

## **Ethnocentrism and Xenophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina Implication on Cross-cultural Education**

**AZRA BRANKOVIC**

International University Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
azrabrankovic@yahoo.com

**VELID DRAGANOVIC**

International University Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
draganovic@hotmail.com

**Abstract:** World is full of people, group, nations, who think, feel and act differently. However, all these people in global world have to cooperate in order to solve global warming, poverty, terrorism, swine or avian flu, AIDS, pollution, extinction of animals, economic problems. In global economy customers, partners, suppliers, workers come from different location. People, groups and nations must have awareness of cultural differences and have ability to work with people from diverse background.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a place where many cultures encountered. The country population has a distinct ethnic and confessional composition consisting of Bosniak (44%), Serb (31%), and Croat (17%) and other ethnicities (8%), of Muslim (40%), Orthodox (31%), Roman Catholic (15%) and other religions (14%). People are closed in their ethnic and confessional groups, as a result of the war and nourish fear, anger and hate. It has strong and negative implication on education.

The aim of this paper is to research ethnocentrism, xenophobia and social trust in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its implication on education. Secondary research will be done based on UN, OSCE and media reports. Primary research will be done using as a target group students from International University Sarajevo. Inductive method of expert system will be applied to analyze the questionnaire. Recommendations for overcoming this situation will be made in the end of paper.

**Key words:** *globalization, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, cross-cultural education, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a place where many cultures encountered. The country population has a distinct ethnic and confessional composition consisting of Bosniak (44%), Serb (31%), and Croat (17%) and other ethnicities (8%), of Muslim (40%), Orthodox (31%), Roman Catholic (15%) and other religions (14%). People are closed in their ethnic and confessional groups, as a result of the war and nourish fear, anger and hate. It has strong and negative implication on education.

The aim of this paper is to research ethnocentrism, xenophobia and social trust in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the era of globalization and its implication on education. Secondary research will be done based on UN, OSCE and media reports. Primary research will be done using as a target group students from International University Sarajevo. Inductive method of expert system has been applied to analyze the questionnaire. Recommendations for overcoming this situation will be made in the end of paper.

### **2. GLOBAL WORLD**

World is full of people, group, nations, who think, feel and act differently. However, all these people in global world have to cooperate in order to solve global warming, poverty, terrorism, swine or avian flu, AIDS, pollution, extinction of animals, economic problems. In global economy customers, partners, suppliers, workers come from different location. Companies search for the best people all around the world and the people search for the best jobs all around the world. People, groups and nations must have awareness of cultural differences and have ability to work with people from diverse cultural background. Letter I in IBM means international, but it could easily mean intercultural, as IBM had 325 000 employees that speak 165 languages and sells to the clients in 175 countries all around the world. Ford sells its cars to 130 countries. Out of ten biggest American

export markets, just two (Great Britain and Canada) speaks English.

In the era of globalization, education is the most important asset. People understand that competition is very strong in global world. 33 millions professional people live today in the developing countries. Number of graduate students increases at the rate 5.5% annually in these countries. One million students graduate in China every year. India has one of the best educational systems in the world and the best experts from the field of engineering, informational technologies, medicine. People from various cultures are connected and communicate today via Face-book, My Space, and Twitter. 500 million people log on Face-book. If this web site were granted terra firma, it would be the world's third largest country by population, two-thirds bigger than the US. Face-book is global, 70% of users are not Americans. People share on Face-book more than 25 billion information and put one billion photos every month. Twitter had 175 millions of registered users in September 2010. LinkedIn, professional network, published that it reached number of 100 millions of users. It gets a new member every second.

