Nation-Building, Democratization and Globalization as Competing Priorities in Ukraine's Education System

Summary:

This article examines how consecutive governments in Ukraine have reconciled the different demands that nation-building, democratization and globalization pose on the national education system. It argues that nation-building conflicts with democratization and with globalization and engages in a review of Ukraine's educational policies from *Perestroika* to the present to illustrate this argument. It shows that nation building in post-Soviet Ukraine was primarily a language project aimed at the ukrainianization of schools and institutes of higher education. It further observes that nation-building was given priority over democratization and globalization in shaping the education system in the first decade following independence. From 2000, however, globalization has become an increasingly important discourse in education removing nation-building from the top of the political agenda.

1. Introduction

One of the greatest challenges currently facing the new states in Central and Eastern Europe is educational reform. After obtaining independence in the early 1990s, these states were confronted with the immense task of transforming an outdated centralized education system, which was aimed at delivering a loyal communist workforce, into a modern system that would be much more responsive to consumer demands and would recognize and further individual talent. The immensity of the undertaking lies in the fact that three prerequisites make simultaneous demands on the education system: nation-building, democratization and globalization.

The need for *nation-building* is felt particularly strong in those new states which derive their legitimacy from former minority nations. The political elites of these states consider nation-building a vital tool for the resuscitation of languages and cultures that have

played a subordinate role under the past communist regime. But nation-building is not only intended to promote the languages and cultures of the new titular nations. It is also seen as a means to foster patriotism and cultural unity among populations whose ethnically diverse make-up and dissatisfaction with post-soviet living standards are considered a risk for the stability and survival of the state. The new states are also under heavy pressure to *democratize* their education systems, closely monitored as they are by human rights watchdogs like the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Most of them have signed international treaties that promise more decentralization and more opportunities for grassroots initiatives in the educational system. Yet, many provisions of these treaties still await implementation. Lastly, the new states in Central and Eastern Europe are confronted with the issue of *globalization*. As all other states affected by the globalizing economy, they feel obliged to reform their education system in ways that would make their populations and economies more competitive on the world market.

This article examines how Ukraine, as one of the new post-Soviet states, reconciles the demands that nation-building, democratization and globalization make on its education system. It will argue that there is tension between these demands, especially between nation-building on the one hand and democratization and globalization on the other. This tension will be illustrated by a description of educational policies from *Glasnost*, when calls for sweeping reforms first began to be heard, to the present. The focus on education is logical: education has been the main vehicle of the state to consolidate the nation ever since the arrival of the modern state in the early 19th century. Green (1997, p. 134), for instance, writes that:

> Through national education systems states fashioned disciplined workers and loyal recruits, created and celebrated national languages and literatures, popularized national histories and

myths of origin, disseminated national laws, customs and social mores, and generally explained the ways of the state to the people and the duties of the people to the state.

Neither is the choice for Ukraine as case study a coincidence. Together with Belarus Ukraine has experienced a particularly strong degree of Russification during Russian Tsarist and Soviet rule. This process, both as a deliberate policy and as an autonomous force, has not only produced a diverse ethnic make-up of the population (roughly one-fifth of which is ethnically Russian), but has also turned the country effectively into a bilingual state. Today, Ukrainian-speakers and Russophones constitute approximately equal halves of the population, the latter of which includes many ethnic Ukrainians. Cleavages of a historical nature further add to the ethno-linguistic complexity. Notably the seven western provinces, which were incorporated in Soviet Ukraine after World War II, distinguish themselves from the other regions by the virulent national consciousness and thoroughly Ukrainian outlook of their populations. As such they sharply contrast with the eastern and southern regions which acquired a distinct Russian character due to processes of industrialization, urbanization and (conscious) Russification. This complicated ethno-linguistic and historical inheritance from the Soviet Union has made the post-Soviet nation-building project exceptionally challenging. Often it represented a careful balancing act steering between a strong version of nation-building supported by the western provinces and a very mild version of nation-building or no nation-building at all – the preferred option for the east and south.

In the next section I will discuss the nature of the relationship between nation-building, democratization and globalization. The third section examines how these discourses have affected school policies, highlighting the tension between nation-building and democratization in particular. The section on higher education, on the other hand, will

primarily discuss the friction between nation-building and globalization. The concluding section summarizes the main findings.

2. Nation-building, democratization and globalization

A coherent discussion of the aforementioned problematic requires that clear definitions be given of the main concepts. Following Linz and Stepan (1996) this article defines *nation-building* as a state policy seeking to enhance cultural and political cohesion by promoting the language and culture of the titular group (i.e. the ethnic group the state derives its name and legitimacy from) and by discouraging the use of minority languages in the public domains of society. Nation-building needs to be distinguished, on the one hand, from bi- and multicultural *state-building* policies, which also try to strengthen the bond of citizens with the state but do so without privileging the language and culture of one particular group, and on the other hand from *forced assimilation* or *ethnic persecution* policies which seek to eliminate cultural diversity altogether. In keeping with the Council of Europe's conception of democratic governance in education, I understand *democratization* to be a set of policies "providing the opportunity for all actors, pupils/students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators to be involved in decision-making regarding the school, feel responsible and express their opinions freely" (Council of Europe 2006, p. 7). In contexts characterized by centralized education systems, such as the post-Soviet region, democratization invariably involves a shift of powers from the central level to local authorities, national minorities, schools, parents and individual pupils. Indeed, Mitter (2003) identifies the decentralization of responsibilities as one of the key areas of educational reform in the post-communist world. Most interesting for this paper is that this process of greater grassroots involvement includes

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pluralistic policies taking the cultural and educational preferences of national minorities into account. Although *globalization* can be interpreted in many different ways it is here defined exclusively in instrumental terms. It refers to all those educational policies which are seen as contributing to a country's economic performance and competitiveness on the global market. These include measures to enhance the employability, flexibility and mobility of the labour force, such as continuous re-education schemes (life-long learning, e-learning) and the standardization of university degrees and of credit and grading systems (Stier 2004). They also comprise education in the type of de-contextualized knowledge and skills that can be applied in a wide range of economic activities and that promise high rates of return (Daun 2002). Most valuable among these skills in the global economy are the conceptual competencies of "problem-identifying, problem-solving and problem-brokering" (Green 1997, p. 154).

