

Religious education in state schools in Kosovo

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Abstract: In Kosovo, debates about the role of religious education in the education system have been ongoing since it gained independence in 2008. Since that time, debates have continued over whether religious education should be part of the school curriculum as a separate subject. Given the limited existing research on this topic, this study aims to explore the extent and nature of religious education in state schools in Kosovo through an analysis of the national curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education. Due to the secular nature of education in the country, religious education is not part of the official curriculum in state schools. Even though religious education is not part of the curriculum in state schools, there are two courses that generally address religious matters: "Society and Environment" and "Citizenship Education." These courses place greater emphasis on topics such as religious tolerance, religious groups, and different beliefs. Even though Kosovo, as a country, grants the right to learn and practice their religion to all religions freely, it seems that this right is not fully upheld within state schools. Religious education can only be conducted in such places as churches and mosques or in private schools/courses. It can be argued that the lack of religious education in public schools in Kosovo represents not only an educational gap in the religious education, but also an obstacle to the full realization of individual rights.

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Introduction

Kosovo has been influenced by different cultures throughout its history. The region is generally seen as a kind of border where Muslims and Christians have encountered and clashed since the famous Battle of Kosovo (1389), fought between the Ottoman Turks and the Balkan Christian powers. Since the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, including Kosovo, Islam has had a lasting impact on it. Today, Kosovo has the highest concentration of Muslim population in the Balkan region. Although people with different ethnic and religious beliefs live in the country, generally Muslim Albanians are predominant. With no official data available, it is estimated that 96% of the population in Kosovo identifies themselves as Muslim. Although the State of Kosovo has a Muslim majority, it is a secular state where religious and state affairs are conducted separately. As outlined in Article 8 of the Constitution, every individual in Kosovo is treated equally before the law and the freedom of conscience, belief, and religion is guaranteed (Zyra e Kryeministrit, 2008, p. 3). The exclusion of religious education from state schools is commonly justified by reference to this specific article of the Constitution. Yet, this issue is continuously being discussed in the Parliament and has also become an important issue for the community. As per these discussions, the community is separated into two groups: the first group supports the importance of religious education in official institutions, whereas the other group opposes its introduction on the grounds that religious education contradicts secular life and freedom. Although religious education cannot be conducted in state institutions, it continues in a traditional and non-formal manner, particularly in mosques, Quran courses, churches, and other places of worship.

1. Methodology

The aim of this study is to analyze the structure and content of primary and secondary school curricula in Kosovo, with special emphasis on religious topics. It aims to explore how and to what extent religious topics are included and addressed in the general curriculum. This topic is important for understanding how religious education is incorporated in state schools in Kosovo. The lack of extensive research on this topic further highlights its significance. Official documents from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)¹, along with the policies and regulations related to the curriculum in state schools are explored. It includes content analysis of religious topics in the general curriculum, as well as the evaluation of the methods used to address religious topics in school courses. This study is qualitative research that uses the documentary analysis to address the topic in depth.

To this end, the study is organized into six sections. The first two sections provide an overview of Kosovo's recent history, the role of religion as articulated in the Kosovo Constitution, the structure of the national education system, and the general framework of religious education. The third and fourth sections offer a more in-depth examination of religious education in both state and private schools. The fifth section focuses on the training and qualification of religious education teachers. The final section explores current debates, particularly the question of whether religious education should be integrated into the curriculum of state schools in Kosovo.

2. State, Society, and Religion

Kosovo, as the newest country in Europe, is located in the Southeast and the Balkans. It shares borders with countries such as Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro (Republika e Kosovës, 2020, p. 15).

