

IMPACT STUDY

Amel Alić, PhD,
University of Zenica

Haris Cerić, PhD,
University of Sarajevo

Sedin Habibović, MA,
Public Health Institution Addiction
Treatment Centre of Zenica-Doboj
Canton

UWC MOSTAR 2017

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Amel Alić, PhD, University of Zenica

Haris Cerić, PhD, University of Sarajevo

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Editor

Elma Mahmutović, United World College in Mostar

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

AMEL ALIĆ, PhD (1971), Associate Professor for pedagogic/education courses at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zenica. Amel earned his BA degree at the Faculty of philosophy (University of Sarajevo), MA degree in special education at University of Sarajevo and University of Joensuu and his (Ph. D) at University of Sarajevo. He is author of the book entitled *Structure and Dynamics of Family Culture* (2012, Sarajevo, Dobra knjiga and CNS), and co-author of the books *The Basics of Inclusive Education* (2005, Zenica, Hijatus) and *Creative Actions in Literature Classes* (2012, Zenica, City Library).

HARIS CERİĆ, Ph.D., (1974), Associate Professor for the pedagogic/education courses at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo. He is author of the book entitled *Skandalon In The Clouds: How To Use Comics In The Classroom* (CNS, Sarajevo, 2013), and co-author of books *Fundamental Premises of Inclusive Education* (Hijatus, Zenica, 2005), *Children and Youth Issues in Human Right Context in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Non-governmental Sector at Crossroads: Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 years on* (Rabic, Sarajevo, 2006) and *Illegal Forms Of Acquiring Knowledge At Higher Education Institutions In Bosnia And Herzegovina: A Study Of Social Deformation In The Academic Culture* (Atlantska inicijativa, Sarajevo, 2016).

SEDIN HABIBOVIĆ (1973), Master of psychological sciences. He is Head of Department for Prevention and Counseling in Public Health Institution Addiction Treatment Centre of Zenica-Dobo Canton. He is a senior assistant at the University of Zenica. Sedin is a licensed EMDR practitioner, therapist of System constellation and Teacher of Mindfulness. He is currently working on his doctoral thesis *Experimental insights into the effects of the application of therapy of EMDR in hospital detox opiate addicts*. He is co-author of Manual for Sexual education and HIV / AIDS prevention – A Guidebook for primary school teachers (Zenica, Our kids, 2008) and co-author of the book Abuse of psychoactive substances (in print).

UNITED WORD COLLEGE IN MOSTAR

UWC MOVEMENT

The United World College in Mostar (UWC Mostar), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is part of the broader UWC movement, founded in 1962, following the concept of the German educationalist Kurt Hahn, who believed that much could be done to overcome religious, cultural and racial misunderstanding and avoid conflict if young people from all over the world could be brought together. UWC makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. UWC is a unique organization. It is the only global educational NGO that brings students together from all over the world, selected from within their own countries, on merit and regardless of their ability to pay. These students come together at one of fifteen UWC schools and colleges that aim to foster international understanding and peace. UWC believes that to achieve peace and a sustainable future, the values it promotes are crucial:

- International and intercultural understanding
- Celebration of difference · Personal responsibility and integrity
- Mutual responsibility and respect
- Compassion and service
- Respect for the environment
- A sense of idealism
- Personal challenge
- Action and personal example

MISSION, GOALS AND IMPACT UWC MOSTAR

UWC Mostar has been an IB School since September 2006. It is registered as a high school in Bosnia and Herzegovina and offers a two-year academic program for high school students aged 16-19 (final two years of secondary education).

Standing on the sharp edge of the UWC mission by being based in the City of Mostar, emblematic of the bitterness and divisions of the war of the 90's, the UWC Mostar enriches the UWC movement by adding its unique aim: "To equip the next generations of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the knowledge, skills, leadership qualities and international values, necessary to bridge the still existing ethnic divisions and move their country into the 21st century."

UWC Mostar is the first UWC with an explicit aim to contribute to the reconstruction of a post conflict society. The College educates students to learn and appreciate their differences, at the same time promoting equality, tolerance and critical thinking.