It is not difficult to see the tension between nation-building and democratization. Only in pure nation states there is no friction between the two concepts as there are no minority groups challenging the homogenizing policies of the state. The overwhelming majority of states however have multi-ethnic populations, and democratization will clash with nation-building as soon as a minority expresses a desire to secure a formal status for its culture and identity in society (Linz and Stepan 1996; Epstein 2000).

I contend that nation-building is also in conflict with globalization. This is because the stress of the former on unconditional loyalty to the nation is difficult to reconcile with the detached rationalism prescribed by the latter. It must be noted, however, that the two policy discourses need not always collide. If the language promoted by a nation-building project happens to be a world language or a language widely spoken in a particular region of the world (English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese) globalization and nation-building are to some extent mutually beneficial processes as the language in question is not only considered to be

an identity marker but also a valuable asset for individuals to exploit economically. Yet, these conditions do not apply in the new states emerging from the collapse of the communist federative states. With the exception of Russia, these states base their existence on minority languages and cultures which tended to be marginalized in communist times. The fate of the Ukrainian language is exemplary. Despite its formal status in the Soviet Union, it suffered from a rural and backward stigma and was regarded by many as a simple peasant dialect of Russian. The domains of its use were restricted to private and rural settings and to official folkloristic events. Clearly, in cases where such languages are revived, the nation-building project is at odds with the standardization and homogenization drive of globalization. As Laponce (2004) explains, in times of accelerated economic integration, languages are in contact ever more frequently and the powerful ones, if left unimpeded, will automatically oust the weaker ones. Under these conditions a vulnerable language needs the protection of a state in order to survive.

Moreover, nation building involves more than the simple promotion of a language. It also aims at socializing youngsters in a particular national culture and historical narrative (Vickers 2002). This idiosyncratic programme is the very opposite of the generic skills education demanded by the globalization doctrine. In concrete educational terms: the teaching of Ukrainian language and literature and of national history and geography competes with education in modern world languages (including Russian, the language of the former ruler!) and with subjects typically associated with problem-solving and analytical skills like computer programming and the basics of law, economy and administration.

One question however remains: why would Ukraine pursue nation-building policies to enhance national unity at all? Would it not be more appropriate for Ukraine to adopt a bi- or multicultural state building project similar to the Belgian, Canadian or Swiss model given the multi-ethnic and bilingual make up of its population? There are three reasons why the latter is

unlikely. First, Ukrainian statehood rests on the claim of ethno-cultural distinctiveness: 'Ukrainians are a separate nation because they have their own language and culture and therefore they deserve a separate state'. A more multi-cultural conception of the Ukrainian nation would dilute this claim and would consequently de-legitimize the idea of independent statehood. Ukrainians certainly are not alone in demanding an independent state on cultural grounds. From the mid-nineteenth century, when the concept of nation began to be defined in ethno-cultural terms (Hobsbawm 1990; Schoepflin 2000), many ethnic groups in Eastern and Southern Europe experienced their national awakening and started claiming a separate state for themselves (Safran 2004). Some of them already succeeded in establishing independent states after World War I, owing in part to the Wilson doctrine which established the ethno-cultural interpretation of nation- and statehood as a legitimate principle in international relations. Eriksen et al. (1990) document how the nation-building efforts of these first wave Wilsonian states met with fierce resistance from the new minorities within their borders (e.g. Ukrainians in Poland, Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia and Croats in Yugoslavia). The newly independent states emerging from the collapse of communism, Ukraine included, might well be interpreted as the second wave Wilsonian states, that is as nations that failed to establish 'their own' states on the first occasion but that have accomplished their 'eternal dream' of self-determination when the second opportunity arose (the fall of communism). Brubaker (1996) calls these states *nationalizing* as they are rightly or wrongly perceived by national minorities and neighbouring states as attempting to culturally homogenize the population to attain the ideal of the nation-state.

The second reason is related to the first. Following the logic of the Wilsonian principle, the political elites in the new states are afraid that accommodating policies towards national minorities might have the undesirable effect of fanning their political aspirations. Granting cultural autonomy is seen as recognition of ethno-cultural distinctiveness, and this,

it is feared, might well be capitalized on by national minorities to demand some form of political self-determination which imperils the territorial integrity of the state.

While the first two reasons apply for nearly all post-communist states, the third reason – the Russification of the post-war period - is more specific to Ukraine. The Russification of Ukraine was both pursued more vigorously and more drastic in its consequences than in any other Soviet republic (Belarus excepting), partly because of the linguistic and cultural proximity of Ukrainian to Russian and partly because the Soviet authorities considered the 'younger Slavic brothers' of the Russians (i.e. the Ukrainians and Belorussians) as the prime candidates for 'merging into the Soviet nation'. According to Arel (1994), the experience of intense Russification at the expense of the Ukrainian language, culture and identity sparked a *fear of national extinction* among the Ukrainian intelligentsia during the perestroika period. Seeing Ukrainian national identity and the Ukrainian language as intimately related, this elite, he goes on to argue, established a linguistically oriented nation-building project aimed at restoring what had gone lost, once they occupied key government positions after state independence in 1991.

In sum, the questions to be explored are to what extent the nation-building project has, on the one hand, prevented the adoption of democratic policies that would fully accommodate the cultural and linguistic preferences of national minorities, and, on the other hand, has complicated the espousal of globalization policies. These issues will be discussed while holding Ukraine's point of departure in mind: when the country became independent in 1991 it inherited an over-centralised education system from the Soviet Union. This system precluded teacher initiative and left the individual pupil with almost no choice in mapping out a personal educational career (Stepanenko 1999). Professionally, it was strongly directed towards teaching technical disciplines and the natural sciences, ideologically towards inculcating the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and creating the *Homo Sovieticus*. The system

was also heavily Russified with approximately half of the school pupils and nearly all students in higher education receiving their education in Russian. The reforms thus faced a corpus of teachers socialized in Russian-language terminology and in conventional one-directional modes of teaching.