According to the most recent estimate, by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) the resident population of Kosovo in 2024 was 1,585,590 inhabitants (Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës, 2025). On a report published in 2023 by the United States Department of State, about 70% of Kosovo's population is made up of Albanians, while the remaining 30% includes other communities such as Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Balkan Egyptians, Bosniaks, Gorani, Montenegrins, and others (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

The religious and political history of Kosovo has been deeply shaped by centuries of imperial rule, cultural shifts, and regional conflict. The Balkans were Christianized by the Western and Eastern Roman Empires before the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. From 1389 to 1912, Kosovo was part of the Muslim Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, Kosovo was the largest of the four Albanian provinces. Its center was Skopje, the capital of present-day North Macedonia. After World War II, Kosovo was governed by the secular socialist authorities of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Kosovo Albanians have never given up their religious identity despite a century of massacres, atrocities, tortures, and genocides by the Serbs. Today, more than 96% of Kosovo's population are Muslims, most of whom are ethnic Albanians. There are also other Muslim communities, such as Turks, Bosnians, and Gorans. On February 17th, 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia (Rexha, 2022). Serbia does not yet recognize Kosovo as an independent state and sees it as a part of its territory. Initially, there was no relationship between the two states, but in the following years, dialogue and cooperation between the two sides increased. The dialogue process conducted by the European Union continues, but no agreement has been reached yet. Although Kosovo declared its independence as a state, it has not been recognized by all countries in the international arena. The capital of Kosovo is Pristina, which is the cultural, social, economic, and political center of the country. The official language of Kosovo is Albanian (Zyra e Kryeministrit, 2008, p. 2). In some cities of Kosovo, Serbian and Turkish are also spoken as official languages. In almost every city in Kosovo, traces of the Ottoman Empire

¹ Ministry of Education, currently known as the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, was previously called the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. For simplicity, this article refers to it as the Ministry of Education throughout.

can be found. Architectural works such as mosques, tombs, and baths have maintained their significance from the Ottoman period to the present day.

The flag of Kosovo consists of a blue background with 6 stars and a map of Kosovo below it. The flag emphasizes Kosovo as multi-ethnic country. The stars represent the country's six ethnic groups (Albanians, Bosnians, Gorani, Romani, Serbs, and Turks). Additionally, since the most of Kosovo's population is Albanian, the Albanian national flag is widely used alongside the official flag. The sense of belonging felt towards the Albanian national flag often comes to the forefront during national holidays such as November 28, Albania's Independence Day. The red and black flag has become embodied in the mentality, culture, and spirit of Albanians because it is thought that it represents all Albanians in the world.

The Constitution, adopted two months after Kosovo declared its independence in 2008, is based on the proposal of Martti Ahtisaari, who served as the UN General Secretary on that time (Instituti për Studime të Avancuara GAP, 2011, p. 1) The Constitution in several articles emphasizes that there is no official religion in Kosovo and accepts its neutrality in matters of religious belief. Article 8 of the constitution states that "The Republic of Kosovo is a secular state and is neutral in matters of religious beliefs" (Zyra e Kryeministrit, 2008, p. 3). Article 38 discusses the freedom of conscience of individuals, while Article 39 pertains to the rights of religious communities to regulate their activities. Article 38 states that:

1. *Freedom of belief, conscience, and religion is guaranteed.*
2. *Freedom of belief, conscience, and religion includes the right to accept and profess a religion, the right to express personal beliefs, and the right to belong to or reject any religious community or group.*
3. *No one shall be compelled or prevented from fulfilling their religious duties and expressing their faith and religion against their conscience.*
4. *The freedom to openly express religion, belief, and conscience may be restricted by law if necessary for the protection of state and state security, state order, or the protection of the personal rights of others (Zyra e Kryeministrit, 2008, p. 12).*

Article 39 reads that:

1. *The Republic of Kosovo ensures and protects religious autonomy and the security of religious monuments within its borders.*
2. *Religious communities are free to independently organize their internal structure and conduct religious activities and ceremonies.*
3. *Religious communities can establish religious schools and charitable organizations in accordance with this Constitution and the laws (Zyra e Kryeministrit, 2008, p. 12).*

According to the Ministry of Education administrative circular which is a statutory regulation on behavior rules and disciplinary penalties for primary and secondary school, students are prohibited from wearing religious attire in primary and secondary schools: "Students are prohibited from wearing religious uniforms" (Republika e Kosoves, 2014, p. 4). Some primary schools do not allow Muslim girls who wish to wear headscarves (hijabs) as a result of the implementation of this administrative circular prohibiting religious attire on school property. Moreover, this ban is not only aimed at students; it also applies to all employees working in state institutions.

