MEST 2012) and civic education subject curriculum as defined by MEST in lower secondary education (Grades 6–9). Specifically, civic education curricula for grades 6 and 7 are examined, as these two are the only yet developed following the latest competence-based curriculum in place in Kosovo.

As noted above, the conceptions of citizenship and subjectivity as developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Biesta (2007) serve as analytical tools for the document and policy analysis. Therefore, a deductive approach through direct content analysis of the curriculum documents² under scrutiny is applied (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

Key results and findings

Civic competences in Kosovo curriculum frameworks and EC documents

Considering the chronology of competence-based education (CBE) since the 1990s, three key projects and developments stand out as critical to understanding the spread of CBE internationally. The first is the OECD's Definition and Selection of Key Competences (DeSeCo) in the second part of 1990s; second, the introduction of OECD's PISA in 2000; and third, the adoption of European Commission recommendations on key competences in 2006 (Tahirsylaj and Sundberg 2020). Despite a number of definitions available, competences have been defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context, and key competences, specifically, are those that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment (OJEU 2006). The 2011 KCF listed six key competences, mostly an adaptation of the eight listed in the 2006 European Commission Reference Framework (ECRF) (see Tahirsylaj 2018 for details).

Since the focus of the article is on civic competences, Table 1 presents definitions and goals of civic/citizenship education and/or competences as outlined in Kosovo's 2001 Curriculum Framework (DES 2001), the 2006 EC Reference Framework (OJEU 2006), the 2011 KCF (MEST 2011), and the 2018 ECRF.

In the light of the personally responsible/individualist, participatory/social, and justice/oriented/political framework adopted in the study, an analysis of the definitions and goals

Table 1. Definitions and conceptions of civic education/competences in Kosovo and EC documents.

2001 KCF	2006 ECRF	2011 KCF	2018 ECRF
<p>Education for democratic citizenship and for human rights (as a cross-curricular objective)</p> <p>Goals for democratic citizenship & human rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the nature of citizenship in a democratic society: what are the rights, responsibilities and duties of a citizen within a society based on a democratic constitution; • what does participatory citizenship mean and how can citizens be involved constructively in public affairs; • how can citizens control the Government and influence public decisions; • what does it mean to respect the law, and how can citizens participate in the process of improving existing laws; • how can citizens participate in civil society; • how can citizens ensure that human rights are observed and respected in daily life situations. (DES 2001, 44–45) 	<p>Social and civic competences (as a key competence)</p> <p>Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.</p> <p>Civic competence is based on knowledge of the concepts of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, and civil rights [...]. [...] Skills for civic competence relate to the ability to engage effectively with others in the public domain, and to display solidarity [...]. This involves critical and creative reflection and constructive participation in community or neighbourhood activities as well as decision-making at all levels, from local to national and European level, in particular through voting. (OJEU 2006, 16–17)</p>	<p>Civic competences – ‘Responsible citizen’ (as a key competence)</p> <p>Competences and outcomes related to civic competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competences for interpersonal, cultural, and social relationships; • understanding and respecting diversity among people; • exercising tolerance and respect for others; • assuming accountability for issues of general public interest, responsibility and civic participation; • tolerating and undertaking useful changes in one’s private life, for an entire society and for the environment. (MEST 2011, 16) 	<p>Citizenship competence (as a key competence)</p> <p>Citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.</p> <p>Essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to this competence (<i>text not shown since almost identical to ECRF 2006</i>) (OJEU 2018, 10–11)</p>

Notes: Adapted from DES (2001), MEST (2011), and OJEU (2006, 2018). Words in **bold** indicate relevant concepts related to conceptions of citizenship.

of civic/citizenship education/competences reveals a number of relevant issues. First, the comparison of Kosovo curriculum frameworks of 2001 and 2011 shows that the status of civic competence became central in the 2011 framework as a *key competence* since in 2001 it was only elaborated on as a cross-curricular objective. Also, the definition and goals of civic education in 2001 are contextualised for the Kosovo context as a post-war society, with a focus on personal freedom and personal responsibility, in line with a personal responsible/individualist conception of citizenship within the democratic society. The 2001 KCF also calls for participation in civic life and respect for human rights and highlights the role of education for democratic citizenship. In the 2011 KCF, the outcome of civic education/competences is clearly defined as ‘a responsible citizen’. However, the conception of civic competences and associated outcomes point to a personally responsible/individualist, and to a lesser degree, to participatory/social conception of citizenship.