### **3. SHORT HISTORY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a place where many cultures encountered, coexisted peacefully for centuries benefitting from each other. People inhabited Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Palaeolithic, hundred thousand years ago. During neolith, people in Bosnia established permanent settlements. The first tribes in Bosnia and Herzegovina were Illyrians. Celts from Northern Italy attacked Bosnia from the north in 370 century BC. They stayed only in the north of Bosnia, but their influence spread all over Bosnia as they have been technologically advanced and Illyrians took over and adopted new technologies. Greeks established their colonies at the Adriatic coast and islands in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, but they spread their influence also on Bosnia and Herzegovina through trade. Greeks were advanced and Illyrians learned from Greeks making coins, building cities, producing arms, tools, jewellery, dishes. Conflict between the Illyrians and Romans started in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, but Rome would not complete its annexation of the region till 9<sup>th</sup> year AD. Illyrians were defeated at last, after 3centuries of battles and stayed 5 centuries in Roman Empire sharing the same destiny as many nation of Europe, Asia and Africa. In the Roman period, settlers from all over the huge Roman Empire settled among the Illyrians or just travelled to Bosnia for various reasons. Young people from Bosnia were obliged to serve in Roman army, sometimes for 30 years and returned after that. So, population of Bosnia in the Roman period was very heterogeneous. It came from Orient, Greece, Egypt, Trakia, Iran and many other countries. It is noted that 40 different religions co-existed at that time and people in Bosnia worshiped 52 different gods.

Following the crises of the Roman Empire between end of 3rd and beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, barbaric tribes started with attacks. Region was conquered by the Goths, Alans, Huns, Byzantine Empire and finally by the Avars and Slavs, who crossed the river Sava in the year 602<sup>nd</sup> AD. We do not know a lot about life of Slavs upon their arrival and political situation in Bosnia during the Early Middle Ages. It was around this time that the Bosnia was Christianized and was probably one of the last areas to go through this process. Bosnia emerged as an independent state in the 12<sup>th</sup> century under the rule of local *bans*. During the rule of Kulin ban (1180-1204), one of the most important rulers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, country started to develop economically and culturally. Official church in Bosnia was Bosnian Church and official religion was bogumilism, considered heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and Byzantine church. This religion survived till Ottoman Empire arrived at Bosnia. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, during the bans and kings from Kotromanian dynasty, Bosnia reached the top of political and territorial power and king Tvrtko I Kotromanian was the greatest ruler at Balkans. Bosnia acquired with territorial expenditure also catholic and orthodox believers, so three religions have existed in Bosnia.

First encounter with Ottomans happened in 1386<sup>th</sup> in Neretva valley and then again in 1388th. Ottomans lost these battles, but their activities and influence in Bosnia have been increasing since that time till the final fall of Bosnia in 1463th. The Ottoman conquest of Bosnia marked a new era in the country's history and introduced drastic changes in the political and cultural landscape of the region. According to historical sources almost all Bosnian bogumils accepted Islam, but also a lot of people from catholic or orthodox religion. However, people were not forced to accept Islam. The Bosnian Franciscans (and the Catholic population as a whole) as well as the Orthodox community in Bosnia was free to exercise their religions. Ottomans ruled in Bosnia and Herzegovina almost 500 years but with the decline of Ottoman Empire were forced by Great Power to cede administration of the country to Austria-Hungary through the treaty of Berlin in 1878. During that period from 1878 till 1918, what was Austrian Hungarian occupation of Bosnia, people from other countries started to immigrate to Bosnia and Herzegovina and change cultural structure. Immigrants reached the number of 114 591 in the year 1910. They mainly came from Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy and Czechoslovakia. Following World War I, Bosnia was incorporated into the South Slav kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (soon renamed Yugoslavia). Bosnia and Herzegovina was prosperous part of Socialistic

Yugoslavia from the end of World War II till the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992 and the war that devastated the country. Discussions between Croat and Serb presidents included "...the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia." were held as early as March 1991 known as Karadordevo agreement. Following the declaration of independence of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina with support from Serbia, attacked different parts of the country. The Serbs wanted all lands where Serbs had a majority, eastern and western Bosnia. The Croats and their leader also aimed at securing parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina as Croatian. The objectives of nationalists from Croatia were shared by Croat nationalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bosnian branch of the ruling party in the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Democratic Union, proclaimed the existence of the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, as a separate "political, cultural, economic and territorial whole", on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina on November 18, 1991. Serb Democratic Party members established the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina on January 9, 1992.

