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**Article:**

Bache, I. and Taylor, A. (2003) *The politics of policy resistance: reconstructing higher education in Kosovo*. *Journal of Public Policy*, 23 (3). pp. 279-300. ISSN 0143-814X

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X03003131>

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## The Politics of Policy Resistance: Reconstructing Higher Education in Kosovo

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### ABSTRACT

This article considers attempts to incorporate lessons and transfer policies from Britain in the reconstruction of Higher Education in Kosovo after 1999. In doing so, it employs aspects of the lesson-drawing framework developed by Rose (1991 and 2001) and the related concepts of policy transfer and policy diffusion. Drawing on contributions from anthropology and democratization studies, we suggest development of the public policy frameworks for lesson drawing and policy transfer in circumstances characterised by asymmetric interdependence, in which the tactics and strategies of *policy resistance* by ‘subordinate’ recipient actors can be crucial. This article details the nature of policy resistance and sets out hypotheses for future research.

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While concepts such as globalisation and interdependence are contested within academe, there is consensus that national boundaries are subject to increasing penetration both materially and ideologically and ideas and practices are transferred from one place to another. This is most notable in the public policy literature, with the conceptual developments of lesson-drawing, policy transfer and policy diffusion. These concepts were developed and have been applied to cases where the transmission process has been largely horizontal across independent states. Lessons are also drawn and policies transferred and diffused where there is ‘external’ pressure on state actors to adopt particular policies. This may be evident where states have pooled sovereignty (e.g., the European Union) or are subject to pressure from international agreements (e.g. World Trade Organisation, global environmental protocols). It is certainly the case in post-conflict societies where international institutions and agencies are directing change and, in particular, where change is associated with external attempts to democratize states. This process is increasingly common, as democratization has become ‘a genuinely global aspiration’ (Grugel, 2002: 239). In this

process, the power relationship between the ‘donor’ and the ‘recipient’ is characterized by asymmetric interdependence, with the former possessing more key power resources: political, legal, financial, organisational and informational.

We argue that in the context of asymmetric interdependence there is a need for the public policy literature to hypothesize the dynamics of relationships between the ‘dominant donors’ of ideas and practices and the ‘subordinate recipients’. In particular, there is a need to theorise the nature and intensity of domestic resistance to external policy inputs. In developing the idea of *policy resistance* we have drawn on relevant literature from anthropology and democratization studies. The collective insights gained are then applied to the case study of the role played by British actors in the reconstruction of higher education (HE) in Kosovo following the end of the war there in 1999. We conclude by developing hypotheses for the future study of policy resistance.

### *I Theoretical Development*

In broad terms it is useful to distinguish between voluntaristic and coercive lesson-drawing/policy transfer. In the former, supply is a function of demand: if a country wants to do so, it will take a lesson. In the latter, demand is a function of supply: if a powerful international organisation makes a condition, then the country is obliged to take it.

#### *Lesson Drawing*

Lesson-drawing refers to the process by which actors in one time or place draw lessons from another time or place that are then incorporated into their own policies and practices. The lessons drawn may be either positive or negative and, as such, may or may not lead to the transfer of policies or practices. For Rose (1991:7), a lesson is an ‘action-oriented conclusion about a programme or programmes in operation elsewhere’. Rose (1991: 21f) examines certain key features that encourage and inhibit the process of lesson-drawing as well as discussing some of the practical steps required for successful lesson-drawing and identifies five alternative methods of lesson drawing: copying, emulation, hybridization, synthesis, and inspiration.

For the most part, Rose argues, policymakers prefer to allow programmes to operate routinely without disruption. Given pressures on time and resources, policymakers do not spend their time seeking to create the ‘ideal’ policy in any given area but act as ‘satisficers’. Satisficing behaviour seeks to maintain satisfaction with the status quo with minimum disruption. As long as there is satisfaction with the

status quo then current programmes can be allowed to run as routine. The fact that another programme may be superior is not enough to encourage satisficers to promote a change of programmes that would disrupt the current routine. Those who wish to see a change of programme must promote a disjuncture between popular aspirations and the achievements of the current programme, thus creating dissatisfaction with the status quo. This is not always easy.

Sensitivity to context is crucial to understanding the potential for lesson drawing. The nature of institutions, political values and financial resources vary enormously across, and indeed within, different states. As such, 'the greater emphasis given to influences from the past as the dominant force affecting future national developments, the greater the barrier raised to applying lessons from abroad' (Rose, 2001: 4). In short, to attempt a great leap forward without regard for context is a policy of impossibilism (Rose, 2003: 7). Generally, policies from abroad will be adapted to fit the local context.

#### *Policy Transfer*

Policy transfer focuses on policy content and on the role of agency in transferring ideas and practices from one time or space to another. Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 349–350) identify seven elements of policy transfer: goals, structure and content; policy instruments or administrative techniques; institutions; ideology; ideas, attitudes and concepts; and negative lessons. In seeking to explain why policy transfer occurs, they distinguish between two types of transfer, *voluntary* and *coercive*. A further distinction is made between *direct* and *indirect coercive* policy transfer. *Voluntary transfer* refers to the process by which policy-makers freely choose to adopt policies or practices from another place or time. This process is usually the result of perceived dissatisfaction with existing arrangements. *Direct coercive transfer* in its most obvious form exists when one organization forces another to adopt a particular policy or practice. This category could relate equally to the imposition of policies by one state on to another or by a supranational institution onto a state. *Indirect coercive transfer* can arise from a range of factors: externalities, technological change, global economic pressures and international consensus. Each of these 'push' factors may lead to similar policy responses from different states, often through cooperative working (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996: 348–9).