Next, the comparison of 2006 ECRF and 2011 KCF definitions and goals of civic competences shows both similarities and differences. In both documents, there is a clear focus on the role of civic education for democracy, in that mastery of civic competences needs to lead to responsible participation in civic life. However, the 2006 ECRF places

more emphasis on the participation function of civic competences, particularly participation in the democratic process of voting. The 2011 KCF is less specific in defining goals related to civic competences than the 2001 KCF and 2006 ECRF documents; however, the civic competence concepts used in the 2011 KCF align better with the 2006 ECRF, especially in terms of having the central role as a *key* competence.

Civic competences in the latest grades 6 and 7 civic education curricula in Kosovo

The 2011 KCF is an umbrella document that outlines the vision and goals of education in Kosovo, which is further defined and detailed in other curriculum documents for primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels (MEST 2011). The 2011 KCF introduced the concept of curriculum stages, which represent '[...] the reference point for the progress of learning, organizing learning activities, and the approach and assessment criteria for mastering the competences of KCF' (MEST 2012, 18). For example, lower secondary education included curriculum stage 3, labelled 'Further development and orientation' covering Grades 6–7, and stage 4, labelled 'Reinforcement and orientation' covering Grades 8–9 (MEST 2011). Accordingly, civic competences are defined first at curriculum stage 3, and then within civic education curriculum in Grades 6 and 7. Table 2 summarises the definitions and conceptions of civic education in the lower secondary core curriculum (stage 3) and civic education curricula in Grades 6 and 7.

As shown in Table 2, the curriculum stage 3 lists eight broad learning outcomes to be mastered by students in relation to civic competences for the stage. These learning outcomes are further detailed in the civic education curricula for grades 6 and 7. The columns on grades 6 and 7 curricula in Table 2 only show the broader purposes and visions for civic education. Further specific learning outcomes for each of the grades are not given here, but they build on the same purposes. The analysis of the core concepts highlighted in Table 2 reveals the focus on personally responsible/individualist conceptions of citizenship, and to some extent on participatory/social conceptions as overall the focus is placed on teaching students to become active and responsible citizens for navigating the world through an understanding of how institutions work, and how to relate to the social context. An underlying assumption of these conceptions seems to be related to the age of students at curriculum stage 3, mostly at 12–13 years old, who are yet to become eligible voters at 18. Thus, curriculum stage 3 highlights the preparation for what is yet to come in students' life, or in Biesta's (2007) terms, more education *for* (eventual) democratic participation, and less education *through* democracy.

However, the learning outcome that expects students to 'Identify prejudices that might exist in school and in the surrounding area and suggests concrete actions to fight them' (MEST 2012, 23) hints towards the conceptions of justice-oriented/political citizenship in line with Westheimer and Kahne (2004), who argue that a justice-oriented citizen seeks to address areas of injustice. Additionally, *responsible decision-making* could potentially have a justice-oriented/political application if such decision-making leads to students' actions that go beyond individual and social participation.

Table 2. Purposes of civic competences/education in latest Grades 6 and 7 civic education curricula.

2012 Kosovo Core Curriculum (Stage 3 – Grades 6 & 7)	2018 Grade 6 civic education curriculum	2018 Grade 7 civic education curriculum
<i>Learning outcomes associated with civic competence:</i>	<i>Purposes of Grade 6 civic education curriculum:</i>	<i>Purposes of Grade 7 civic education curriculum:</i>
<p>Student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implements and respects rules of good behaviour in the classroom, at school, etc. [...] 2. Expresses the opinion about the school rules and other rules he/she wants to change [...]. 3. Reacts to inappropriate behaviour in school/classroom and out of it, which impact interpersonal relations [...]. 4. Expresses understanding towards persons that suffered violation of any of their rights [...]. 5. In different ways of expression, explains the necessity to respect and implement rules and laws [...]. 6. Shows high self-esteem in taking decisions on actions he/she undertakes, without damaging interests of others, which contribute to increasing the quality of the activity of the social group or the community. 7. Identifies prejudices that might exist in school and in the surrounding area and suggests concrete actions to fight them. 8. Takes part in activities that promote tolerance and cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, etc. diversity at school or in community [...]. (MEST 2012, 23) 	<p>Civic education covers issues such as social relations, associations and interactions of the individual with the group and institutions, rights and responsibilities, decision-making, environment and sustainable development.</p> <p>Students of this age group must understand the relationships with the social context and reflect on the environment where they live. Therefore, Civic Education assists students to develop their intellectual, moral, and social potential as well as to think and act responsibly. [...] Grade 6 civic education cultivates in students the love for people, country, life and the world in general. (MEST 2018a, 146)</p>	<p>Grade 7 civic education covers issues such as social relations, people's behaviours and attitudes, connections and mutual impact of nature and society, social, human and civic values, participation in institutional decision-making, and environment and well-being.</p> <p>Students of this age group must understand the relationships with the social context and reflect on the environment where they live, therefore they must cultivate and practice civic and human values. They must understand that democratic society is grounded on rule of law, respect of human rights, respect of diversity, equal opportunities, transparency, inclusion, solidarity and respect of human dignity. Civic education teaches students to become active and responsible citizens in decision-making, to be familiar with types of institutions and their functions and responsibilities [...]. (MEST 2018b, 160)</p>

Adapted from MEST (2012, 2018a, 2018b). Words in **bold** indicate relevant concepts related to conceptions of citizenship.