Furthermore, the UWC Mostar broadens this special mission by offering the same opportunities to the young people from all over the world, especially those coming from other post-conflict countries, particularly from the Balkans. Every year UWC Mostar welcomes a generation of 100 high school students, nearly half of them from BiH and the other half from over 30 countries worldwide. Students are selected by their national committees based on merit, irrespective of their ability to pay the tuition fee. All students from BiH receive a full scholarship to live and study in Mostar. So far, 798 students have graduated from UWC Mostar and 381 of them were from BiH. They enrolled in over 120 prestigious universities worldwide.





Executive Summary: A Study of Cultural Contact and Social Impact of the United World College in Mostar

Introduction

Taking into account key criteria, the research of the United World College's (hereinafter UWC Mostar) impact on the local community (and vice versa) is characterized by explorative, descriptive, cross-sectional, ad hoc and non-experimental research. Predicting the weaknesses that could have arisen from the cross-sectional insight into a multifaceted and complex phenomenon such as the impact of one educational institution such as UWC Mostar, the research tried to reconcile the paradigms of understanding and explanation. This initial intent gave also way to the methodological orientation which, by its inner structure, encompassed the understanding of research phenomena, as well as the correlational scheme with features that determine the cause of the phenomena to the extent permitted by the non-experimental empirical approach: qualitative analysis of the dynamic reality including quantitative checks of static and dynamic realities. A quantitative data check was carried out via statistical data processing, and for data comparison, a t-test or Student's t-test, chi-square, correlation and descriptive statistics measures were used. For the quantitative part of the research, comparisons within the sample of UWC Mostar students and Grammar School Mostar (hereinafter

Gimnazija Mostar) students were conducted in regard to the following variables: generic data about students, the perception of family, social distance, intellectual sensitivity, empathy, depression anxiety stress scales, as well as the locus of control. For qualitative research, structured and semi-structured interviews were designed for: UWC Mostar students (current and former/alumni, teachers and other UWC Mostar employees, employees at professional community-based institutions which cooperate with UWC Mostar, UWC Mostar students' parents, and citizens who attended CAS activities.

The empirical part of the research encompassed the UWC Mostar students sample of 124 respondents; UWC Mostar students that were encompassed by the research come from 47 different countries, whereby the biggest group of students comes from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 39 of them. We identified that UWC Mostar students listed 34 different world languages as their mother tongue and that 55% of them actively speak or consider English their second language. The Gimnazija Mostar students sample encompassed 67 respondents, which makes it a total of 191 overall respondents. Regarding the sample based on the curriculum they follow, 124 students en-





Scheme 1 General overview of independent and dependent variables in the context of impact on the local community

compassed by the research attend UWC Mostar. Out of the remaining 67 students from Gimnazija Mostar, 50 of them attend classes under the Bosnian and 17 under the Croatian curriculum.

Within the qualitative part of the research, an interview was conducted with 15 current students, 5 former students, 3 UWC Mostar teachers, 10 parents, 12 professionals from institutions cooperating with UWC Mostar within CAS¹, 5 professionals working in educational and local community institutions: Education Institute, Office for upbringing and education of the City of Mostar and Pedagogical Institute, and relevant polls for citizens who attended public activities of UWC students and teachers.

By grouping the independent variables, we came to the conclusion that the analysis of social contact and cultural impact could be divided and separately observed in three areas:

- Efficacy of the overall activity in the local community (and wider) through various UWC Mostar activities—drawing attention;
- the level of insight into and knowledge about the UWC Mostar activity – familiarity and participation of em-

ployees in education and institutions, and citizens in the UWC Mostar activities, and

- the level of acceptance of UWC Mostar – views of educational employees, employees in other educational institutions, students of other schools and citizens.

Core schematic overview divides independent variables into:

- factors of the organizational concept of the UWC Mostar
- factors of explicit levels of impact through different activities, and
- factors to be considered when dealing with cultural, social, and political characteristics of the local community.

The previous schematic overview displayed some of the most significant dependent variables as summarized singled out and grouped that can be seen, at least, at the explicit level:

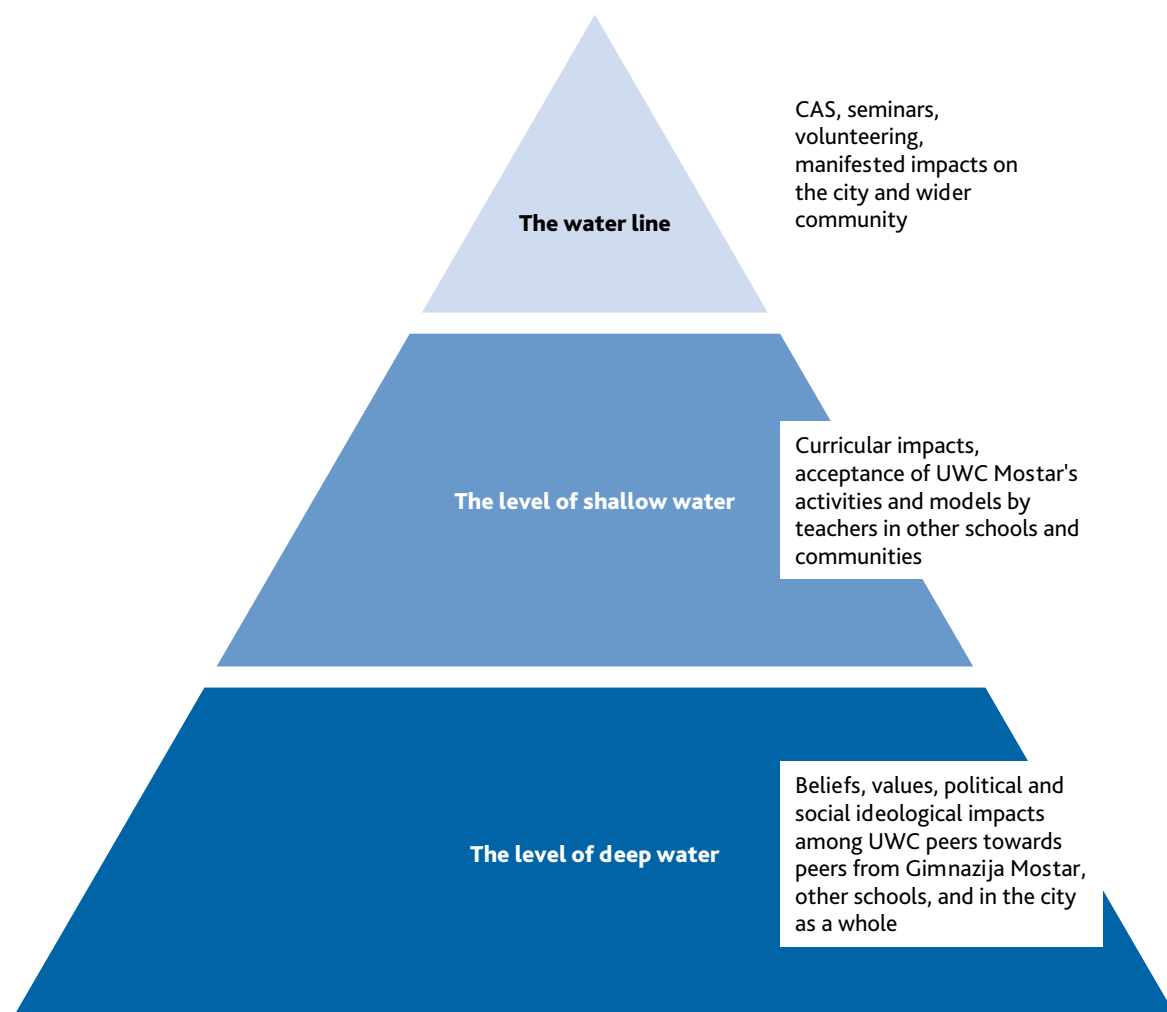
- impact on views and opinions
- impact on general perception
- impact on individual and institutional practices in the local community.

The implicit level of the institution's functioning (including even the hidden curriculum) can only be caught if the research pervades in the paradigmatic layers, which

¹ acronym for Creativity, Activity, Service is a part of the Diploma Programme of all IB-schools worldwide, mandatory for all students.

required adjusting the situations and conversations with different categories of respondents in order to continuously check and test the collected data. It turned out that the most significant part of the data was offered and accessible by itself naturally as the environmental conditions (validity) of observations, interviews, and polls moved from non-participant-formal toward participant-informal interaction. In other words, the environmental validity increased as the respondents were immersed into situations of informal exchange of information. In that sense, it is possible to show the overall impact in areas like perception, opinion, and change of practices at three levels of which one is the manifested, visible, explicit level of impact, and the other two are implicit and insufficiently visible. The first explicit one is possible to be displayed graphically as the visible part of an iceberg as the impact of one institution, and that part is mostly related to the impact on the community through CAS and educational and volunteer projects. Regarding those aspects of impact, a great level of agreement was achieved among all respondents even those who expressed negative attitudes towards UWC