The diversity of ethnic groups living in Kosovo allows for the coexistence of three religions there: Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy. According to the latest census, Muslims make up 96% of the population, Catholics 2.2%, and Orthodox Christians 1.5% (Mehmeti, 2019, p. 2).

Muslims in Kosovo are associated with Albanians, Turks, Bosnians, and Goranis. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is associated with Serbian ethnicity. Although the majority of the population is Muslim, religion has not been a major factor that destabilized the country. A famous Albanian poet, Pashko Vasa, used the following expression in his poem: “The Albanian’s religion is Albania” (Vasa, 2010). Metaphorically, Albania is the “religion” that unites people; it is understood that faith is individual and Albania is collective. Kosovo Albanians define their national identity not through religion but through language, and they have a relatively relaxed approach to adhering to the forms of Islam. The vast majority of Kosovar Muslims, while not strictly religious or radical in their views, still adhere to many of the most common Islamic traditions, practices, and prohibitions, such as the more widespread Islamic holidays and the ideal of not eating pork. Even though they do not perform most of the rituals, a large majority place importance on fasting during Ramadan.

3. Education, School, and Religion

Education in Kosovo is conducted in state and private institutions. In Kosovo’s primary schools, teaching is conducted in five languages: Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Turkish, and Croatian. The Parliamentary Education Commission is an important part of Kosovo’s education system. This commission, which is in direct contact with the Ministry of Education, examines laws and decision proposals and makes recommendations for approval. In Kosovo, there is a “two-tiered education management” system implemented to achieve the desired quality of education. This system is managed by the Municipal Education Directorates through the Ministry of Education, and its regional representatives, the Regional Education Departments (Zengin & Topsakal, 2008, p. 121). The aim of education in Kosovo is to develop a quality education system that prepares the youth to build a developed and sustainable society. It supports students in developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values compatible with the requirements of a democratic society through the following ways: the development of personal, national, state, and cultural identity; the promotion of general, cultural, and citizenship values; the development of responsibility towards oneself, others, society, and the environment; the ability to live in different social and cultural environments (Zyra e Kryeministrit, 2008).

The official levels of pre-university education in Kosovo are in accordance with the ISCED 2011/International Standard Classification of Education prepared by UNESCO (Ministria e Arsimit, Shkencës, Teknologjisë dhe Inovacionit & Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës, 2023, p. 11). Compulsory education in Kosovo begins at the beginning of the school year for children who have reached the age of six, which represents the minimum age for inclusion in compulsory education. This educational process lasts until the completion of the second level according to the International Classification of Education (ISCED)(RKS, 2011, p. 10). Compulsory education is provided free of charge, guaranteeing equal access for all children. Preschool education in Kosovo is organized to provide nursery (crèche), kindergarten, and pre-primary class education and learning. The primary education level lasts for 5 years, from the first grade to the fifth grade. The middle school level extends from the sixth grade to the ninth grade. High school education (ages 15 - 18) lasts for 3 years, from the tenth grade to the twelfth grade (Ministria e Arsimit, Shkencës, Teknologjisë dhe Inovacionit & Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës, 2023, p. 11). The levels of university education in Kosovo are divided into three main categories, similar to the education levels in other countries: bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral. First degree – Bachelor’s: It is the foundation of university education and is known as the first level of higher education. Second degree – Master’s (MA): The master’s level is known as the second level of higher education and offers students who have completed their undergraduate studies the opportunity to advance their knowledge in a specific field. Third degree—Doctorate (Ph.D.): This is the highest category of higher studies, involving an in-depth examination of a specific field of knowledge and skills. In Kosovo, there are state and private universities that offer a wide variety of educational programs. The tuition fees of private universities are higher, and they offer specialized programs in certain fields. The universities in Kosovo are part of the Bologna system, a compatible higher education system in Europe (Zengin & Topsakal, 2008, p. 108).

In Kosovo, there is no religious education as a separate course in the form of religious classes in state schools. However, the establishment of private schools providing religious education is permitted in Kosovo.