War in Bosnia and Herzegovina is known for brutal ethnic cleansing, genocide, mass rape and concentration camps. The most recent research places the number of killed people in Bosnia and Herzegovina at around 100,000–110,000 (some sources cited over 300 000), and the number displaced at over 2.2 million, making it the most devastating conflict in Europe since the end of World War II. Today 117,000 are still refugees or internally displaced persons. In August 2010, 10,402 persons were still missing from the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### **4. ETHNOCENTRISM AND XENOPHOBIA**

Ethnocentrism is tendency to judge all other group according to the standards, behaviours and customs of one's own group. When making such comparison, people too often decide that their own group is superior. Racism assumes that one group is superior over other and often use it to justify violence for the purpose of maintaining that superiority. These theories have been responsible, among other things, for the holocaust organized by Nazi during the World War II. Totalitarian ideologies like apartheid often impose definition which group is better and which were inferior.

Xenophobia is fear of strangers and foreigners. What is different is dangerous. In the United States there been periodically scientific discussion on whether certain ethnic groups, in particular blacks, could be genetically less intelligent than whites. However, Americans reported recently that black segregation in US drops to lowest in century.

Europe seems to have reached a stage in its development in which countries have joined a supranational union.

#### **5. SOCIAL TRUST IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

##### **5.1. Trust index**

Social trust can be measured by trust index, created by The World Values Survey. It is an ongoing academic project by social scientists to assess the state of socio-cultural, moral, religious, and political values of different cultures around the world. In order to build the map of a Trust Index for each country, calculations are based on the following formula:

Trust index = 100 + (% Most people can be trusted) - (% Can't be too careful)

In this way, index over 100 corresponds to countries where a majority of people trust others, while an index under 100 corresponds to countries where a majority of people think one can never be too careful when dealing with others. Countries that have high trust index are Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia, Netherlands, and Canada. These countries generally trust people.

Bosnia has trust index of 32.4. This index is very low and shows that people in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not trust each other. This index puts Bosnia and Herzegovina at 91st place out of 171 countries.

##### **5.2. UNDP research on social trust**

Oxford research International on behalf of the UNDP, with support of Netherlands Government has carried out comprehensive research on social and political situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, addresses

general well being, trust, social capital, politics, corruption, etc. One of finding of this research is that people in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not trust each other. In fact, with only around one in 14 respondents (7.2%) saying that you can trust other people, there appears to be breakdown in social trust. Research finds that social trust is ‘virtually non-existent’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the social fabric in the country is characterized by an ‘absolute weakness of social bonds of trust, reciprocity, and solidarity: international comparisons, including countries as Iraq put Bosnia and Herzegovina to the last position. Also, people in Bosnia do not expect much fairness from their fellow citizens. Next UNDP research, carried out later on did not found any improvement on social trust in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Findings of this research are presented in table below:

**Table – People’s trust in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Percent trusting all or most of each group	Family	Close friends	Neighbours	Own ethnicity	Other ethnicity	People with a different way of life	General level of trust
Total BiH	82.7	61.1	33.5	21.3	11.0	8.7	9.9
FBiH	83.4	59.3	33.6	21.3	11.0	8.8	8.5
RS	81.0	63.2	33.0	21.0	10.9	9.0	12.2
Brčko (118)	92.4	69.5	45.8	32.2	10.2	1.7	5.1
Bosniak	81.6	58.5	33.1	20.9	10.8	9.1	7.4
Croat	83.5	56.6	34.9	20.7	12.3	7.7	11.2
Serb	83.4	64.6	33.6	22.3	10.2	8.8	12.2
Of local ethnic majority	83.2	63.0	35.3	22.1	10.5	8.8	10.5
Of local ethnic minority	77.0	44.4	25.9	22.2	16.7	12.0	9.2
Of ethnically balanced community	85.0	60.1	24.7	13.7	11.0	6.1	2.7
Men	81.4	61.7	34.1	18.8	9.9	7.9	8.7
Women	84.0	60.4	33.0	23.7	12.0	9.6	11.0
Urban	81.0	57.1	26.1	16.9	10.4	8.3	9.6
Rural	84.0	64.1	39.1	24.7	11.4	9.1	10.1
Under 30	88.1	71.9	25.5	19.0	10.4	9.6	8.9
30 to 65	81.7	58.8	30.3	18.3	9.0	7.3	9.8
Over 60	80.9	56.3	45.7	28.3	15.0	10.6	10.6

The report also found that the highest levels of trust are reserved for family and friends, from whom people derive considerable support. Trust levels are lower vis-à-vis neighbours, and are much lower for ‘outsiders’—non-family members and non-neighbours, including those of one’s own ethnicity. Rather than describing a society suffering from ethnic polarization, these suggest that Bosnia and Herzegovina is characterized by very low levels of trust towards ‘strangers’. In this respect, there were almost no differences across gender, age, and ethnic groups, or across the two entities.