Discussion, conclusions, and further research

The findings and results presented above along the lines of main guiding questions that the article addresses highlight a number of issues relevant for a developing context such as Kosovo. First, Kosovo represents a unique case in the recent educational developments and reforms, especially within the European context, in that it has served as an open ground for European education trends. Kosovo deliberately and intentionally tried to break away from its troubled past of conflict and draw near the Western Europe trends. Kosovo is a clear example of 'loud borrowing' as neither 'externalization' nor 'silent borrowing' (Waldow 2009) really capture the policy flow into Kosovo's curriculum reform; rather, local policy makers called for and welcomed curriculum policy proposals offered by the international organisations and consultants deemed to be in line with current Western Europe education trends at the time. In Kosovo's context, loud borrowing indicates the education policy-making process in which national authorities deliberately pursued and locally adopted the 2006 EU recommended policy on key competences.

Also, while Kosovo represents a strong case of convergence in education policy, it is unique for the European context in the sense that international policies arrived in Kosovo through international consultants affiliated with the UNESCO, UNICEF or the World Bank or another organisation from the West – which confirms prior findings in global education policy flows, which usually follow a one-way direction from the West to developing countries (Verger, Novelli, and Altinyelken 2012). As a result, due to the lack of local expertise on the one hand, and political openness and support for anything ‘European’ or ‘international’ as a desired benchmark on the other, Kosovo turned into an open educational project to install new curriculum trends, especially through the 2011 reform.

In this regard, ‘loud borrowing’ might be the more appropriate term instead of borrowing since educational reform was adapted from international organisations to the Kosovo context, although the documents at the end were published under auspices of the local institutions – DES in 2011 and MEST in 2011. This process of ‘loud borrowing’ allowed local authorities to signal progress towards European education standards as they amplified incoming curriculum policies to the local public and the international community. To illustrate this, the then incumbent Kosovo minister of education stated, in support of the adoption of the 2011 competence-based curricula, that

The solutions proposed in this document [KCF] take into account the immediate needs for improvement of pre-university education in Kosovo, as well as the present educational trends in developed countries, so that our students are competitive with their peers in Europe and beyond. (MEST 2011, 5)

Ultimately, the curriculum policy reform had to play the dual role of reforming education locally, and signalling the European orientation of Kosovo’s leadership and public internationally. As such, loud borrowing indicates an education policy-making process in which national authorities deliberately pursue and welcome external policies for both educational and political ends.

Considering the broader political, social, and economic context of Kosovo then, it is evident why the 2011 reform on competence-based education approaches made it into the Kosovo curriculum. In efforts to show the closeness of Kosovo to Western Europe, the Kosovo government, after declaration of independence in 2008, sponsored international marketing initiatives which branded Kosovars as ‘Young Europeans’ and Kosovo as the youngest country introduced within the European boundaries (see for example Hapçiu and Sparks [2012]). Adopting competence-based curriculum (CBC) reform based on EC key competences thus served the aspirations of local policy-makers, arguably not because CBC was considered the most appropriate reform, but precisely because it served the larger goal of signalling to the international community the aspiration of Kosovars to be part of the European developed nations.

Turning to civic competences in the 2011 policy, the findings provide explicit evidence of the ‘loud borrowing’ of education policy, particularly from the 2006 ECRF (OJEU 2006) to the 2011 KCF (MEST 2011), with the key conceptions following primarily the *personally responsible/individualist* definition of democratic subjectivity or good citizenship. Both in EC and Kosovo documents, civic education envisions future democratic citizens who understand the institutional and social contexts and act accordingly by obeying laws and participating in civic and democratic life. From the educational policy perspective

then, the new 2011 KCF aims to construct Kosovars as 'Young Europeans' along the same lines that the European Commission recommends to educate all other students across EU member states (for details see Hapçiu and Sparks [2012]). Also, civic education goals in Kosovo's lower secondary core curriculum, and in Grades 6 and 7 provide more evidence of the instrumentalist role of education in producing a specific future democratic citizen who can think rationally and autonomously in Kantian terms and participate in civic life through social interactions in the Deweyan sense. Related to this, the adoption of CBC as an EU-promoted policy assists in overriding local ethnic tensions in Kosovo by offering a European-oriented vision of education and its associated values that contribute towards the newly-promoted identity of 'Young Europeans'. In this sense, Kosovo's civic competences, similarly to prior research in post-conflict societies (Quaynor 2012), avoid local ethnic-related controversial issues, and push for a European identity that builds on internationally-promoted democratic citizenship and civic competences.