Mostar. The second layer refers to the impact and social contact of the UWC Mostar management and educational philosophy on the community with a particular emphasis on potential curricular impacts and contact which enable action via cultural exchange mechanisms (especially educational philosophy). That layer could be graphically portrayed as "the layer of shallow water," i.e. the part of the iceberg that partially appears through the water, but does not "float above the water surface." The third and most hidden layer represents a series of and extremely hard-to-catch impacts at the level of peer interaction in school and extracurricular activities. We portrayed this level of impact as invisible, the implicit part of the iceberg, which is mostly found in the layer of "deep waters." That part of impact does not only refer to impacts that the UWC Mostar transfers over students onto students from other schools, especially in informal settings, but also to the impact solely on UWC Mostar students. We portrayed the iceberg of the UWC Mostar organizational concept based on three layers so that the explanations above would look like as in the following scheme:



Scheme 2 Explicit and implicit layers of the UWC Mostar impact

Based on the interviews conducted with the students and teachers from UWC Mostar, employees at the Pedagogical Institute, Education Institute, institutions where the majority of UWC activities takes place, citizens who attended public UWC Mostar activities, as well as observations, examination of available documentation, including the empirical part of the research encompassing UWC Mostar and Gimnazija Mostar students, and in line with the previous explanation, the impact that the UWC Mostar has on the local community can be observed at three different levels:

1. Impact on the community through CAS and educational and volunteer projects.
2. Impact and social contact of the UWC management and educational philosophy on the community. - Curricular impacts
3. Impact on the level of peer interaction in school and extracurricular activities.

The impact on the community through CAS and educational and volunteer projects

At the explicit level, the most visible impacts are the ones that the UWC Mostar students have through the CAS programme, especially its third component – SERVICE. Through CAS, students are involved in a variety of activities, in addition to academic subjects which are a part of the Diploma Programme.

CAS enables students' personal and interpersonal development through experience-based learning. At the same time, it represents a significant counterbalance to the academic pressures imposed by

the Diploma Programme. A good CAS programme should represent both, a challenge and pleasure, a personal journey towards self-concept.

Every student has a different starting point, and thereby different goals and needs, but for the majority of them, CAS activities represent experiences that prepare them for ongoing life changes that will happen. Based on the interview that was published in educational local institutions and institutions in which students do CAS activities, we recorded the statements and argumentation about impacts which explicitly highlight a positive impact. It could be concluded that all of these activities represent impacts at an explicit level. Analysing the answers of the employees in institutions where CAS activities take place, the impact of UWC Mostar students on the institutions' protégés could be grouped into the three following categories, regarding the high level of agreement:

- development of abilities of understanding and acceptance of cultural differences as values (intellectual sensitivity),

- development of communication abilities with the culturally different (communication skills)
- awareness of stereotypes and prejudice about the culturally different
- non-violent conflict resolution (negotiating, finding a compromise, etc.),
- foster a feeling of solidarity and sensitivity towards others
- help with studying,
- motivation for continuous learning and education,
- reducing social distance towards members of groups perceived as different,
- strengthening self-confidence,
- development of teamwork skills.

A positive attitude towards CAS activity was also confirmed by the citizen poll. The answers obtained from citizens let us conclude that the majority of surveyed citizens have a positive attitude towards UWC Mostar activity, and the terms that the citizens used to describe UWC Mostar not only emphasize the positive impact on the local community, but for the most part, they are also the key terms of the educational UWC Mostar philosophy. The majority of citizens is familiar with the UWC Mostar activities, and they highlighted the cleaning campaigns, food fest, clothing collections, youth gatherings, promotion of human rights, side events on city squares, open door, and help to the community in general. The question: "Would you recommend to others to enrol their children in this school?" was answered by the majority affirmatively, i.e. that they would recommend to others to enrol their children in UWC Mostar. We asked those who would recommend to others to enrol their children in the UWC Mostar to list a reason for why they would recommend it. The list of the given reasons for recommendations made by the respondents was as follows:

- due to the development of positive social values,
- better preparation for life,
- quality education,
- I think they would familiarise with the cultures of other nations, make new friends, etc.,
- because it is fun,
- familiarising with different cultures,
- because it is different from anything else in this region,
- to widen their horizons, familiarise with new cultures, get new opportunities,
- to get to know better other cultures.