Article 39, paragraph 3 of the Kosovo Constitution includes the following statement regarding the establishment of private schools: “Religious communities may establish religious schools and charitable organizations in accordance with this Constitution and the laws” (Zyra e Kryeministrit, 2008, p. 12).

In Kosovo, religious education is mostly provided through private schools. For Muslims, there are faculties of theology, madrasas, and Quran courses, but the faculties of theology and Quran courses are not supported or recognized by the state. Madrasas, on the other hand, have been operating under the Ministry of Education since 2000. Christians similarly receive their religious education in private schools. In 2007, a high school named “Loyola” was opened by the Catholic Church in Prizren. Additionally, the Catholic college named “Imzot Lazër Mjeda” also operates in Prizren. For the Orthodox, the Faculty of Theology was established in 1871 in Prizren and is still operational (Gashi, 2024, p. 191).

4. Religious Education in State Schools

Kosovo sees itself as a secular state and emphasizes this in its Constitution with the statement in the Article 8, “The Republic of Kosovo is a secular state and is neutral in matters of religious beliefs.” Therefore, there is no place for any separate religious courses in state schools, whether mandatory, elective, optional, extracurricular, or of any other status. State schools in Kosovo prioritize scientific, artistic, and cultural subjects while adhering to the principles of secular education. The aim is to promote religious tolerance and encourage religious diversity in a secular environment. As seen in the curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Education, two courses appear to address religious matters in a limited way and provide information about them. Students from first to fifth grade take the “Society and Environment” course. The “Society and Environment” book for 1st and 2nd grades, published by Dukagjini Publishing House, does not contain detailed information about a specific religion, but it provides knowledge about Kosovo’s most important holidays, including Eid al-Adha, Easter, and New Year. These holidays are illustrated with accompanying images, each captioned with brief explanations indicating which religious or cultural group observes them—for instance, Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha, while Catholics and Orthodox Christians observe Easter. Below, relevant images illustrate the content of this course.



Photo 1: Society and Environment 1st Grade

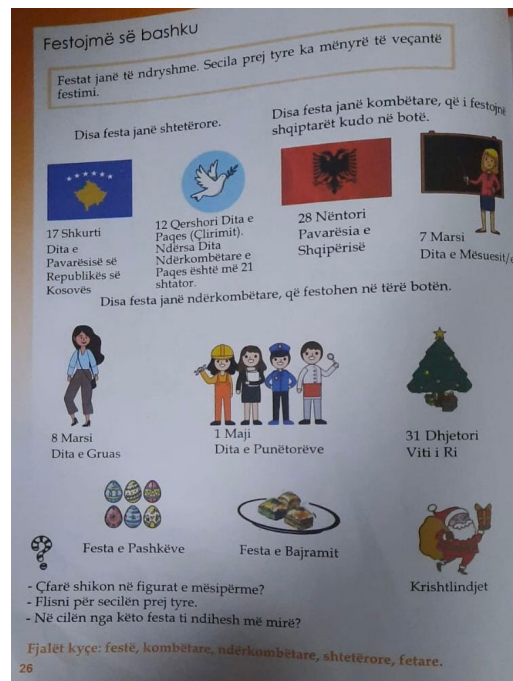


Photo 2: Society and Environment 2nd Grade

In the 3rd and 5th grade Society and Environment books, there is no topic directly related to religion. The content of these books deals with various topics related to ethnic and cultural diversity, tolerance, human rights, and their responsibilities in the society. However, the fourth-grade Society and Environment book devoted space to the issue of religious diversity in Kosovo. Two pages were reserved for this topic, where religious diversity was illustrated through two different situations and some guiding questions, in order to attract the students' attention and make the lesson more attractive, involving them in expressing their opinions on the questions: which religious communities do you know, which religious holidays do you know, why should we know different cultures, what was the best gift you received for a holiday?

In the first situation mentioned, a child is presented, who expresses his surprise when the voices coming from the minarets of the mosque and the church bells are heard simultaneously. The parents, noticing the child's surprise, took him to a city in Kosovo where the church and the mosque are located in the same yard, where it was explained to him that this is an example of religious diversity and that respecting the religious affiliation and opinions of others is necessary. Below relevant image is provided to illustrate the course content.