3. Changes in school education since Glasnost

3.1 Nation-building in schools: the language issue

As it turns out, Ukraine has indeed opted for nation-building instead of multicultural state building as a strategy to enhance national unity. Central to the nation-building project was the drive to revive the Ukrainian language. From the mid-1980s, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, which allowed ordinary citizens to openly criticize the Communist Party, had made it possible to raise the language issue. In Ukraine, discontent in this period was voiced through the opposition movement *Rukh*, a loose grouping of intellectuals and dissidents that campaigned for democratic reform, state sovereignty and – above all – the reversal of Russification policies. Initially, the conservative party leadership did not respond to *Rukh's* grievances, but no sooner than a month after the retirement of the hard-line First Secretary Volodymyr Shcherbyts'kyi the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet passed the "Law on Languages in the Ukrainian SSR", which made Ukrainian the sole state language. According to Arel (1995, p.599), this law represented "a defensive reaction of the communist old guard, which could no longer justify the *status quo*, since eight Soviet republics had enacted language laws earlier in that fateful year". The language law introduced a whole series of provisions intending to curb Russification and make Ukrainian the dominant language in all spheres of

state activity. As such it constituted a clear break with the past. Although heavily inspired by Ukrainian renaissance thinking, the law did contain provisions that secured a continued, albeit much reduced role for Russian in the public life, as the architects of the law were careful not to alarm the Russian-speaking population of the south and east.

The law was ambivalent on the issue of the language of instruction in schools. On the one hand, it stipulated that Ukrainian be the principle language of instruction of school education and that national minorities could have their children taught in their national languages if they so desired. On the other hand, it reiterated a decree initially issued by Krushchev's in the late 1950s which granted parents the right to choose the language of instruction for their children. Obviously, there is friction between the two principles as the implementation of the latter could very well lead to a situation in which children are educated in a language different from their ethnic background. This friction, however, was largely unnoticed as the authorities chose to leave the language law what it was – a piece of paper.

After independence in December 1991, many prominent Ukrainian intellectuals and dissidents were appointed to important positions in the government by president Leonid Kravchuk. Determined to revive Ukrainian language and culture and stop the 'defection' of ethnic Ukrainians to the Russian camp, they launched an ambitious Ukrainianization programme aimed at the implementation of the hitherto ignored language law. In the educational sphere, the key activist of this programme was Deputy Minister Anatolii Pohribnyi. Seeking to make the school system a reflection of the national composition of the population, he ordered local authorities to establish a network of Ukrainian- and Russian-instructed *first-graders* that would 'optimally' correspond to the ethnic make-up of the local population (Arel, 1995). Possibly, by adopting a gradual approach that targeted new enrolments (in other words, those pupils already instructed in Russian were allowed to complete their school education in that language), he hoped to that local authorities would

comply with the order. In any case, the parental right to choose the language of instruction was severely curtailed by this policy. A measure that was clearly instrumental in accomplishing the 'optimal net' was the ministerial order forbidding Russian schools to open Russian first grade classes alongside Ukrainian ones. This measure effectively ruled out the possibility of permanent bilingual schools. It forced Russian schools to completely transform to Ukrainian schools within 10 years once they had opened Ukrainian classes (for this measure, see Ministry of Education, 1993). In addition, as mandated by the language law, Ukrainian language and literature were instituted as statutory subjects in Russian schools, taking up three to four hours a week from the second to the eleventh grade (Ministry of Education 1998a; see also Table 2). This put an end to the Soviet practice of exempting children in Russian schools from attending Ukrainian language classes. Thus no effort was spared to ensure that all children, whether enrolled in Ukrainian or in Russian schools, would learn Ukrainian as the new state language.

After Leonid Kuchma, a Russian-speaker from Dnipropetrivs'k, had taken over the presidency from Leonid Kravchuk in 1994, many political observers expected a shift in language policies as Kuchma had promised granting Russian an official status in the election campaign and was facing a left-leaning parliament dominated by a pro-Russian bloc of communist-socialist deputies. However, the government appointed by him by and large consolidated the Ukrainianization policies of its predecessor, issuing neither new measures nor revoking earlier decrees. The long-awaited Constitution, which was adopted in June 1996, further formalized these policies as it proclaimed Ukrainian to be the sole state language and granted Russian the status of a national minority language, along with Hungarian, Moldovan, Crimean Tatar and various other small languages (Ministry of Justice, 1996). Yet, the continuation of the language project did not prevent parliament from ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in May 2003 (Parliament of Ukraine 2003).

Prepared by the Council of Europe, this treaty aimed at safeguarding the linguistic rights and needs of national minorities. An earlier ratification had been overturned by the Consitutional Court, a decision which was welcomed by many nationally conscious Ukrainians who feared that the Charter would allow Russian to resume its erstwhile dominant position (Kuzio, 2002). Interestingly, a close look at the provisions for primary and secondary education reveals that the Charter places quite modest demands on the participating states. States, for instance, are given a choice to either make available education in a minority language or to simply provide for the teaching of a minority language as an integral part of the curriculum upon parental request (Council of Europe, 1992). In fact, the stipulations were so lenient that Ukraine need not commit itself to extra measures concerning the use of minority languages in schools when it signed the treaty.