From the answers obtained from the citizens, we can conclude that:

- the majority of citizens has a positive attitude towards UWC Mostar's activity,
- the majority of citizens is widely familiar with the UWC Mostar activities,



- the majority of citizens would recommend to others to enrol their children in this school, and
- the terms that the citizens used to describe UWC Mostar, not only emphasize the positive impact on the local community, but for the most part they are also the key terms of the educational UWC Mostar philosophy.

Social impact and cultural contact of the UWC management and educational UWC philosophy on the community – the rulers of “No Man’s Land”

Affirming differences, equality, tolerance, and critical thinking, the basic mission of the UWC is to contribute to the reconstruction of post-conflict societies which is also reflected in different engagement forms in the community. For the purpose of this research, we conducted interviews with representatives of several institutions which deal with issues regarding promotion of education (Agency for Preschool, Elementary, and Secondary Education, Pedagogical Institute Mostar, (Office for Upbringing and Education of the City of Mostar), representatives of certain non-profit organisations which cooperate with UWC Mostar through the CAS programme and other activities

(MINORES, “Robotics”), as well as with UWC Mostar employees. Numerous teacher activities regarding the organisation of professional seminars, competitions, and volunteer activities reveal that a teacher at UWC Mostar has to be a person of specific professional and human profile, and hence, every student in such a context and social environment would be oriented towards increasing social sensitivity and reducing social distance.

If we would recapitulate the statements of our interlocutors in the institutions which represent the educational authorities in the local community based on the hypothetical question what would be the same and what would be different in Mostar if UWC Mostar had never existed, then, in the words of multiple interlocutors from different institutions, without UWC Mostar there would be no:

- restoration of the Gimnazija Mostar;
- the building of Gimnazija Mostar would not serve as a contact point for many institutions;
- The City of Mostar would not be hosting other organisations which carry out their activities thanks to UWC or in cooperation with it;
- politics would have probably interfered into the separation of curricula in Gimnazija Mostar;
- people were brought to Mostar and xenophobia was reduced, and tolerance increased;

- citizens ascertained the possibility of intercultural life;
- the association of natural science teachers, especially physics teachers, would not be working together on seminars, competitions, and professional development projects, especially because UWC Mostar finances physics competitions for students who study under both curricula. Even though the best are selected separately under each curriculum, together they make a single team at the Federal competition;
- tourism would be scarcer, and thereby, the economic effects of UWC Mostar would be more modest.

In the end, it is important to emphasise the general impression of how the UWC Mostar teachers and students are almost the only one with their activities who actively work on building bridges between people and institutions in this divided town. With their initiative, hard work, persistence but also patience, tolerance, openness, and empathy, they are the only ones who have the courage to promote basic human values enclosed in the name of the school) through school and extracurricular activism and volunteering. That "united world" is for the local circumstances (but as it seems, even wider when listening to the daily news!) a little bit strange, awkward, and unusual, because people are not used to such behaviours, and too often, they are suspicious. Therefore, according to our interlocutors, one should understand presumptuous and prejudiced comments which the local people use to defend themselves against their own insecurities.

Still, it could be said and illustrated that UWC Mostar occupied the space of "No Man's Land," not only in regard to physical separation, but also when it comes to the outlined borders along different value systems, points of view, politics, ethnicities, languages, and religions. In that way, as if the horizontal division into East and West can be observed in its horizontal explicitness and implicitness. The explicit is undeniable, manifested, visible, and included in numerous reports. However, the implicit should make progress in the world of people's hearts regarding change of attitudes, reducing social distance, and overall progress from ethnocentrism (especially concerning defence against differences) towards ethno relativism (acceptance, adaptation, and integration for differences).

Impact at the level of peer interaction in school and extracurricular activities

A particularly interesting part of the study referred to the data analysis that derived from the part of the research that had the goal to identify the impact at the level of peer interaction in school and extracurricular activities. The assessment of the impact based on interviews from the perspective of UWC Mostar and Grammar School

Mostar students has shown that the students disagree regarding the scope and level of impact. Actually, the qualitative and quantitative part of the research regarding implicit and invisible impacts within peer interaction offered the most delicate data. From this third part of the research, the significance of students' consideration and cultural characteristics was subsequently determined, not only based on the fact of their perception of UWC Mostar's activity but also regarding numerous impacts back on students. The affirmative answers of Gimnazija Mostar students highlight a fresh spirit, intercultural, and erasing barriers, separation, and prejudices, while negative responses mostly criticise the lifestyle of UWC Mostar students, the way they dress, their too liberal behaviour, and the school's educational philosophy, which, according to the opinions of these students, offend the local tradition and value system. Students from both schools clearly recognize the source of the barriers – it is institutional for most of its part and reflects the lack of interest of other schools' managements to establish better communication.