A number of factors may constrain the potential for policy transfer. Generally, complex policies or practices will be more difficult to transfer than simple ones. This is related to the fact that each policy environment is different and anything transferred is necessarily planted into

a different plot. Thus, even where shared ideological goals across nations raise the prospects for successful policy transfer, existing policies and practices still place constraints. Other factors constraining the potential for transfer include the stock of political, bureaucratic and financial resources available to the recipient organization or country.

### *Policy Diffusion*

Policy diffusion focuses on the timing and sequence of the spread of ideas and practices, rather than the content. Diffusion studies focus on explaining why some states either adopt or adapt policies and practices more readily than others. The policy diffusion literature places the concepts of immunity and isomorphy at opposite ends of a spectrum. *Immunity* is an extreme situation, which means that no diffusion of policy is possible because the organisational or state unit is not receptive to new external ideas (Bache and Olsson 2001: 218). The opposite hypothesis of *isomorphy* says that diffusion of ideas and concepts occurs quite easily, resulting in an efficient homogenisation process across states as states and organisations become increasingly similar (Meyer & Rowan 1977; DiMaggio & Powell 1983).

*Resistance* is a strategy of reacting to pressures from outside a social group. This may be an expression of strong organisational or national identity, which can develop into a defence of established values that are seen as threatened by external ideas. Strong and efficient resistance, including relying on *inertia* to block action, can make the individual organisation or nation immune to new ideas and concepts. *Imitation* is another way of reacting. This strategy is in line with the hypothesis of isomorphy. Here, new ideas and concepts in the surrounding world are adopted fast and uncritically. Every modern organisation is, in this perspective, open for new fashions of organisational design and practice.

The concept of *adaptation* indicates that diffusion is much more complicated than is assumed by the imitation hypothesis (see Bache and Olsson 2001: 218). Adaptation may occur on either the conceptual level or in practice, or possibly both, but a separation may develop between conceptual adaptation and practice. An organisation may simply accept adaptation conceptually in order to register agreement with dominating ideas or concepts in the surrounding world. Yet changes on the conceptual level may eventually affect practice. This process is described as the 'virus effect'; new ways of acting will emerge slowly and imperceptibly in relation to the level of discourse. In this view, discourse works as a virus that spreads and 'infects' the behaviour of the organisational or state unit.

*Policy Resistance*

The dynamics and process of policy resistance is relatively under-theorised. We take as a starting point the observation that ‘States are notoriously resistant to change. Reform of state cultures and practices and of the patterns of access to the state generally change incrementally’ (Grugel, 2002: 244). Moreover, in the context of transferring ideas and practices in an attempt to democratize states, the nature of resistance to policy transfer will be shaped by past practices and embedded interests. In the process of transition, behaviour ‘is dependent at least as much on the weight of the past as it is on the imperative for change’ (Grugel, 2002: 85). Finally, we argue that in all states there will be some groups supportive of external inputs and some opposed; the interplay between these domestic actors is important for understanding the prospects for lesson drawing, policy transfer or diffusion.

While the notions of voluntary and coercive policy transfer highlight extremes, the process of policy transfer is unlikely to be exclusively one or the other. Policy transfer may have both voluntary and coercive elements, but is in reality a bargaining process between interdependent actors. This bargaining should not be seen as a straightforward external-internal process, but is more complex, with different domestic actors taking different positions in relation to change. Some domestic resistance is likely to feature in all cases. Even with the most coercive incidence of policy transfer, those coercing are dependent on the domestic policy implementers for effective transfer. As such, there is always a degree of interdependence in the process, however asymmetric that interdependence might be. Even the most subordinate of actors have tactics and resources that can be deployed as part of a strategy of resistance. Moreover, there is the possibility of a two-stage game. In *stage one*, the process of policy transfer is largely coercive or hegemonic as recipients accept donor conditions in order to receive benefits. In *stage two*, the process is more voluntaristic, as recipient implementers can decide whether to resist or subvert the conditions agreed.

This point is well illustrated by James C. Scott’s study of class relations in a Malay village, where groups gave different accounts of the same events to different audiences. These contradictory behaviours were the product of their dependence on other groups and had, what Scott (1990: ix) referred to as a ‘situational logic’: ‘The poor sang one tune when they were in the preserve of the rich and another among themselves. The rich spoke one way to the poor and another among themselves’.

Scott illustrates how these contradictory behaviours formed part of a resistance strategy for social groups in ‘the most severe conditions of

powerlessness and dependency', such as slavery and serfdom, noting that 'subordinates in such large-scale structures of domination nevertheless have a fairly extensive social existence outside the immediate control of the dominant' (1990: x-xi).