Lastly, what is lacking both in the ECRF and Kosovo conceptualizations of civic competences is a more proactive focus on a justice-oriented/political conception of democratic subjectivity in Arendt's (1977, 1958) terms, where students not only *learn for* and *participate in* democracy, but also have the possibility to become democratic subjects by *doing* democracy, which in turn initiates new beginnings of others who take up students' *doing* as a precondition for students to become democratic subjects. Similarly, conceptions of justice-oriented citizens who, as noted by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), critically assess social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes, and seek out and address areas of injustice, are less visible in Kosovo's 2011 civic competences, but are still noted in learning outcomes for grades 6 and 7. It might take sustained efforts in implementing the 2011 civic competences on personally responsible/individualist and participatory/social conceptions of citizenship to build a cohesive democratic and inclusive society. Only then, perhaps, will there be room for more emphasis on justice-oriented/political conceptions of citizenship in a post-conflict context such as Kosovo so that students and future citizens are able to address areas of injustice through democratic means without reverting to past inter-ethnic violence.

Implications, limitations and further research

The idea of loud borrowing as conceptualised in the article has implications for the Kosovo case and the field of comparative education more broadly. Regarding Kosovo, loud borrowing specifies the approach policy-makers have followed in education policy-making since the end of the war in 1999. It reveals how and why competence-based curricula became part of curriculum reform in 2011, and implies that future curriculum reforms in the country can be initiated or adopted either through a similar internationally-driven and locally-welcomed process, or another locally-inspired and locally-developed curriculum reform process based on locally-available educational expertise. Regarding the field of comparative education, loud borrowing exemplifies a unique process of travelling education policies from an external source to a developing context. It implies that for a developing country with certain political aspirations the source of the policy is equally, if not more, important than what the policy contains. As such, future comparative education research might contribute towards a more nuanced understanding of how and why developing countries engage in loud borrowing.

In the light of the findings related to the civic competence curriculum policy in Kosovo, and to respond to the question *What kind of citizens?* (Westheimer and Kahne 2004; Biesta 2008), this article has demonstrated that civic education curriculum in Kosovo offers opportunities for students to learn about the democratic society and democratic institutions they are embedded in, and eventually how to participate in the civic and democratic life in a distant future, i.e. become citizens who are *personally responsible/individualist* and *participatory/social*. Indeed, the findings are in line with those of Westheimer and Kahne (2004) on the US, and Biesta (2008) on Scotland, where the personally responsible/individualist and participatory/social conceptions of citizenships were dominant. These conceptions have implications for curriculum policy-making and implementation in Kosovo (and Europe more broadly), particularly pertaining to the effects that implementation of competence-based curricula have in diverse contexts. As shown in the analyses here, civic competences as part of a competence-based curriculum in Kosovo and also as promoted at the EU level, seem to be focused on developing and maintaining existing democratic order. If education is to serve a more critical role in advancing democracy and human rights in Kosovo and globally, a turn towards justice-oriented/political conceptions of citizenship will be required in future curriculum reforms/policies.

While the present study fills a gap in the literature on different conceptions of civic competences in developing contexts, one clear limitation needs to be recognised. The study only captures the possibilities that Kosovo students have to develop into democratic citizens relying on the education *for* democracy approach, i.e. the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the curriculum policy context in pursuit of democratic citizenry but the findings are limited in the sense that the study does not capture whether the education *through* democracy approach is present in Kosovo schools. Therefore, future research could examine the institutional and structural context of Kosovo schools in search of presence, or lack thereof, of democratic practices. This would require fieldwork across a number of schools in Kosovo to collect and analyse contextual data on school factors and relationships that promote, or inhibit, the pursuit of democratic purposes of education: first, to examine to what extent the education *for* democracy goals are implemented in schools; and second, and more importantly, to examine if schools in Kosovo are democratic institutions that make education *through* democracy possible?

Notes

1. This article uses the word *competence* throughout because the definition of competence in Kosovo curriculum documents is aligned with the European Commission key competences, even though the documents themselves use *competency*.
2. The curriculum policy documents examined here are only those produced and adopted by the Kosovo governmental authorities, which only affect Albanians and other communities that recognize and accept Kosovo authorities, but not the Kosovo Serbian community, whose education system is affected by curricula developed and adopted in Serbia. This situation has further implications that cannot be addressed in the present study; however it has already been argued that the divisive situation contributes to ongoing segregation and fragmentation of Kosovo society along ethnic lines (for details, see Horvatek and Tahirsylaj 2017).

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