Positive attitudes mostly emphasize that it is good that the UWC Mostar exists, that the projects bring people closer and enable familiarising with other cultures, but also their dissatisfaction with the fact that they cannot participate in private parties organised by the UWC Mostar students. Analysis of answers given by the UWC Mostar and Gimnazija Mostar students suggests the following conclusion:

- With reference to the theory of integrated threat, it can be concluded that the UWC Mostar and Gimnazija Mostar students, who revealed negative relationships, indicate the existence of a symbolic threat, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes.
- Considering the quadrants of intercultural encounter, the negative answers indicate that there is a smaller percentage of students who take a hostile stand, who emphasise diversity and disliking and accept the only assimilation of others and different ones into the standards of their native culture.
- Observing the above from a cultural shock point of view, such a group of students is at the stage of disintegration where the differences collide, disturb and upset, whereby they are looking for cultural support of like-minded groups.
- Such a group reveals attributes aimed at glorifying one's own and rejecting other and foreign groups, and observing such a relationship, negative attitudes could be assigned to a completely ethnocentric stage of intercultural sensitivity expressed with denial and defence.
- The group of students that reiterates the positive and negative impacts inclines the stage of ethnocentrism regarding minimizing the differences and ethno relativism through acceptance. Such students are the closest



to separation from others, they emphasise differences, but tolerate them.

- Still, the largest number of students reiterated a positive attitude – it is the group of students where one can recognize the readiness for pluralism, emphasising both, differences and similarities, respect, appreciation, readiness for cooperation, and the attitude that “our (sub)culture is related to others/with others.”
- Students that reiterate positive attitudes are at the autonomous stage where differences and similarities are beginning to be legitimised, they express their readiness to negotiate with the culture of others, and they express self-confidence that one can survive in an ambience of diversity.

- At the same time, the largest group of students also showed that, despite numerous separations, there is a significant number of local community members that expresses an ethno relativistic attitude regarding acceptance, adaptation, and integration.

Analysis of impacts back on UWC Mostar students could be summarised in several conclusions as follows:

- During their studies at UWC Mostar, students mature faster, take on responsibility earlier, and are more ambitious in planning their future.
- After the studies, some students independently organise activities in local communities based on the CAS model.

- They accept new behaviours (especially regarding the expression of emotions and building social relationships), which they learnt during their studies in Mostar, and transfer them onto the culture of origin making a kind of cultural transmission.
- Some students experience a strong change in value orientation, as well as in adopting new lifestyles.
- Social distance towards other cultures is being reduced intensively, as well as prejudices.
- Connection in the parents- children relationship, the level of attention and the process of dissociation from the primary social core is culturally determined, and it can have a strong effect on the efficacy of the impact on the students and their status during studies.
- Foreign students incline toward internal and students from Bosnia and Herzegovina toward the external locus of control.
- Students from Bosnia and Herzegovina during their first year of studies at the UWC express a higher lev-



Open answers from students are just an introduction for the plunge into the deeper layers of UWC Mostar's functioning, as well as invisible barriers which deny not only a more successful impact at the explicit but also at the implicit level. The barriers are most visible on the cultural agenda, and they are backed up by the differences obtained from comparisons of UWC Mostar and Gimnazija Mostar students, including an additional assessment of differences among all students from Bosnia and Herzegovina and UWC Mostar students from other countries.

- Students from different cultures come from completely different family and wider cultural environments.
- They differently assess the significance of the dimensions of emotionality and control of both parents.

el of social distance compared to others, and students from foreign countries are significantly more interculturally sensitive than their peers from BiH.

- During the school year, the level of social distance significantly decreases in students from Bosnia and Herzegovina compared to students from other countries.
- While the variable of the locus of control is more important for UWC Mostar students regarding social distance, students from Bosnia and Herzegovina determine social closeness on the basis of a series of factors that impact the level of intercultural sensitivity, i.e. estimate of how much to invest themselves cognitively, emotionally and socially regarding (during enculturation and imprinting) adopted criteria and norms for building inner-group and out-of-group relationships.