Even in a situation of domination, there are spaces open to exploitation by both the dominator and the dominated. Both, but especially the dominated, can develop a 'hidden transcript' that may play an important role in a context of apparent subordination. Central to this notion of the hidden transcript is the contrast between a 'hegemonic public discourse' and a 'backstage discourse of what cannot be spoken in the face of power'; the argument that there are 'multiple audiences' for the 'displays of domination'; and that powerless groups have an interest in 'conspiring to reinforce hegemonic appearances' (Scott, 1990: xiii). A characteristic feature of the dominated group's behaviour is to avoid irrevocable acts of public defiance, preferring instead to use 'disguise, deception and indirection, as tactics, while maintaining an outward impression, in power situations of willing, even enthusiastic consent' (Scott, 19970: 17).

More broadly, Scott (1990: 19) talks about the 'infrapolitics of subordinate classes', meaning a 'wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance'. Here, 'most of the political life of the subordinate groups is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of powerholders, nor in complete compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites' (Scott, 1990: 136). This final point chimes with our view that in the context of asymmetric interdependence the process of policy transfer is likely to be neither truly coercive, nor truly voluntary. Our purpose here is to highlight the sophistication of resistance strategies of apparently weak groups in the context of asymmetric interdependence.

#### *The University of Prishtina as an Ethnic Institution*

To assist the reconstruction of higher education (HE) in Kosovo, the British Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) funded assistance from British universities to the University of Prishtina, the most important HE institution in Kosovo. As part of this project, academics from Prishtina visited a number of UK university departments, including the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield. The authors of this article subsequently visited Kosovo on two occasions to advise the University of Prishtina on establishing a new Department of Political Science and Public Administration. Before and after visits the exchanges between the researchers and the practitioners continued via e-mail and telephone.

The methodology for this study was a form of action research, in which the researchers were involved in promoting change rather than the 'objective' research process of description, understanding and explanation (Lewin 1946). The action research approach involves researchers reconciling understanding of the research situation with promoting change in that context (see Robson 1992). In Kosovo, it became clear that to give effective advice depended on interviewing potential recipients in order to understand the local policy context. Local policy-makers were keen to avoid what they called the 'Frankenstein Syndrome' occurring in Kosovo, which they believed had developed in other post-Communist states. This was the inappropriate adoption of practices from elsewhere producing a dysfunctional whole considerably less than the sum of its component parts. Beyond this concern, local actors had a range of interests to protect that were challenged by external pressures for change. Changes to the University of Prishtina were of political, cultural and material importance to key domestic actors both within and without the institution itself.

#### *Background*

The education system of Kosovo 'has had a long history of inseparability with the politics of the region' (British Council 2000: Appendix 20, para. 2). Between the first and second world wars, all education in Kosovo was conducted in Serbian. A 1948 survey found that 74 per cent of Albanians aged 10+ were functionally illiterate and there was a massive shortage of Albanian-speaking teachers. From 1945, the Tito regime began to reverse this policy through a process that became known as the 'Albanianisation' of the Kosovo educational system. Other minorities within the Yugoslav Federal Republic were also taught in their own language. However, Islam was suppressed and, from 1952, teaching in mosques became a criminal offence. The Tito regime hoped that this 'stick and carrot' approach to policy would inhibit the growth of Kosovar Albanian identity and identification with Enver Hoxha's Albania, but this hope was not realised. The education system became the major transmission belt for a Kosovo Albanian identity (Malcolm 1998: 318). An important ethnic Albanian demand throughout this period was that Kosovo be given its own university.

In 1968 demonstrations took place in Prishtina demanding a local university, a demand clearly linked to separatist politics. While the demonstrations were suppressed, Tito made further concessions intended to placate moderate Albanian opinion. In late 1969, it was agreed that the subsidiary institutions of the University of Belgrade be transformed and expanded into the University of Prishtina, a multi-ethnic



institution teaching in Serbo-Croat and Albanian. In the next decade, the proportion of students from an ethnic Albanian background grew from 38 percent to 78 percent. The University subsequently played a prominent role in the Albanianisation of Kosovo's political, administrative and security apparatuses under the 1974 Constitution that granted Kosovo substantial autonomy within the Yugoslav Federation (Malcolm 1998: 326).

The subsequent expansion in student numbers at the University was not matched by a comparable expansion in resources. On 11th March 1981, student demonstrations began over conditions at the University. By April 1st, the demonstrations had expanded into political demands from some protestors for full republic status, and calls from others for a merger with Albania. These demonstrations involved both students and workers. In response, the Yugoslav authorities condemned the University as a hotbed of Albanian nationalism, and the demonstrations as separatist inspired counter-revolution. Textbooks, students and teachers were purged, and cultural and personnel exchanges with Albania were banned. Demonstrations were crushed using federal police and military units as well as the newly created territorial militias (Malcolm 1998: 335–36, Judah 2000: 39–41).

