

## Understanding an Importance of Interculturalism in the Learning Process



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**ABSTRACT:** Authors of this article aimed to research an understanding importance of interculturalism within learning process and beliefs related to intercultural education together with the level of intercultural education implementation in the learning process. Research has been conducted on the pattern of 163 teachers and librarians who participated in the interactive workshop “Enhancing capacities of teachers/trainers for promotion of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and tolerance through media and information literacy”. This article represents concrete organized effort and an attempt for promoting importance related to development of an adequate intercultural competencies of teachers and librarians that are directly involved in the learning and educational process.

**KEYWORDS:** Interculturalism, Education, Culture, Learning Process, Teachers, Librarians

### INTRODUCTION

It is not needed to accentuate that we consider interculturalism imperative in so many ways. And we do not agree with opinions that interculturalism is only an icing, a group of fairly abstract images that are somewhat important in people’s life. At the same time, we think that interculturalism is changeable especially according to events on the global level and according to the characteristics of each society. But none of this reduce its importance and values and if we are not able to understand it, we will not be able to understand the flow of various events in the world. Beside all, interculturalism in many parts of the world and therefore in Bosnia and Herzegovina gain its meaning more than ever. Furthermore, we have a certain attitude towards culture as well. We view it as a social construction, social symbolism with its innumerable connotations. Our approach is holistic and in constructivist manner. This kind of approach of our research is also one reminder on the ways how culture and cultural mind is created. Indirectly, shows that once created patterns already have their own dynamics. This requires analyses of process where certain elements of culture become mutual, firstly thanks to institutions that abstract ideas turn into the acts. Primarily, we think about education institutions, perceiving them as field lines that can create changes. That is why it is necessary to conduct more researches, especially in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s society when interculturalism in question.

Teachers and librarians together with other actors in the learning processes, should, logically, have a central role but certain responsibility as well when we deal with issues of interculturalism. According to Amy Gutmann, what democratic education recall as good civil and intercultural education as well is consisted not only by teaching basic skills of writing, reading, mathematics, but religion tolerance, nondiscrimination, race and gender non-discrimination, respect of individual rights and legitimate regulations, possibilities of articulating courage for defending public defendable, possibility of counselling with others and therefore, capability to be open for social and political relevant problems (Gutmann, 1999:287). In this regard, authors of this article aim to research attitudes on interculturalism and intercultural education of main actors such are teachers and librarians (with the exception of students) in the learning process. It is important to underline that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no sufficient researches on this topic, and hence, this concrete research is our contribution in this segment of scientific work on interculturalism. Moreover, this article represents concrete and organized effort and our tendency to promote importance of development various adequate intercultural skills among teachers and librarians that are directly involved in the education process.

### *What is interculturalism to us?*

Interculturalism is basically referred on the plurality of elements within living among different cultures. The term interculturalism is very dynamic term and inevitably indicate relations of exchange, on a set of dynamic flows that are marking exchanges of individuals with different cultural background (Lavić, 2014:341). This term accents relation between cultures and inevitability of mutual interactions. Interculturalism implicates facing with problems that appear between bearers of different cultures, their acceptance and mutual respect (ibid). Interculturalism arises from reflections on cultural differences, psychological, cognitive, sexual, ethnical, religious, and other characteristics. It implies combat against stereotypes and prejudices, implies mutual and

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peaceful living among nations, groups and individuals from various cultural background. But, when speaking about interculturalism, most people describe this term in the sense of ideal world without any insights on the realistic situation. According relevant documents of UNESCO (UNESCO, 2009., 2013.) we can condensed interculturalism and intercultural education in the following characteristics: it strengthen respect towards cultural differences, human rights and freedoms, develops awareness on communion with multicultural residents, promotes tolerance, pluralism, openness and mutual understanding, improves ways of living together („learning to live together“), strengthen social cohesion, democratic governance, empowers peace processes and harmony in multicultural world an prevents/solves intergroup conflicts. But it is not quite apparent how interculturalism can solve such serious issues and achieve such important goals.