The post-independence language policy substantially changed the school landscape. As Table 1 shows, the proportion of Ukrainian-instructed pupils rose from 47.4% in 1988-89 to 73% in 2002-03 nationwide. This means that the authorities have made considerable progress in reaching the stated policy aim of bringing the network of Ukrainian-instructed pupils in accordance with the national composition of the population – in the 2001 census 77.8% of the population identified themselves as Ukrainian. However, the regional disparities are conspicuous. In the west and center-west the percentage of Ukrainian-instructed pupils is very high, to a point of even exceeding the proportion of Ukrainians in the local population, but in the east and south it still is at a modest level, lagging far behind the demographic weight of ethnic Ukrainians. Yet, the rate of increase of Ukrainian-instructed pupils is higher in the 1997-2003 period than in the 1989-1997 phase, which means that the east and south are catching up fast. It is not easy to interpret this accelerating pace of Ukrainianization. It could be a sign that Kyiv has decidedly strengthened its grip on the Russian-speaking regions, overruling uncooperative local authorities. It could, on the other hand also reflect a genuine

desire among parents in these regions to have their off-spring educated in the state language. Finally, we should not rule out the possibility that the figures are a more accurate reflection of a *desired* state of affairs than of reality. In other words, local educational authorities may have felt the need to send rosy statistics to the centre overestimating the use of Ukrainian and underestimating the use of Russian in actual practice.

Table 1 about here

3.2 Nation-building in schools: the role of literature, geography and history

The nation-building project in school education is not confined to language issues. Apart from its focus on the Ukrainian language as an identity marker, this project promotes a narrative that provides Ukrainian national identity with a meaningful past and legitimizes the current state independence by discrediting former rulers. The subjects chosen for this purpose are Ukrainian Literature, Geography of Ukraine, and History of Ukraine. Table 2 shows the allocation of hours to these subjects by the statutory national curriculum. As we can see, Russian schools have to devote as many hours to the teaching of History of Ukraine as Ukrainian schools (9.5 hours a week for all grades combined). The curriculum does not specify the numbers of hours allotted to Ukrainian Literature (in Russian schools) and to Geography of Ukraine (in both Russian and Ukrainian schools), merging these subjects with Ukrainian Language and Geography, respectively.

As regards the content of the three courses, it can first of all be noted that the curriculum for Ukrainian Literature addresses topics central to Ukrainian historiography. Thus, recurring themes are (1) the misery of Ukrainian serfs and peasants toiling lands owned by foreign overlords, (2) the Ukrainian national awakening in the 19th century and the Czarist ban on Ukrainian language and culture, (2) the Stalinist crackdown on Ukrainian writers and the Russification policies of the post war era and (4) the collectivization of agriculture and the ensuing famine. Nonetheless, the present literature curriculum is far less politicised than its Soviet predecessor, as it also discusses topics like the beauty of nature, country life, human yearnings, love, the passing of time and many other themes that have no specific ideological or nationalising content (Ministry of Education, 2001). Geography of Ukraine develops a specific economic argument for the legitimisation of Ukrainian statehood. The central textbook for this subject argues that the command nature of the Ukrainian economy and its dependency on Moscow as the centre of decision-making were responsible for the severe economic crisis that hit Ukraine in the early 1990s: "The structure of industry and agriculture first of all served the interests of the empire. (…) The contempt for the laws of economic development led to workers who were not interested in the results of their work, to low quality production and a low labour productivity, and altogether to a severe economic crisis" (Masliak and Shyshchenko, 2002, p. 165).

Yet, History of Ukraine clearly bears the brunt of the content-oriented side of the nation-building project. Its relevance was underlined by the institution of a compulsory central exam in the subject for eleventh graders completing their school career. Given its centrality as a nationalising agent, *History of Ukraine* has commanded the Ministry of

Education's full attention. Not only does the Ministry establish the detailed central curriculum by which all schools are obliged to work (including private schools!), it also closely monitors textbook adoption. Once in every two to three years the Ministry organizes a competition for new textbooks. The books that pass this competition will then enter a phase of review, testing and revision before being approved by the Ministry for use in schools throughout Ukraine (Popson 2001). For each grade there are now two, three or four of these officially approved books, which means that schools have a small choice (*Osvita Ukrainy*, 2004). Yet, this slightly expanded offer of textbooks does not necessarily mean a relaxation of central control, which is well illustrated by events in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the rebellious Russian-speaking peninsula in southern Ukraine. Until 1997 the Crimean authorities had prepared local curricula, programs and exams for most school courses including history, geography and literature in defiance of the Constitution which did not grant the Autonomous Republic any powers in the sphere of education. In that year, however, the national government started acting upon the Constitution by imposing the central curricula, programmes and textbooks on the recalcitrant region.[1]

As regards the content, the history textbooks underline the deep historical roots of Ukrainian nation- and statehood, with medieval Kyivan Rus' and the short-lived Cossack state of the 16th century identified as the predecessors of the modern Ukrainian state. Moving into the modern era, the books present an account of history that maximises Ukraine's distinctiveness vis-à-vis Russia and go to great lengths in portraying Soviet power as a foreign and hostile regime in which Ukrainians had little or no part (Janmaat 2002). Although the new school historiography is clearly more balanced than the Soviet account of history, it does not make students aware that historical facts are open to different interpretations and that different versions of history can therefore exist side by side. The logic of the new

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[1] Interview with T. E. Yakovleva, head of the Department of Programs and Methods of the Ministry of

historiography thus seems to be merely a negation of the Soviet version of history rather than an attempt to be more widely embracing. Because of its singular approach, Stepanenko (1999) sees the new school historiography as genealogically related to its Soviet forerunner.

Whatever their differences, the three subjects discussed above have one thing in common: the argument that Soviet rule has been disastrous to Ukraine and its people, whether economically, socially or culturally, and that Ukraine can only realize its full potentials as an independent state. Clearly, this is the message the authorities want to convey in their efforts to instil a Ukrainian national spirit in the youngest generation.

3.3 Democratization and globalization in school education

After independence, the new Kravchuk government declared democratic reform in the educational sector to be of highest priority, as witnessed by several policy documents. Thus, the state national program entitled *Education: Ukraine of the 21ˢᵗ Century* mentions as a key objective: "an elimination of uniformity in education and the sweeping away of the prevailing practices of authoritarian pedagogy". In addition it calls for: "a radical restructuring of the management in education, its democratization, decentralisation, the creation of a regional system of management" (quoted in Stepanenko, 1999, p. 99). Another official publication strikes an equally radical note: "The state monopoly in the branch of education is ruined, its multi-structurality is guaranteed (…) the forms of administrating become more democratic and perfect, the rights of educational institutions broaden, wide autonomy is given to them" (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 71).