Belgrade blamed the University for fomenting discontent. However, Kosovo's low level of economic development, resulting in high graduate unemployment, was a more important source of discontent. Serb repression and high unemployment encouraged armed resistance and led to an Albanian diaspora in Western Europe, especially Austria and West Germany, and to a lesser extent in the United States. In the 1980s, many University of Prishtina graduates undertook postgraduate education abroad and contrasted their experience in West European universities with that in Kosovo. Many Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) leaders in exile were former students of the University of Prishtina. This reinforced the Serb view that the University was a nationalist hotbed and that the Students' Unions were increasingly pro-KLA. Not surprisingly, the identification of the University with the KLA was to pose major problems after the Serb withdrawal from Kosovo in 1999: competing factions of Kosovo society saw the University as a valuable resource in post-conflict politics and as a means of leverage over the development of the next generation of the Kosovo Albanian elite. Moreover, the return of the 'lost generation' of ethnic Albanian graduates was to have important consequences for HE reform.

From the late 1980s onwards, the rise of Milosevic and Serbian nationalism placed Kosovo's autonomy under increasing threat. Up to 1990, educational policy in Kosovo was determined by the 1974 Constitution, which gave Kosovo's educational authorities considerable free-

dom over both policy content and delivery. Milosevic made it clear he regarded this aspect of autonomy as a threat to Serbia. This led to further student-worker demonstrations in Prishtina in November 1988 in support of Titoism (strong Yugoslavia, weak Serbia). These demonstrations were suppressed, but convinced Milosevic that the time was right to act against Kosovo nationalism more directly (Malcolm 1998: 343).

In March 1989, the Milosovic regime forced the Kosovan Assembly into conceding much of its autonomy. In July of the same year, the Assembly was dissolved, in defiance of the 1974 Constitution. In 1990, a range of powers, including those over education, was transferred to Belgrade. Rilindja, an Albanian language publishing house and newspaper in Kosovo was suppressed, the Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences was closed, and thousands of Kosovo Albanians were dismissed from the public services.

In May 1990, all remaining Albanians resigned from the public services and in August-September new laws were passed imposing a new curriculum at the University of Prishtina taught in Serbian. Between September-December 1990, all Kosovo Albanian staff and students were expelled from the University of Prishtina, and educational segregation imposed (Malcolm 1998: 343-44). This policy of segregation was accompanied by efforts to degrade and impoverish Albanian culture in Kosovo. In these efforts, an attack on the University of Prishtina was central. The result was that, by the beginning of the academic year in 1991, the University had, 'to all intents and purposes, become a Serbian-only institution. Eight hundred and sixty three teachers and staff were sacked' (Judah 2000: 63). In response, the Kosovans began to develop a parallel system, under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova and the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo). The Kosovo parliament rejected Serbianisation, declared Kosovo's independence and created a shadow government, including an education ministry (Reitan 2000: 71-102).

#### *The Parallel System, 1991-1999*

Civil war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990s convinced the Albanian political leadership that it could not provoke Serbia. Instead, the policy was one of passive resistance to Serbia, which led to the development of a 'parallel' HE system. Kosovan intellectuals, many of them linked to the University of Prishtina, played a central role in developing the philosophy of the parallel system, much of which was financed by the taxation of the Kosovan diaspora that eventually numbered about 400,000. In October 1991, Ibrahim Rugova and the

LDK established in Bad Godesburg, Germany an embryonic state apparatus for Kosovo, which levied taxes and made policy. Ninety per cent of revenues from this went towards education, which was at the heart of the passive resistance programme. This gigantic system of self-help undermined the attractiveness of Kosovo as part of a 'Greater Albania' in favour of independence.

In the case of higher education, students were taught in private homes by professors purged from the University of Prishtina. By 1995, there were some 12,200 students organised in 20 faculties of the parallel education system. The curriculum was concerned primarily with promoting Albanian consciousness and identity, and drew on Albanian resources. The process was heavily politicised and isolated from mainstream education by both geography and police harassment. Moreover, the system's academic awards were recognised only by Albania.

In 1996, the LDK and the Ministry of Education in Belgrade reached an agreement, brokered by an Italian catholic charity, which permitted the return of Albanians to the mainstream higher education system and the reactivation of the pre-1990 curriculum (British Council 2000: 182-I, para 33). However, this agreement was never implemented, due to resistance from Serb students who saw this as a step towards separatism. When Serb students refused ethnic Albanian's access to University facilities, the resulting demonstrations, this time led by KLA sympathisers (Judah 2000: 135–36), were again suppressed. This incident reinforced the political nature of the parallel university, which was increasingly run by political cadres under a Rector with enormous powers.

In the long run, the parallel system was not sustainable, given its lack of technical infrastructure and the difficulties of delivery under Serb harassment. Between 1989 and 1996, student numbers halved. Despite this, the parallel university assumed enormous political significance as a symbol of Kosovan identity and determination. Those who operated the parallel system saw themselves as front-line freedom fighters and the continued existence of the parallel university symbolised for many the viability of an independent Kosovan state. The parallel system ended with the conclusion of the war in 1999 when the international agencies reincorporated the excluded Albanians into the University of Prishtina.