Photo 3: Society and Environment 4th Grade

The second situation describes a history teacher who, while explaining historical periods, remembers Christmas days, when she watched movies with Santa Claus and the gifts he gave, while her mind was reminded of the gifts she had received during the Eid holiday. Although she had not liked some of them, she later realized that joy is the most important element in any celebration.

At the end of the page, it is emphasized that, although traditions and language may change, their preservation remains of particular importance, as they are considered essential values. In this context, issues such as understanding and respect for other cultures, acceptance of differences, coexistence and tolerance, cultural values and cultural identity are also addressed. Through these points, students are offered the opportunity to understand the importance of religious and cultural diversity, as well as the need for these diversities to be respected in order to enable peaceful and harmonious coexistence. At the same time, the important role of the school, which contributes to the creation of a suitable environment where different religious beliefs are respected, is also emphasized.

From sixth grade to ninth grade, students take the "Citizenship Education" course, which offers more detailed information about religion compared to earlier grades. In the table below, there is information about the textbooks and their attainment targets related to religious education.

Table 1. Citizenship Education (Edukata Qytetare) 6th - 9th Grade Levels

Book Name/Class	Book Author	Publishing House	Year/ Volume	Number of Pages	Objectives/Learning Outcomes of Religious Topics Covered in the Section
Citizenship Education 6 (Edukata Qytetare 6)	Shemsi Krasniqi	Dukagjini			1. Explains the role and spread of beliefs in the world 2. Understands the essence of belief or religion 3. Appreciates the importance of religious tolerance 4. Defines folk beliefs
Citizenship Education 7 (Edukata Qytetare 7)	Erlehta Mato Bajram Shatri	Libri Shkollor	2013	154	1. Understands the rights of belief, the right to change religion and the right to continue one's religion 2. Defines the religious beliefs that are valid in Kosovo society 3. Makes the distinction between belief and religion 4. Demonstrates tolerance towards different religions
Citizenship Education 8 (Edukata Qytetare 8)	Adem Beha	Albas	2021	107	1. Define tolerance and religious toleration 2. Know the impact of religious tolerance during Albanian nation-building 3. Understand how Kosovo is defined in terms of religion 4. Describe the characteristics of extremist groups 5. Understand the context of the September 11, 2001 attacks and the efforts to spread Islam in Kosovo during this period 6. Describe measures to prevent extremism 7. Describe the principles of secularism
Citizenship Education 9 (Edukata Qytetare 9)	Demë Hoti Naser Zabeli	Libri Shkollor	2014	120	1.Explains the three most popular monotheistic religions 2.Identifies the characteristics and common points of the three monotheistic religions 3.Provides concrete examples of rituals from any of the three major religions 4.Explains the meaning of minor religions 5.Explains the meaning of sects and cults

Basic information, characteristics, rituals, and whether there are common features among them can be seen in the related sections regarding the religious groups. The most information about religious groups is provided in the book of Citizenship Education 9. It covers the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The book also includes information about the role of other religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Additionally, the topic of religious sects and cults is also addressed to ensure a complete understanding of religious diversity. The information provided about these religions is sometimes expressed with incorrect terms. For example, in the book “Citizenship Education 9” (Edukata Qytetare 9), where the five pillars of Islam are mentioned, the term “zakat (almsgiving)” is replaced with “sadakah.”

The 6th and 7th-grade textbooks emphasize religious tolerance, understanding of religion, and belief. In the 8th-grade book published by Albas Publishing House, there are some sensitive topics that could influence students’ potential prejudices about religion. In this book, religious extremism is associated with the spread of Islam in Kosovo, linking it to the September 11 attacks. This information is not well-founded as Islam was already widespread in Kosovo before these events. The use of this approach can be very dangerous, as it can affect students’ perception of the Islamic religion. In the text books of the Albas Publishing House harsher language is used in the treatment of religious issues, while publisher Dukagjini uses a more objective approach in the treatment of religious issues. As seen in the table above, it is worth noting that these books are published by various publishing houses recognized by the Ministry of Education, and state schools in Kosovo can use any of these books for teaching.