Education of the Crimean Autonomous Republic. Simferopol, September 2004.

In practice, however, the centralised system of the Soviet era was carried over, with the school system remaining almost totally in state hands: in the 1997-98 school year still a mere 0.2% of pupils studied in private schools (Ministry of Education, 1998b). In the beginning of the 1990s parents, teachers and school authorities did temporarily have more opportunity to decide on educational matters, but this seemed to be more a matter of necessity - new curricula and textbooks had not yet been developed and the Ministry of Education did not allow the use of Soviet materials – than a reflection of a genuine desire to give schools more freedom of manoeuvre. Indeed, once the Ministry had prepared new curricula and produced sufficient amounts of new textbooks (the mid-1990s), it quickly resumed control over schools and regional authorities. The 1996 Education Act formalised this recentralisation process. It instituted the *state standards of education*, which established norms for content, volume and level of education (Parliament of Ukraine, 1996). As a result, all schools, including private ones, were obliged to teach several core subjects which together comprised the so called *state component* or *invariable part*, and use the officially approved curricula and textbooks for these subjects (for a list of these subjects, see Ministry of Education, 2004a).

It would be incorrect, however, to argue that nothing has changed. Democratization and grassroots initiative have been allowed to make limited inroads into school education. First of all, the number of hours that school and individual pupils (or parents) can decide upon has increased dramatically. In the Soviet era the hours of this so-called *school component* or *variable part* were negligible, but now they can take up as much as 14% of the teaching plan for schools with the Ukrainian language of instruction. The Ministry of Education prepared many new courses for the school component, from which schools could freely choose. These include practical subjects (a second foreign language, basics of computer science), social sciences (economics, ecology, 'person and society') and courses

intended to acquaint students with Ukrainian values, habits, costume, song and dance (Ukrainian studies; folklore and ethnography of Ukraine). Although clearly helpful in the identity construction process, this last group of courses, because of their optional status, remained relatively unimportant and very vulnerable to being cast aside in exchange for more hours of education in 'hard' subjects like English, law or mathematics.

Second, teachers can state their opinions freely now, and they have liberty in choosing whatever additional materials they deem necessary in the lessons, alongside the prescribed textbooks. Whether teachers make use of their increased discretion is of course another matter, for this autonomy might only exist on paper. Informally, teachers could still be proscribed from introducing original materials in their lessons. Alternatively, a lingering passive attitude among the teaching staff of only teaching *what one is told to teach* could well preserve the uniform pedagogical practice of the Soviet era. Yet, there are indications that teachers are no longer content with teaching in the old way. In a survey conducted in 2001 among history teachers, respondents, for instance, said that the main problems they face are "overloaded teaching programmes, outdated approaches to the selection of facts and their interpretation in school textbooks, too limited historical interpretations, insufficient quality of historical sources for corroboration, (…) and making myths of past events" (Verbytska 2004, p. 67).

In addition to democratization, the impact of globalization is beginning to be felt in matters of school education. Intending to bring the Ukrainian school system in line with European standards, the government for instance decided to start with a twelve-year system of three levels - primary (grades 1-4), middle (5-9) and senior (10-12) - from the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year. This system is meant to gradually replace the ten-year system inherited from Soviet times in a year-by-year manner. The Ministry of Education has already

prepared the state standards and the teaching plans for the twelve grades and is now in the process of developing new curricula for each subject.

4. Higher education

4.1 Nation-building in higher education

Often, the language of instruction of higher education is an even more sensitive topic than that of school education. This is because higher education is synonymous with upward mobility, progress and a 'superior' urban culture. As a rule, activists campaigning for the elevation of a low status language believe that the image of urban sophistication will rub off on their language once it is used in higher education. They will therefore do everything within their power to establish their language as the language of instruction in universities and institutes. This brings them into open conflict with cosmopolitans and teaching staff who wish to retain the language of the (former) metropolitan centre. The acrimonious struggles waged over the language status of the universities of Ghent and Louvain (Belgium), Helsinki (Finland) and Pristina (Kosova) before and after World War II all testify to this type of conflict.

Ukraine in the late Soviet era presents a similar case. Alarmed by the vulnerable position of Ukrainian vis-à-vis Russian, *Rukh* activists targeted the heavily Russified higher education system, and succeeded in seeing their priorities integrated in the aforementioned language law. Thus, the law stipulated that the language of instruction of higher education would be Ukrainian, and that instruction in a minority language (i.e. Russian) could only be continued in places where the *majority* of citizens belonged to a minority (art 28 of language

law, see Arel 1995). As ethnic Russians made up a majority only in the Crimea, this meant that Russian-language higher education would be confined to that region and that all the other institutes of higher education in the Russian-speaking East and South would have to switch to Ukrainian. In addition, the law introduced a Ukrainian language exam for students wishing admission to higher education. Nonetheless, the authorities realised that a sudden implementation of these measures would have catastrophic consequences for the quality of education as many lecturers had been teaching in Russian only and could not even speak Ukrainian. They therefore gave higher educational establishments 10 years time to retrain their teaching staff and switch to Ukrainian.

After independence, the Kravchuk government was adamant to ukrainianize higher education. In order to speed up the transition process, the Ministry of Education decreed that "as from 1 September 1993 all *first grade* classes should be taught in Ukrainian" (Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 7). As with schools then, the Ministry adopted the strategy of gradually phasing out the Russian-instructed batches of students. Yet, it allowed institutes of higher education in the south and east to open Russian first grade classes parallel to Ukrainian ones for a transition period "in view of the language situation in these regions" (*ibid.*, p. 7). Thus, the authorities were not blind for the linguistic realities produced by 70 years of Soviet rule, possibly fearing an uprising in the Russian-speaking areas if language policies were implemented too impatiently. Still, the Ministry of Education made it more than clear that institutes of education or students would not be allowed to decide on the language of instruction themselves, explicitly condemning institutes that had allowed students to vote on the issue (Ministry of Education, 1993).