The University of Prishtina's importance within Kosovo can be seen in four main areas. First, it provided physical evidence of an autonomous intellectual Kosovan life. Second, it provided a training ground for the ethnic Albanian elite. Third, it was a major developer of Kosovar Albanian identity and consciousness. Fourth, the University and its students were a focal point of resistance to Serbianisation. In short, the University of Prishtina was an extraordinary educational institution

because of its centrality in the intellectual and cultural life of ethnic Albanian Kosovars (Judah 2000: 37–8). Only in this context, can the importance of the University be understood to the reconstruction of Kosovo after 1999; and, only when the importance of the University in Kosovan life is recognised, can the nature and intensity of policy resistance in response to external pressures for change be fully understood.

*Reconstructing Higher Education in Kosovo: post-1999*

Following the war in Kosovo education reform was placed under the control of Professor Michael Daxner, the Principal International Officer of the United Nation's Mission in Kosovo's (UNMIK's) Transitional Administrative Department of Education, Science and Technology. Daxner drew his authority from UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which set out UNMIK's reconstruction mandate. Daxner emphasised:

We are not here for the school directors, the ministers or the bureaucrats. We are here for the teachers and the students. We have to de-politicize and democratize the system. Because in the end, it is education which will play the key role in peace-building (UNMIK 2000).

UNMIK's statement of intent was knowingly ambitious, given resource constraints and the realities of Kosovo Albanian politics. However, UNMIK thought it necessary to articulate this vision publicly as a means of bringing external pressure on those running the HE system. During 2000–2001 UNMIK, aided by the Council of Europe and Kosovo's education community, drafted legislation that would underpin the reformed education system. The laws sought to bring Kosovo's education system in line with those elsewhere in Europe.

In line with stated UN objectives, the British Council-funded project aimed to assist the development of new departments at the University of Prishtina, particularly within the social sciences. This was identified as 'a gap in the disciplinary provision of the University' which 'directly related to the University's stated role in the building of democratic citizenship' (Davies, 2001: 3). The University departments covered were Political Science/Public Administration, Sociology, Journalism/Media, Architecture, and Film Directing. These departments were either undergoing fundamental reform after ten years of isolation from wider academic networks, or were being developed for the first time. In relation to the University of Prishtina, it said:

The culture of learning at the University is seen to require an overhaul. In the parallel system, there were huge problems of attendance, with almost a part-time system in operation whereby students turned up only for the examinations. There has been no staff development in terms of higher education

pedagogy and both staff and students have been unused to using journals and current information to inform their work (British Council, 2000: Appendix 20, para 8.3.1).

The British Council grant was spent on three types of activity: a study tour to UK universities by University of Prishtina staff members in Spring 2001 to discuss curriculum issues; visits to Kosovo between February and October 2001 by UK academics and students to advise on curriculum development, departmental reform and to engage in joint seminars or projects; and provision of resources for departmental libraries and film equipment (Davies, 2001: 2).

In relation to the development of the Department of Politics and Public Administration, the focus was on two issues: curriculum development and staff recruitment. The first of these issues was dealt with in the initial study tour by Prishtina staff to the UK and in the first visit to Prishtina of staff from the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield. The second issue was covered in a follow up visit to Prishtina by Sheffield staff. Advice on these two issues received very different responses within Prishtina.

#### *Curriculum Development*

During the visit by Prishtina staff to Sheffield, British academics soon appreciated the need to understand both the practical consequences of the post-war situation for HE in Kosovo and the pre-war political culture that had permeated the institutions and practices of education<sup>2</sup>. Creating a University in Kosovo that would be capable of entering the European HE mainstream would inevitably create conflict because ‘the older generation will insist on a national curriculum including national history and music. Current ministry officials will be doubtful ... [others] will strive for an international balance looking outward to the rest of Europe and the Western World’ (British Council, 2000: Appendix 20, para. 8.22). There would also be problems integrating the formal and informal parallel systems of education and then securing implementation of UNMIK’s vision of a multi-ethnic, pluralist, liberal university based on the Western model. Beyond this, resource constraints added to a complex context for reform attempts.

First, under the communist regime, there had been no Department of Politics at Prishtina University. Prishtina staff stated that this had not been permitted, although some staff claimed that the teaching of politics had effectively taken place within other University departments, notably Law and Sociology. For Daxner and the UN, the development of a Department of Politics was central to the University’s role in the reconstruction of civil society and in educating future policy-

makers along Western lines. As such, the visiting staff members were seeking to develop the Politics curriculum in the context of UN support for 'successful' British models.

Second, while the University of Prishtina was committed to introducing a Politics and Public Administration degree from October 2001, the Department of Politics and Administration at the University existed in name only. While a number of local academics, mainly from other departments at the University of Prishtina, had been earmarked to play a role in the new Politics Departments, none had actually been appointed. Moreover, resource constraints meant the Prishtina staff all had second jobs to supplement the meagre salaries paid by the University.

Third, dependence on external funding from a range of international donors for the reconstruction of HE (including UNMIK, individual governments and a range of NGOs) meant that the Prishtina staff were uncertain of the likely size of the new Department in terms of both staff and students. This uncertainty over funding meant that it was not clear whether appointees would be primarily local or international and, related to this, what their subject specialisms would be. In one sense, this uncertainty made the task easier. Not knowing the staff allowed the curriculum to be developed on the basis of the perceived needs of students and the wider social and administrative demands of Kosovo, rather than being based around staff subject interests. Adjustments would have to be made later if resources and/or recruitment problems meant that the agreed curriculum could not be delivered.