In addition to the courses “Society and Environment” and “Citizenship Education,” the topic of religions is also addressed in a limited manner in the “History” course. However, even there, incorrect statements can be seen which might lead to the misunderstanding of religious principles by students. For example, although the “6th Grade History Book” taught in the sixth grade provides little information about Islam it also contains inaccurate claims such as “All Muslims worship the black stone in the “Kaaba” (Gashi, 2024, p. 194). This statement is not in accordance with the religious principles of Islam. Muslims believe in worshipping one God, while this expression, it can lead to misunderstandings that Muslims worship stones. It is also worth noting that these topics are covered in a single 45-minute lesson. In these few minutes, students should receive information on these topics from correct sources and using correct terms, without leading to any misunderstandings about these religious topics.

5. Religious Education in Religious/Private Schools

As mentioned above there is no separate religious education courses in state schools in Kosovo, and the Republic of Kosovo clearly states this in its constitution. Although religious education is not included in the curriculum of state schools, the state of Kosovo does not prohibit religious groups from opening private schools or organizing religious events.

In Kosovo, there are private schools that provide religious education. One of the important schools providing Islamic religious education in Kosovo is the Alauddin Madrasah in the capital, Prishtina. This madrasa has two branches, one in Prizren and the other in Gjilan. In this madrasa, students learn not only the words of the Quran and Islamic traditions but also other academic disciplines such as history, geography, philosophy, chemistry, mathematics, and foreign languages like English, Turkish, and Arabic, akin to Imam Hatip schools in Türkiye (Zengin & Hendek, 2023). The learning process takes place according to the curriculum approved by the Presidency of the Islamic Union of Kosovo and the Ministry of Education. The funding for this institution is provided by the Presidency of the Islamic Union of Kosovo (Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës, 2002, p. 14). Since the madrasah today is at the level of a general high school, its diploma is also equivalent to a high school diploma. In order for students to be admitted to the madrasa and continue their education, they must meet certain conditions and go through a selection process.

Another institution of Islamic religious education is the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, located in Pristina, near the Islamic Community of Kosovo. This faculty is an independent educational and research institution

that organizes undergraduate, master's, and doctoral education. Its aim is to prepare professional and scientific personnel for the needs of the Islamic Union of Kosovo and, more broadly, for the needs of Kosovo society, and to train a cadre with scientific principles and contemporary values in the field of Islam (Fakulteti i Studimeve Islame, 2012, p. 4). The faculty implements the Bologna program and offers both formal and open education programs. Student evaluation, compulsory and elective courses, seminars, and final assignments are conducted according to the ECTS credit system. Those who graduate from the faculty receive a bachelor's degree in Islamic studies (Gashi, 2024, p. 197). Those who graduate from the Faculty of Islamic Sciences have the right to work in institutions such as mosques, Quran courses, madrasas, and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, led by the Islamic Union of Kosovo.

In addition to private Islamic schools, there are also schools belonging to other religious beliefs, such as Christian schools, in Kosovo. Founded in 2007 in Prizren, Loyola Catholic High School is a private institution that provides religious education to Christians. With 1,100 students and 70 teachers, the school has had 1,200 students graduate and earn their diplomas in its 16-year history. There is no information regarding the educational curriculum on the official website of this school (Gashi, 2024, p. 198).

6. Training and Selection of Religious Education Teachers

Since religious education is not provided in state schools, there is no situation for training religious teachers in Kosovo. However, the country's Catholic, Orthodox, and Islamic theological faculties offer educational programs for religious leaders.

As previously mentioned, the aim of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences is to prepare professional and academic staff to meet the needs of the Islamic Union of Kosovo and, as a whole, the society of Kosovo. Those who graduate from this faculty can work in institutions assigned by the Islamic Union of Kosovo. Mosques, madrasas, Quran courses, etc.