As was the case for schools, the Kuchma administration basically continued the language policies of the previous government for higher education. The ratification of the aforementioned charter on minority languages had no serious consequences for these policies,

as the stipulations Ukraine agreed to abide by did not require the government to offer higher education in languages other than Ukrainian.

Table 3 about here

Official statistics on the language of instruction reflect the Ministry's determination to ukrainianize higher education (see Table 3). They demonstrate that despite the arrears of higher education in relation to schools - in 1995-96 only 51% of all students were instructed in Ukrainian, compared to 60.5% of all school pupils in 1996-97 – the transition process in higher education proceeded faster than in schools. As a result, the number of students instructed in Ukrainian (78%) had overtaken the number of Ukrainian-educated pupils (73%) by 2002-2003. As with schools, however, the regional differences were conspicuous. While in the central and western part of the country higher education had become fully ukrainianized (reaching figures close to 100%), in the east and in the south only a small majority of students were instructed in Ukrainian by 2002-2003. One must also be cautious in taking these figures at face value. Several students I met in Kyiv in September 2004 indicated that some of their lessons were still given in Russian. In addition, some lecturers reportedly allowed students to vote on the language of instruction. The figures therefore may not reflect the actual state of affairs, which could still be favouring Russian.

As regards the substantive side of the nationalizing project, institutes of higher education, irrespective of ownership or orientation, have since independence been required to teach a number of humanities and social sciences, the so-called *humanitarnyi blok*. Three of these humanities, History of Ukraine, Business Ukrainian, and Ukrainian and Foreign Culture,

are clearly related to the nation-building project. The humanitarnyi blok as a whole replaced a number of courses of the Soviet period that were specifically designed to inculcate the communist ideology (see Table 4). Most of the lecturers who taught these courses in the Soviet era retained their jobs and started teaching the new disciplines. Many teachers of History of the Communist Party, for instance, had to change their orientation overnight and teach History of Ukraine (Kovaleva, 1999).

Interestingly and in contrast to schools, institutes of higher education are free to determine the subject matter of the mandatory disciplines, including history of Ukraine (see art 46 of the 1996 Education Act (Parliament of Ukraine, 1996). Interviews with the teaching staff of several universities revealed that institutes indeed used this discretion by elaborating their own curricula and teaching materials. Although groups of experts supervised by the Ministry had prepared central curricula for the mandatory disciplines at the end of the 1990s, none of the interview partners teaching history of Ukraine said they actually used these curricula as a guideline for their lectures. Instead, all of them indicated that they had prepared their own curricula "based on a general understanding of the important periods in Ukrainian history".[2] They also stated that the state inspection checked up on the content of education only once in every five years as part of the general attestation cycle. These statements do not give the impression that the central authorities are much involved in, nor concerned about history of Ukraine and the other mandatory courses. One state official openly expressed doubts on the long-term viability of history of Ukraine, Business Ukrainian, and Ukrainian and Foreign Culture, saying that "no civilized European state requires its higher education establishments to teach national history, language and culture".[3] In fact, government support for the these subjects appears to have dwindled the last years as the

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[2] Interview with L. S. Dunaevskii, head of the social-humanitarian department of the Crimean branch of the European University of Finance, Information Systems and Business. Simferopol, 22 September 2004.

Ministry of Education has repeatedly reduced the number of hours devoted to the compulsory courses, a fact much regretted by the nationally conscious intelligentsia and the teaching staff directly affected (*Literaturna Ukraina*, 2002).

Table 4 about here

4.2 Democratization and globalization in higher education

The declining importance of nation-building concurred with a surge of government interest in issues related to globalization and – to a lesser extent – democratization. To begin with the latter, it must be noted that the issue of autonomy for higher education has been largely ignored by the authorities until recently. Indeed, Rarog (2005) reports that the freedom and participation levels granted to institute staff during *Perestroika* were steadily curtailed by a string of government and presidential decrees in the 1990s. However, the 2002 Higher Education Act, although prepared in Soviet-style secrecy (*ibid.*), may have been a turning point as it granted institutions of higher education noticeably more powers in matters of personnel (Parliament of Ukraine, 2002). Unlike before, the University Council now has the decisive vote in the appointment of a new rector. Previously, the Ministry of Education gave its approval to new appointments. In addition, the law acknowledged and formalized student self-administration, although the decisions of these bodies were only given an advisory status. As in the case of schools, however, the Ministry continued to determine the *state standards of education*, which in regard to higher education set requirements for the qualifications of

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[3] Interview with K. M. Levkivs'kyi, director of the Scientific-Metholodogical Department of the Ministry of

teaching staff and the level and volume of education. The Ministry also remained in full control of attestation, inspection and certification.

Much more so than democratization, the discourse of globalization has really dominated the Ministry's agenda in recent years. From 2000 almost every edition of the education journals *Osvita* and *Osvita Ukrainy* features articles on the Bologna process.[4] The tenor of these articles, many of which quote the former education minister Vasil' Kremen', is that Ukraine has no choice but to participate in the Bologna process if it wishes its higher educational establishments to provide high quality training and remain competitive on the world market. The prospect of Ukraine and its institutions becoming an isolated backwater in Europe, issuing diplomas that nobody else recognizes, thus seems to have become a major concern of educational policy makers, removing nation-building from the top of the political agenda. Indeed, one of the first actions of the new education minister Stanislav Nikolaenko as part of the Tymoshenko-led government was to make Ukraine a member of the Bologna process (17 May 2005). Moreover, among the five policy priorities that he established for his term of office, nation-building concerns are conspicuously absent. This is all the more remarkable as the new government installed in January 2005 after the turbulent presidential elections is said to have a national-democratic and patriotic profile. One of the five priorities is "attaining European levels of quality and accessibility" (*Osvita Ukrainy* 2005, p. 2). Interestingly, this closely echoes one of the key assignments for education the EU Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has formulated for Ukraine: "Reform and upgrade the education and training system and work towards convergence with EU standards and practices" (*EU/Ukraine Action plan* 2005, p. 26). As the ENP "will encourage and support Ukraine's objective of further integration into European economic and social structures" (*ibid.*

Education of Ukraine. Kyiv, 15 September 2004.