Fourth, resource constraints meant that access to information would be a major problem for both staff and students. The nearest library of any size was a four-hour drive away from Prishtina and this contained little relevant material on Politics and Public Administration. While most new British university departments might overcome this problem with extensive use of information technology (IT), this did not offer a solution here. The Prishtina staff reported very limited access to computer terminals within the University and the local telecommunications network was in need of modernisation. Thus, while extending IT provision was a priority, the funding required for this provision was again uncertain.

#### *Curriculum Discussions*

Despite conflicting interests and immense practical challenges, the Prishtina staff visiting the UK expressed commitment to introducing a Politics and Public Administration degree in October 2001: only eight months forward of their visit to Britain. University of Prishtina staff

and administrators were under great pressure from UNMIK to establish a politics department with the minimum delay.

Following initial exchanges at the University of Sheffield, discussions focused on the Department of Politics' modular curriculum. The University of Sheffield curriculum built from five core modules in year one: Introduction to Political Analysis; An Introduction to Western Political Thought; The Globalisation of World Politics; Comparing Modern Politics; and Modern British Politics. In years two and three, core modules were increasingly replaced by option modules, allowing students greater freedom of choice to specialise.

In adapting the modular structure for the University of Prishtina, a number of factors had to be taken into account. First, Kosovo had an urgent need to develop its civil service and this needed to be reflected in the Politics curriculum. The teaching of Public Administration was a priority and had to be incorporated into the model. Second, while Prishtina University would be able to recruit the brightest students in the country, the culture of education in Kosovo had traditionally not emphasised the development of student skills needed for independent learning. As such, there would be a need to expand the study skills component of the curriculum. Finally, there was a need to incorporate an English-language component into the structure to give students access to a wide literature.

To reflect these points, the Year One core modules in the Prishtina draft were revised to: Study Skills and Political Analysis; Political Theory; International Politics; Public Administration; and English Language. Again, it was re-stated that the curriculum might need revision depending on staff. At this stage, however, it was deemed necessary to 'get the balance right' in relation to perceived needs and to attempt to recruit accordingly.

In the discussions around core modules for the University of Prishtina, differences in opinion began to emerge between the visitors. The differences centred on the extent to which the curriculum should be vocational or non-vocational in content. It is a debate that has been much rehearsed in British higher education. On one side was an emphasis on the University of Prishtina 'training' students for the civil service; on the other side, the emphasis was on the development of critical thinking among students. In this context, the modular structure of the Sheffield curriculum appealed to the visitors: beyond year one, it provided greater flexibility and students would be able to specialise more in either vocational or non-vocational subjects. In addition, the modular system made practical sense in terms of uncertainty over staff appointees.

While there was a clear need for adjustment of the Sheffield curric-



ulum to meet the demands of the University of Prishtina, the modular structure and key components of the curriculum content were accepted enthusiastically by the visitors. Moreover, the eventual curriculum structure and much of the content eventually adopted by the Senate of the University of Prishtina largely reflected what had been agreed at Sheffield.

### *Staff Recruitment*

The barriers to transferring Sheffield practices in terms of staff recruitment were demonstrably greater. The first visit by Sheffield staff to Prishtina took place in July 2001. While ostensibly a visit to discuss curriculum development, the curriculum structure had been agreed by the Senate before the Sheffield visitors arrived. As such, much of the visit focused on other matters, notably: departmental structures and staff administrative responsibilities; teaching and assessment methods; module evaluation practices; student entrance requirements; and the appointment of staff to the Department of Politics and Public Administration. On most of these issues, the advice of Sheffield staff was readily accepted, with adjustments made according to local circumstances. On the issue of staff recruitment however, the advice of Sheffield staff met with resistance.

During the July visit, Sheffield staff provided personnel at the University of Prishtina with documents from the University of Sheffield on university procedures for recruitment. They also provided information specifically on the requirements set out by the Department of Politics. This included information on how posts are advertised, the professional expertise required of successful applicants, and on the selection process itself.

Despite the fact that by July no staff had been appointed to the new Department of Politics and Public Administration, the University still planned to launch the degree programme in October. The Sheffield staff expressed the need for immediate action to recruit international staff, who would usually be required to give a significant period of notice to their existing institutions. This advice was accepted by the international agencies funding and supporting the British Council programme, and by the UN administrators working at the University. However, resistance to the recruitment of international staff came from local University staff and administrators. This resistance was aimed at securing local control over appointments and therefore, in the longer term, control over curriculum content and other aspects of University policy.

Before the September visit, the Sheffield staff were contacted by the



UN administrators to comment on the advertisement for the posts proposed by the University of Prishtina. The response from Sheffield was that the advertisements were so specific in relation to subject specialisms they would limit the number of applicants. Moreover, some of the module specialisms were quite unusual and prompted suspicion in Sheffield that the job descriptions had been designed with specific individuals in mind. These views were shared with UN officials working at the University of Prishtina. They agreed with the concerns, but proved unable to secure agreement with local University administrators to change the advertisement.