In the city of Prizren, Kosovo, there is a Catholic college named "Imzot Lazër Mjeda." Religious education is provided by 24 active Catholic churches, which have 37 bishops. The media outlet "Drita" also plays an important role in Catholic education and produces periodicals aimed at Catholics in Kosovo (Gashi, 2024, p. 199). Additionally, the Orthodox Faculty, established in 1871 in the city of Prizren by the Orthodox group, is a cultural center and a religious institution. Despite being damaged in a fire in 2004, it resumed its activities in 2011 and reopened in 2015. With 12 teachers and 109 students, it is believed that the school, which works in coordination with the Belgrade-based school, uses the same curriculum as the Serbian school since there is no information about the curriculum on its official website (Gashi, 2024, p. 200).

7. Discussion

Whether or not to include religious education in state schools in Kosovo is a sensitive and controversial issue. On one hand, there are those who advocate for religious education in state schools as a way to help students' moral and spiritual development, while on the other hand, there are critics who believe this could violate the principles of state separation. In Kosovo, the constitution provides for freedom of belief and religious practice, but it also stipulates that state institutions, such as schools, must be secular and separate from any religious beliefs. Therefore, the constitution does not allow the teaching of a specific religion in state schools, and it has become the state's duty to provide an education independent of religious beliefs.

In light of several incidents that have occurred within Kosovo's schools, representatives of the Muslim community have renewed their efforts to advocate for the inclusion of religious education in the national curriculum. They argue that, now more than ever, it is essential for children to be educated in religious values to foster moral development and social cohesion. While the proposal to introduce religious education in state schools has garnered support from certain segments of the population, it remains a contentious issue. A

significant portion of the state—including many within the Muslim community—express reservations or outright opposition to the idea.

Leaders of the Muslim community have sought to emphasize the importance of this initiative through state campaigns and interfaith dialogue, calling upon representatives of other religious communities in Kosovo to support their efforts. However, these appeals have not resulted in broad consensus. The push to integrate religious education into the state school system has sparked significant debate within Kosovo's society. The issue has also been brought before the Kosovo Assembly, yet it has failed to receive the legislative attention necessary for advancement. Leaders of the Islamic Community of Kosovo, along with faculty members from the Faculty of Islamic Studies and educators from the madrasas, have made persistent efforts and numerous state appeals to institutionalize religious education in schools. Despite their continuous engagement, their proposals have not been officially acknowledged or acted upon.

One of the most debated and enduringly unresolved issues in this context has been the restriction on female students wearing headscarves. This restriction stems from the implementation of an administrative circular issued by the Ministry of Education, which prohibits religious attire within state educational institutions. Notably, this ban applies not only to students but also to all state-sector employees working in educational settings.

Conclusion

Kosovo, one of the youngest states in Europe, gained its independence in 2008 and has been working on its development as a state since then. Education is one of the main stages where the state of Kosovo strives to find the right path for the individual and moral development of its citizens in accordance with the laws it has established for a country in harmony and complete security. While many European countries include religious education in their curricula, unfortunately, Kosovo still does not include religious education in its curriculum. Although religious education is prohibited in state institutions, religious groups are free to open their own private schools. Citizens who wish to receive religious education can obtain their education from institutions such as madrasas, mosques, the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Quran courses, Catholic and Orthodox churches, and private schools. Although a large portion of the students continue their religious studies at these private religious schools, a significant number wish to receive education but are unable to do so in Kosovo's state schools due to the headscarf ban. This is primarily a very important issue that requires a solution. If everyone is free to express their rights, then these students who choose to receive an education and wear a headscarf should also be equally free. The headscarf may be a religious symbol, but it cannot be considered a right to stop these students' education.

Finally, it is worth noting that one of the institutions most interested in religious education in private schools and also making great efforts to promote the subject of religious education in state schools in Kosovo is the Islamic Community of Kosovo and its affiliated institutions. All the activities carried out by the Kosovo Islamic Union play an important role in promoting religious harmony in Kosovo, organizing various events where prominent individuals, Kosovo citizens, and sometimes members of other religions are invited. All these efforts play an important role in understanding how religion can further contribute to the development of religious harmony and peace.

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