[4] The Bologna process seeks to establish a European Higher Education Area in which the participating institutions issue comparable degrees, recognize each other's diplomas and operate a system of accumulation and transfer of credits with the aim of increasing student and staff mobility.

p. 1), it seems that, in addition to the fear of losing out in the competition with other nations, the Ukrainian authorities are now also motivated by the prospect of one day joining the European Union in their efforts to reform higher education.

Globalization has also left its mark on the structure of higher education and on the offer of courses. Thus, in contrast to school education, private institutions have mushroomed in higher education. According to the website of the Ministry of Education, as much as 105 out of 311 institutes are privately owned. Yet, as these institutes are on average much smaller than state institutes and ask substantial tuition fees, they enrol only about 7.5% of the total number of students (Ministry of Education, 2004b).[5] The overwhelming majority of the private institutes have an economic profile, teaching business, management, law, information technology, and foreign languages. They thus cater to the growing demand by parents and students for professional education that prepares the latter for a career in international business, or, if the required level of talent for that is not met, for jobs in Ukrainian private companies. Like state institutes of higher education, however, private institutes are required to teach the aforementioned humanities and social sciences. The question is what attitude students have towards these subjects: are they taken seriously or are they seen as a nuisance preventing students from learning things 'that really matter'. In 1999 a survey among 165 fourth-grade students of two state universities and one private institution in the eastern city of Donets'k revealed that the compulsory courses were on average not considered essential. In addition, their teaching quality was judged to be lower than that of the special courses. Moreover, History of Ukraine was rated as one of the least useful subjects of the *Humanitarnyi Blok*, with students from the private institution displaying particular negative opinions (Kovaleva 2000). Thus, the lack of support from the Ministry of Education seems to

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[5] The figure of 7.5% was calculated from data on student numbers on the Ministry's website.

be combined with pressure from below to diminish the role of the compulsory courses or to abolish them altogether.

5. Discussion

This paper has revealed that nation-building has been the key priority in Ukraine's education system after independence. The identity project found its most dramatic expression in the transformation of the language of instruction. The educational sector has moved from a largely Russian-instructed system to a Ukrainian-instructed one, a process that has not yet come to an end. In addition, nation-building had a considerable bearing on school subjects that are ideally suited for conveying a patriotic narrative – literature, geography and history. The central curricula and textbooks for these subjects had the suffering of the Ukrainian nation and the injustices committed by foreign powers (Poland, tsarist Russia and, last but not least, the Soviet Union) as their leitmotiv. The authorities moreover left the centralized system of the Soviet era intact, which meant that schools, irrespective of profile or form of ownership, were obliged to use the central curricula and textbooks. Institutes of higher education, too, were required to teach a number of courses instrumental for the national revival project.

Democratization was the evident victim of the emphasis on nation-building. The determination to Ukrainianize the education system of both the Kravchuk and Kuchma administrations effectively blocked parents, students or educational establishments from having a say on the language of instruction. The Ministry of Education even explicitly prohibited students from voting on this issue. The centralized nature of school education, with its prescribed curricula and textbooks, moreover prevented local authorities, national

minorities, schools and parents to acquaint pupils with cultures and historical narratives different from those sanctioned by the state. This was most visibly exemplified by the central government's imposition of the national curriculum and the corresponding programmes and textbooks on the Russian-speaking region of Crimea. Yet some changes in the direction of democratization did occur. Higher education, for instance, was free to determine the subject matter of the group of mandatory humanities and social sciences.

At this point it is important to note that a preference among Russian-speakers for Russian-language instruction should not automatically be equated with an unwillingness to learn Ukrainian. Some Russian-speakers may indeed bluntly reject Ukrainian language and culture but many others are likely to regard Russian-language education simply as a vehicle to pass their cultural heritage on to their offspring without making a judgement on Ukrainian language and culture. In any case, it is no longer possible for youngsters to ignore the state language as Ukrainian language and literature have been instituted as mandatory subjects in all educational institutions. The educational authorities are thus both enforcing the learning of the state language (which might be seen as a wholly legitimate state activity) and constraining the possibilities for national minorities to receive education in their native language, culture and history. It is in this latter sense that Ukraine's nation-building project conflicts with democratization.

Since 2000 globalization has become an increasingly powerful force shaping Ukraine's education system. In 2001-2002 the authorities introduced a twelve-year system of primary and secondary education to bring Ukraine's school education in conformity with European systems. In higher education globalization appears to have decidedly overcome nation-building as the top priority as concerns about joining the Bologna process have dominated the agenda of the Ministry of Education in recent years. Equally noteworthy has been the rise of private institutions, many of which have an economic profile and provide

instruction in the competencies prescribed by the globalization discourse. At the same time, the Ministry of Education has repeatedly cut back on the number of hours of the mandatory courses relating to the nation-building project. The coincidence of an increasing salience of globalization and a declining importance of nation-building in higher education nicely captures the competitive relation between the two discourses.

Now what do these patterns tell us? Do they allow us to make predictions about future trends in policies and identity formation? Let us start with policy and government. A remarkable finding of this study was that the Kuchma administration, though originating from the Russian-speaking south and east, continued the nation-building policies of its national-democratic predecessor. This has led one observer to conclude that there seems to be consensus among the political elites in Ukraine about an intimate connection between language, national identity and the viability of Ukraine as an independent state:

> My own hypothesis is that the members of this elite have already made up their minds: Ukraine is to remain independent of Russia. They nurture no illusions that this can be possible unless the country has a cultural identity distinct from that of Russia. And the clearest, most obvious cultural marker at their disposal? Language, of course (Kolstoe 2000, pp. 188,189).

If this conclusion is indeed valid then we should not expect to see much difference between a reform-oriented pro-western and a conservative pro-Russian government in the nation-building policies pursued.