The Sheffield staff had also recommended that the advertisement be circulated as widely as possible in the international academic community to attract the best possible range of applicants. Sheffield staff offered to assist in this task, which would be cost-free via academic e-mail networks. Again, the advice was not taken and the advertisement for both international and local staff was only placed in the Kosovo press, albeit in English. The closing date for applications in the advert was shorter than was recommended by Sheffield staff. Clearly, there was little time to waste, but the consequence of this short deadline was to limit the number of applications from overseas academics. The view of UN administrators was that this was the outcome intended by local administrators anxious to retain control of the University.

On arriving in Prishtina in September 2001 for a week-long visit, the Sheffield staff were informed that around 60 applications had been submitted for the posts advertised, the majority came from Kosovo nationals. The two Sheffield staff visitors were also asked to participate in a selection panel, along with two local professors and a UN administrator at the University. The arrangement was that the panel would agree a shortlist and seek to contact as many shortlisted candidates for interview or discussion by other means before the Sheffield staff left at the end of the week.

Due to series of delays caused by local panel members being unavailable, unsuitable or absent, planned meetings of the panel were cancelled until UN administrators made it clear that the selection process would continue in the absence of local staff if necessary. However, the delay meant that it would not be possible for any candidates to be interviewed before the Sheffield academics left Kosovo. This was a particular problem because it emerged that many of the Kosovo applicants shortlisted by the panel members from Prishtina did not appear suitably qualified to teach politics: most were academic lawyers currently employed at the University. Moreover, many of these candidates had not submitted the information required in the job advertisement and in some cases had not even formally applied. Finally, the panel agreed

a shortlist, with recommendations for appointment. This shortlist and accompanying statement was typed up in Albanian by one of the local panel members. When it was translated back into English, at the insistence of the Sheffield staff, the paper contained no recommendations for appointment. Instead, it merely identified suitable modules and potentially suitable staff to teach them. The Sheffield staff refused to sign the document and instead drew up their own document containing recommendations for appointments. The Sheffield staff left with both documents unsigned. The UN staff provided assurances that both documents would be presented to the University Senate.

However, control over staffing, and thus the subsequent direction of the University was not simply about politics. Corruption, while not a feature of Kosovo society alone, was a particular problem facing international advisers. As Michael Daxner (2002: 12) put it 'you can buy examinations, grades, degrees, the right class for your children, the right teacher. . .'. One illustration of this problem was local resistance to the suggestion made by Sheffield advisers that the University's short multiple choice entrance examination should be replaced with a written examination. While corruption was not always an obvious issue, it was nevertheless, what Daxner (2002: 12) described as the 'unpleasant reality' of the situation.

The discussion above paints a bleak picture in relation to prospects for reform at the University of Prishtina. However, there were also positive signs. First, progress was made on issues such as curriculum development, teaching and assessment methods and department structures. Second, while the Sheffield staff faced resistance from some local staff, they received considerable support from others: generally those who had studied outside Kosovo and placed a high value on the University of Prishtina's assimilation into the international academic community. There were clear and understandable tensions within the University about how it should move forward. Many of the Law and Sociology professors who sought jobs in Politics had been the very people who had maintained higher education for ethnic Albanians through the parallel system. Quite understandably, they felt they did not want to lose control over the University again. By contrast, support for international initiatives came primarily from those academics, often with KLA sympathies, who saw rejection of international advice as insular and potentially damaging to Kosovo's long-term development.

Some nine months after the final visit of the Sheffield staff, follow-up research revealed a lack of progress in a number of areas. Department members reported staffing shortages in relation to the 200 plus students recruited and poor library and internet facilities. In both cases, part of the problem was with international donors failing to supply the

necessary funding. More significant for the long term, there were reports of tensions between local and international staff within the University, with the latter claiming they were being undermined by the former.

In summary, our findings echo those of a study on Power and Property Relations Under the United Nations Mission in Kosovo:

‘It is relatively easy for an international mission to assert legal authority over an area, but much more difficult for it to build up the institutional resources to fulfil a responsibility which exists on paper. There are clear dangers in assuming powers without the capacity to exercise them. The social realm does not remain idle, waiting for the international community to allocate attention and resources. Any vacuum of authority is filled by domestic actors’ (UNMIK, 2002: 3).

#### *Wider Implications*

First, we emphasise the importance of local context – historical, political and socio-cultural – to the success or otherwise of lesson drawing and policy transfer. Rose’s (1993) argument that ‘the greater emphasis given to influences from the past as the dominant force affecting future national developments, the greater the barrier raised to applying lessons from abroad’ is particularly important in relation to democratising states. As Grugel’s (2002: 85) study of democratization illustrated, where ‘the past is non-democratic, democratising states are bound to contain ambiguities, paradoxes and authoritarian enclaves’.

Control over the University of Prishtina was identified as an important political resource in a highly politicised society that featured ten years of self-organisation in HE. In resisting changes that would undermine local control over education, local actors employed resistance strategies honed by the experience of authoritarianism and subordination. These strategies were low-level, subtle and often disguised as cooperation through the use of ‘hidden transcripts’. In the terms of the policy diffusion literature, there was adaptation on a conceptual level to demonstrate an attitude corresponding to dominant ideas, but no indication that this adaptation would affect practice in the near future. The nature and intensity of this resistance strategy can only be understood in the context of Kosovo’s recent political history and the importance of the University within that history.