- Cultural contact and social impact happened exclusively between those student subcultures which have already brought in similar lifestyles into the relationship and the contact is taking place in the Gimnazija facilities the least, but much more in informal settings.
- At the subcultural level, differences are easier accepted and overcome, and they impact the lower level of social distance between those students who make contacts in informal settings, at parties, and while going out to the same places in the city.

The preceding notes also determine the success of the impact on the local community at all three levels of impact given that the described characteristics of students from Bosnia and Herzegovina and similar foreign cultures are valid when looking at the success regarding the reduction of social distance and increase of intercultural sensitivity in local community members. These mechanisms strongly determine the impact, and they are mostly hidden in the invisible "deep waters" layers of the iceberg of the UWC Mostar's cultural contact and the local community. Without improvement and adaptation of the mechanisms that are found in the layers of "shallow" and "deep waters," social impact and cultural contact will remain exclusively at the visible level, 1/3 of the iceberg of the UWC Mostar organisational culture.

Based on the preceding identification of educational values and multicultural education, including conclusions deriving from the analysis of the whole processed research material, we feel free to suggest the following recommendations:

1. For a more complete, and methodologically seen, more objective, more reliable, and more valid level of consideration of impacts, this research should be repeated next year in order to transform it into a longitudinal study by comparing the results obtained during this school year from the sample of students who spent one year at UWC Mostar, and in that way, reduce the cross-sector consideration shortcomings regarding objective reality.
2. Organising supervisory groups for staff, especially professional staff employed in boarding schools (the so-called "house mums").
3. During the first week and reception of new students, apply instruments for measuring anxiety, stress, and depression, and accordingly, design and plan a work programme for the students throughout the year, aimed at anxiety, stress, and depression reduction and overcoming the cultural shock.
4. Based on the suggestions of numerous interlocutors during the interviews, a need to strengthen the educational segment during the education of students at UWC Mostar was recognized in relation to a more detailed introduction of implicit layers of the local

culture (residing at local families', attendance of local family, religious, and overall wider cultural rituals) , In other words, even though UWC Mostar implements a culturally sensitive approach, it should take into consideration in its future activities the local cultural characteristics upon organising activities which refer to social boundaries and out-of-group relationships in particular with the goal to further improve its work.

5. Think about the possibilities of organising support for the students' parents given that during the interview they expressed the desire to "ventilate" and reduce the tension related to the separation from their children.
6. Based on a larger number of remarks by Grammar School Mostar students regarding the way UWC Mostar students (and teachers) dress, maybe the UWC Mostar administration should consider introducing a dress code in the school. A larger number of students said that it was a serious obstacle to cooperation since they have to comply with a dress code, whereas UWC Mostar students do not, and it causes additional social distance.
7. Consider the possibility of introducing motivational groups or other kinds of activities regarding psychological preparations for returning home to the native countries after finishing school or leaving for further education to third countries. Namely, taking into account the opinion of a larger number of interlocutors from different institutions, but also parents, that UWC Mostar represents a kind of "a catapult" for "launching" students into different countries (especially EU countries and the USA) and that it represents a weakness in the sense of subsequent UWC Mostar impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular, extend the work programme regarding (possible) redirecting and encouraging UWC Mostar graduates (from Bosnia and Herzegovina) to come back and later professionally engage in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
8. In reference to the analysis of multicultural and multi-ethnic education impacts, it is clearly visible that UWC Mostar integrated the whole philosophy of such an approach and incorporated it into its work. Areas of integration, unbiased pedagogies, the process of formulation and knowledge building, reduction of prejudices, and accreditation of the school culture aimed at the openness to diversity was astonishingly, but successfully implemented in the UWC in the space of "No Man's Land" (and certainly, between the "East" and "West") in Mostar. That model could also be adopted by native educational employees, without further delay.

In that sense, we suggest the competent education institutions to continue to support UWC Mostar with the goal to transform "No Man's Land" into a "Land" that will be open and welcoming to all people with good intentions.



UWC MOSTAR

Španjolski trg 1, 88 000 Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Telephone +387 36 320 601; +387 36 320 601, Facsimile +387 36 319 926
Email info@uwcim.uwc.org, Website www.uwcmostar.ba