### **5.3. Research at International University Sarajevo**

Students at International University Sarajevo who took the course Business Communication in spring semester 2010 answered the questionnaire regarding 5 dimensions of national culture in June 2010. Class consisted of 44 students, half from Turkey and the other half from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Inductive method of expert system has been applied to analyze the questionnaire and give answer on differences regarding national cultures between Turkey and Bosnia and possible convergence.

Results show that the most dominant cultural characteristics of Turkish students are related to the quality of future work and private life. However, the most dominant cultural characteristic of Bosnian students was related to the fear. The most dominant question was: "Would you work for the manager of other nationality?" Bosnian students answered negative. It might be surprising as target group were young people, educated, from rather wealthy families, and someone would expect more tolerance and openness. However, this primary research just confirmed above mentioned UNDP research that did not find any differences in social trust across age group.

## **6. IMPLICATION ON EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

There is no cross cultural education in Bosnia. There are three different education systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Every ethnic group in Bosnia and Herzegovina has its own educational plan, program and curricula. This is result of Dayton agreement which gave responsibility over education to entities and cantons. So, some students learn that their country is Bosnia and Herzegovina, other that it is Serbia and third that it is Croatia. First students follow Bosnia's curricula, second Serbia's curricula and third Croat's curricula. The biggest problem is teaching ethnically sensitive courses such as history, geography, religious history, and languages, so called national group of courses. Croat textbooks are in large part taken from Republic of Croatia and all examples in such textbooks are connected with people, language, literature and cultural heritage of Croatia. The Serb curriculum textbooks magnified their belonging to Serbia. Such textbooks cite only names, towns, rivers and poets from Serbia or Republica Srpska. The Bosnian textbooks are the only one that encourages sense of belonging to Bosnia and Herzegovina and use the both Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, but they also describe material from one nation's perspective. Ethnic-based curricula are deeply rooted, as they have been freely functioning since the early 1990s.

Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly politicized, a reflection of the country's lingering struggles with ethnic division. Schools have become a battlefield in the fight for ethnic dominance, resulting in a system of ethnically "clean" schools where children learn from ethnically specific curricula and textbooks, and have little interaction with their peers from other ethnic groups.

Primary school in Capljina, small town in Herzegovina, is a perfect example of a post-war Bosnian phenomenon called "Two Schools under One Roof". The system is mainly found in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the region with a predominantly Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and Croat population. Under this concept, Bosniak and Croat students and teachers use the same school facilities but have no contact with one another, and follow divergent, ethnic-based curricula. In many such schools, Bosnian and Bosnian Croat children, as well as their teachers, have no mutual contact. Students often arrive at school via different entrances, they take separate breaks, and the teachers have separate common rooms. However, since establishment of these schools, there have been many reports of conflict between students of different nationalities. In the Federation there are currently 57 schools which operate in this way.

In the Bosnian Serb-dominated entity of Republika Srpska, Bosnian and Croat returnees similarly attend their own ethnic schools. This situation is highly supported by political parties in power. Education Minister of the Federation's Middle Bosnia canton (where the largest number of "Two Schools Under One Roof" exist) told local media that authorities were not going to suspend the project because she saw no problem with it and "because it helps in reducing education expenses." But she also said something more illustrative of the larger problem. "The 'Two Schools under One Roof' project will not be suspended because you can't mix apples and pears. Apples with apples and pears with pears," Minister explained.

The segregated system affects not only students, but teachers as well, as they continue to be appointed based upon ethnic criteria. For instance, there is an unwritten rule that a Croat teacher cannot teach geography or history subjects in Republika Srpska, while a Serb cannot teach those subjects in the Federation.

Research done by OSCE, Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that for many parents it is more important that their children attend the schools that offer curricula they want for the children than the quality of education and nearness of the school. So, it is not a rare case that parents decide that their children should go to schools which are much further than their designated schools in order to learn by their national curricula and to be among students of same ethnicity as their own. Parents explain this decision with fear that "their children will lose their national identity if thought on accordance with other ethnicities' curricula. Bosnian parents specifically point to history classes in the Republika Srpska as particularity unacceptable.