That there was some policy *emulation* in this highly politicised context (adoption, with adjustment for different circumstances), particularly in relation to curriculum structure and content, is explained by two factors. First, was the absence of an existing policy, in this case a Politics curriculum, which would have allowed the ‘satisficers’ to defend the

status quo. Second, while accepting the externally recommended curriculum, the bigger issue for local administrators was that of appointing staff. Those staff appointed would be responsible for revisions to the curriculum and could amend according to locally determined priorities. On staff recruitment, there was some rhetorical acceptance of advice given but practical resistance leading to international advice being ignored.

Tensions within the domestic polity were important in contributing to the nature and intensity of policy resistance. Broadly, there was a division between those who prioritised control over the University and were resistant to international initiatives, and those who prioritised international acceptance for the University and were thus supportive. The former view had generally sustained the parallel system; the latter view came from those who had studied abroad. This division largely reflected the different domestic political affiliations of these actors, with the latter group predominantly attached to or sympathetic to the KLA, the former to the LDK.

The intensity of policy resistance to international initiatives for some actors was reinforced by their desire to ensure that other domestic actors were not empowered by changes. The nature of policy resistance was partly a legacy of the political-administrative culture of the communist era and also of the Kosovo Albanian need to survive and operate under Serbian domination after 1989, a situation bearing resemblance to Scott's conditions of 'powerlessness and dependency'. Many of the tactics used to resist external initiatives after 1999 had been practised under communism and further developed under Serb rule. The policy resisters had, in Scott's (1990: 138) terms, 'a capacity to test and exploit all the loopholes, ambiguities, silences and lapses available to them'. At the root of this strategy was fear of retaliation to overt resistance in the form of the denial of UNMIK resources or conflict with other sections of Kosovo Albanian society, either of which could lead to a loss of power. In such a complex and delicate situation, participants cannot definitively know the balance of forces and the related distribution of resources, so the process is characterised by a continual testing of boundaries. As Scott (1990: 199) notes, 'Taking a long historical view, one sees that the luxury of relatively safe, open political opposition is both rare and recent'.

These internal domestic tensions further highlight limitations to the concepts of voluntary and coercive policy transfer. There were elements of both voluntary and coercive transfer occurring simultaneously: some domestic actors voluntarily embraced the advice coming from abroad, while others were more resistant. The outcomes were determined through a bargaining process that involved international actors and

domestic actors with different views and different interests. Within this process, different actors had varying levels of resources, political, legal, financial, organizational and informational, and employed various tactics and strategies in deploying these resources in the transfer process.

In a context of asymmetric interdependence, policy resistance becomes more important. Even where there is a high degree of asymmetric interdependence, subordinate actors can deploy sophisticated resistance strategies that limit the processes of learning and transfer. We offer the following hypotheses for investigating policy resistance:

1. *States and other institutional actors are generally resistant to change.* This is particularly the case in the context of democratization, where state institutions are undergoing (re) construction.
2. *The domestic context is crucial* to understanding the nature and intensity of policy resistance and thus the prospects for successful lesson drawing, policy transfer or diffusion. Within domestic politics, there will be both advocates for change and resisters to change: the balance between these actors must be understood to understand the prospects for success. Moreover, the existence of multiple international donors with competing objectives increases the scope for domestic resistance.
3. *Transmission of ideas and practices takes place through bargaining.* In all cases, there will be some domestic resistance to change. Since all actors with a role in the policy process control some power resources, political, legal, financial, organisational and informational, the outcome of external inputs will reflect a bargaining process in which external and internal actors employ different tactics and strategies when mobilising differential resources in the context of asymmetric interdependence. Where the power resources of policy resisters are limited, the importance of resistance strategies is heightened and they are more likely to be subtle and multifaceted and thus more difficult to overcome.
4. *Infrapolitics matter.* Policy resisters may employ a range of strategies to prevent change. In the context of asymmetric interdependence, these are more likely to be characterised by low-level forms of resistance rather than overt opposition or defiance. In particular, policy resisters may develop a hidden transcript, through which there is outward agreement and cooperation that disguises strategies of non-compliance and obstruction. In post-authoritarian societies, domestic actors will be particularly skilled in activities practised under the previous regime

For policy-makers, our main finding concurs with a parallel study on power and property relations in Kosovo, which found that 'no genuine

social change can be brought about without identifying and working with constituencies and local interests with a stake in such reforms' (UNMIK, 2002: 4). For academics seeking to understand the significance of external influences on domestic change, we emphasize the subtle power of resistance strategies that can be deployed to great effect by the 'powerless'.

## NOTES

1. The authors would like to thank Richard Rose, Robert Castle and Enver Hasini for their comments on earlier versions of this article. All the usual disclaimers apply.
2. The discussions took place in English. Older academics and administrators often did not speak English and UN-funded translators were provided. These were young, western educated graduates from Kosovo who were very cooperative with international actors. This was important because language differences offered a potential resistance opportunity, illustrated when one of the documents relating to appointments was drawn up in Albanian. Its content differed considerably from that drafted in English and the international actors could only verify this with the help of the cooperative translators.

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