Yet, as this study has shown, starting from Kuchma's second term of office the authorities seem to attach more importance to globalization than to nation-building, particularly in higher education. How are we to interpret this finding? Does it mean that the government is confident that the nation-building project will succeed anyway and that it does not need further support? The success of the Ukrainianization process in schools and higher

education might lead some policy makers to come to this conclusion. Or is it a sign that the conviction of a link between language, identity and national independence is eroding? In other words, does the ruling elite now increasingly believe that a national identity based on distinguishing cultural markers may not be so important in underpinning state independence after all? Another theory is that the shift in priorities may be linked to a reorientation of Ukraine's foreign policy enhancing the influence of Russia over Ukraine's internal policies. The argument here is that the implication of the Kuchma regime in various scandals and violations of human rights (the Kuchma tapes, the Gongadze murder and the Iraq arms deal) led to a severing of ties with the West, leaving the regime with no other option but to strengthen its relations with Russia in order to avoid international isolation (e.g. Kuzio 2005a). Possibly, the Putin administration has urged Ukraine to soften up its nation-building policies in exchange for solid support for the Kuchma regime. There is no denying that Ukraine indeed moved much closer to Russia in the years 2001-2004 and that Russia played an increasingly important role in Ukraine's internal affairs. It has for instance been alleged that Russia was closely involved in censoring the Ukrainian media and staging the campaign for the 2004 presidential elections (e.g. Kuzio 2005b). Yet, if the mitigation of the nation-building project had had its roots in Moscow, we would have expected to see a complete turnaround of policy under the pro-western national-democratic government instituted in January 2005. But this has not happened. To the contrary, the new education minister Stanislav Nikolaenko continued the pragmatic course of his predecessor and identified issues other than nation-building as key policy priorities.

What other explanation might there be for the fading salience of nation-building in relation to other objectives of education? My own hypothesis is that the conviction of a link between language, identity and loyalty to the state is as strong as before but that an anxiety for not meeting the utilitarian preferences and expectations of the population has simply

assumed greater proportions among the ruling elite. This population has witnessed how several neighbouring states have successfully entered the European Union and are expecting their government to prepare Ukraine's accession as well. Any obstacles in this process, such as nation building policies criticized by international monitoring organizations, are not likely to be appreciated by the electorate. The Ukrainian government may therefore feel that it does not have a choice but to go along with international trends and keep a low profile on nation building issues.

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TABLE 1. Enrollment in Ukrainian-language schools and the share of Ukrainians in the regional population (in percentages)

Regions	Schools 1988-1989 (%)	Schools 1996-1997 (%)	Schools 2002-2003 (%)	Ukrainians in population 1989 (%)	Ukrainians in population 2001 (%)
East	15.5	26.7	45.4	59.3	66.4
South	23.4	33.5	49.3	52.5	58.3
Center-east	60.6	79.0	93.8	88.2	91.3
Center-west	77.1	89.9	97.4	88.9	92.6
West	88.0	94.5	95.5	89.2	92.2
Kyiv city	20.1	75.8	95	72.4	82.2
Total Ukraine	47.4	60.5	73	72.7	77.8

Nb: The regional breakdown is based on the one proposed by Arel and Wilson (1994). The define western Ukraine as including the oblasts of L'viv, Ivano-Frankivs'k, Ternopil', Volyn', Rivne, Transcarpathia, and Chernivtsi. Center-west comprises the oblasts of Khmel'nyts'kyi, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Cherkasy, Kyiv Oblast and Kirovohrad. Center-east is made up of Sumy, Chernihiv and Poltava. Eastern Ukraine includes Donets'k, Luhans'k, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovs'k and Zaporizhzhia. Southern Ukraine comprises Odesa, Kherson, Mykolaiv and Crimea.

Sources: for the school data of 1988-89, 1996-97 and the 1989 population data, see Janmaat (1999); for the school data of 2002-03 and the population data of 2001, see Ministry of Statistics (2003). The 2002-03 school data were calculated from oblast data on the number of pupils and the language of instruction (*ibid*, pp. 508, 509).

Table 2. National curriculum for Ukrainian schools and schools with instruction in a minority language (1998-1999 school year)

Ukrainian-language schools		Schools with instruction in Russian or in another minority language	
Subject	Total no. of hours a week in all grades *	Subject	Total no. of hours a week in all grades *
Ukrainian Language	44.5	Ukrainian Language and Literature	39
Ukrainian Literature	19	Native Language	34.5
World Literature	14	Native Language and World Literature	23
Foreign Language	19.5	Foreign Language	19.5
History of Ukraine	9.5	History of Ukraine	9.5
World History	8.5	World History	8.5
Geography	9.5	Geography	9.5
Other subjects	129	Other subjects	129

* Ukraine continued the comprehensive school system of the Soviet period. This system is characterised by all-through schools combining primary and secondary education in a ten or eleven-grade structure.

Source: Ministry of Education (1998a)

TABLE 3. Proportion of students instructed in Ukrainian in institutes of higher education instructed by region.

Regions	1995-1996 (%)	2002-2003 (%)
East	23	58.9
South	26.9	55.5
Center-east	61.3	94.2
Center-west	88.1	97.9
West	99.4	99.1
Kyiv city	67	97
Total Ukraine	51	78

For the regional breakdown see Table 1.

Source: Ministry of Statistics (2003). The data for both years were calculated from oblast data on the number of students and the language of instruction in higher education (*ibid*, pp. 515, 516).

TABLE 4. Compulsory courses in the humanities and social sciences in Ukrainian institutes of higher education before and after independence

Before independence	After independence
History of the Communist Party of the USSR	History of Ukraine
Political economy	Ukrainian business language
Marxist-Leninist philosophy	Ukrainian and foreign culture
Scientific atheism	Philosophy
Basic principles of Soviet law	Principles of psychology and pedagogy
Foreign language (usually German)	Theology
Physical education	Political science
	Sociology
	Principles of law
	Principles of constitutional law
	Foreign language
	Physical education

Source: Janmaat (2000)