Several studies and analyses have been conducted on textbooks on national subjects from three ethnic curricula. Studies concluded that existing textbooks on these subjects are filled with nationalist and intolerant language regarding the other ethnic groups, particularly when talking about the recent war and are in many cases fascist in nature. Examined textbooks represent in fact an extension of wartime nationalist rhetoric, filled with hatred and intolerance.

The analysis of the 'National Group of Subjects' contents in textbooks done by Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina concludes that that textbooks on national group of subjects and on religious education, are predominantly dealing with only one nation and that they are not in favor of multicultural society. This encourages segregation of students as well as of society as a whole. Also, these textbooks point out that its own people are threatened by other peoples living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is underlined as a lesson taught in the past which should be a guideline for relations between peoples in the future.

In their research Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina also found that textbooks contain parts which interpret differences in Bosnia and Herzegovina primarily as a problem, and rarely as potential or wealth.

This content in curricula encourages the attitude that living in multicultural society is complicated because different groups have different values, expectations and tradition which are not complementary. This supports attitudes of governing ideologies that it is impossible to live together in this area.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are 13 separate education laws. The two entities have their own laws, the Federation's 10 cantons have theirs, and the self-governing District of Brcko has its own. The international community, created an education bill intended for state-wide implementation, which it then forced the Bosnian Parliament to pass. However, the relevant authorities have never implemented the law.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has also ratified several international conventions that guarantee high quality education to all children in multicultural environment, free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice, but current educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not respect or implement it.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

Bosnia and Herzegovina has always been a place where many cultures encountered, coexisted peacefully for centuries, benefitting from each other.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is ethnocentric and xenophobic place where people are closed in their ethnic and confessional groups, as a result of the war nourishing fear, anger and hate toward others.

Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even fifteen years after the end of the war, remains the least reformed sectors in Bosnian society. Students and teachers at all levels continue to experience ethnic and religious segregation, intolerance, and division.

Educational systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not create positive attitude toward the country.

Educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not promote respect for other cultures and for cultural differences, but consider other cultures different and dangerous.

Educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not promote multicultural learning, but learning and promoting just culture of only one nation.

Education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina created generation of young, intolerant, ethnically isolated, and ethnically overfed students.

Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not build but destroys country.

The quality of education itself in Bosnia and Herzegovina falls well below European standards.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Bosnia and Herzegovina has to abolish segregated educational system and create modern system based on European standards. Bosnia and Herzegovina has to create unified curricula and textbooks on a state level, which would prepare students for the work and life in Europe and global world teaching them cultural tolerance, openness to other culture and cultural diversity.

## **9. References**

- Azra Brankovic, Savo Stupar, "Cultural Differences between Turkey and Bosnia: Does convergence exist?", International Symposium, Balkans and Islam: Encounter-Transformation-Discontinuity-Continuity Cannakale, Turkey, 3-5 November, 2010.
- Balkan insight, Bosnia: No End to 'Two Schools Under One Roof', 18 Feb 2010, available at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-no-end-to-two-schools-under-one-roof>
- European Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion. Commission of the European Communities, 2004, p.10. Available at <http://www.socialinclusion.ie/JointSocialInclusionReport2004.html>.
- Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov, Cultures and Organizations, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2010, McGraw Hill Companies, USA,
- Group of authors, Bosnia and Herzegovina from the old times till the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> world war, Press center of BH Army, 1994, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Open society fund Bosnia and Herzegovina and Promente, Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: What do we teach our children, Sarajevo 2007, available on <http://www.promente.org/userfiles/What%20do%20we%20teach%20our%20children.swf>
- OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2007, reports on education available on <http://www.oscebih.org/Documents.aspx?id=146&lang=EN>
- UNDP and Oxford Research International, The Silent Majority Speaks: Snapshots of Today and Visions of the Future in BiH, Sarajevo, 2007. Available at <http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=7&RID=413>.
- UNDP, National Human Development Report: Social Inclusion, Sarajevo, 2007. Available at <http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=36&RID=63>.
- UNDP, Assessing Social Exclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, 2010, available at <http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=3&RID=56>
- World value survey, available on [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)