Understanding interculturalism as one of the most important social processes, the primarily implication is to define its specific goals (Baraldi, 2010), which are basically based upon acceptance of various perceptions and understanding of the world, understanding cultural differences and similarities. Additionally, interculturalism prevents violence and overcomes misunderstandings including conflicts among those who view differences as threats and those who see them as fruitfulness. Sociologist Claudio Baraldi clearly underlines conditions that are needed for this specific goals to be achieved. Baraldi stress out that the most basic conditions are equal dignity and position of all participants in the process, together with voluntary engagement, readiness to comprehend cultural differences and cultural similarities as well, together with capability of finding out a mutual language of understanding and respect (ibid). All these elements were also our starting point for our research.

Unlike multiculturalism, which emphasizes diversities of cultures in society – diversities that are mainly created from immigrations (Berry, 2006), interculturalism initially places interaction between different cultures. Interactions is first of all a mutual action among individuals and groups or in other words, an influence that individuals or groups make on each other. Interaction represents the most important category in the theory of social action (Parsons) and that is why, from the aspect of contemporary social, cultural and communication areas, interculturalism has a huge significance within theoretical and empirical researches. If we add, shortly, that culture is what defines human life, the way people think, how they live, behave and feel, and that culture’s artefacts transmit *via* socialization process, upbringing and education, it is more than clear in what way cultural continuity is achieved and mutual communication and cooperation of all members in society.

Sociologist Geert Hofstede has given us much appreciated definition of culture according which, culture is consisted out of mutual mental programs that condition individuals’ responses towards society. This unpretentious and so valuable formulation confirms the assertion that culture is expressed in everyday life, in the relation of individual with its environment, but also, that this relation is controlled by acutely rooted mental programs. Culture is not only a set of visible behavioural patterns; it is deeply rooted in each individual.

Outward characteristics of our social behaviour such are manners, he ways we communicate with others, dress etc., in most cases are emanating shapes of our values and principles based upon the culture. In the communication context, according to Bauer, culture represents communication relations from which individuals extract and justify their actions and decisions (Bauer, 2007:25). Key characteristic of culture in above mentioned contexts is that mental programmes and communication relation are common to another people from community they belong to as well. All this together creates cultural patterns that are basically full and mutually harmonized set of cultural values, which are consciously or unconsciously adopted by individuals and social groups. Bearing in mind the number of individuals that adopt the same or similar cultural values, receiving and/or refusing influences from closer and wider environment, it is empirically possible to isolate dominant or alternative cultural patterns within any organized society. Dominant cultural pattern is identifying itself in the specific society, while alternative cultural pattern represents the basic for subcultures that are not in conflict, but are significantly different from dominant cultural pattern. There is also a contra culture, which patterns represents negation of dominant cultural pattern.

Because of everything that is underlined, it is important to pass through in the ways of interculturalism perception and understanding within learning processes taking into consideration specific context of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s society. This particular society is still in need for securing multidimensionality of meeting cultures and cultural identities due to the overfilling with various sorts of stereotypes and prejudices. This is extremely reflected in the public sphere. Bearing in mind that interculturalism in the learning process represents connection between language, social interaction and intercultural communication, there is a significant difference between this specific process and other processes.

Interculturalism within education represents not only learning about it, but interaction between persons from various cultural contexts (linguistic, ethnical, religious, and racial), implicating already existing assumptions of regulations that are tackling this kind of interactions.

In so complexed society such is Bosnia and Herzegovina’s society, education institutions become the most vital agent of secondary socialization and culturalization of children and young people (Bakić, 2013:71). Interculturalism does not mean exclusively collective catalogue of abstract ideas, but it is a configuration of complete relation towards the Other and Different and a ways of living in the community. Function of education in one community in this context is not only to transmit the best from the past. Function of education is to demonstrate the present and to work on possibilities for the future.

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Anthropological and sociological constant is that there are no and can't be hierarchies among cultures. Fruitfulness of various cultural identities represents an immanent value of entire society, but in order for this value to be strengthened, refined and enriched, it is important for entire Bosnia and Herzegovina's society to understand the core of cultural processes, its inner need for accepting the Other and Different, and for entire society to be more opened for adopting and respecting other and different cultural identities.

### *Methodological concept of the research*

The aim of this research was to explore an attitudes/opinions of teachers and librarians about intercultural upbringing and education, their capacities for intercultural upbringing and education and the implementation level of intercultural education within learning process. The subject of this research in the wider sense are attitudes/opinions of teachers and librarians about intercultural upbringing and education, while in the more narrow sense, the subject of research was understanding and capacity and competency of teachers and librarians to perform interculturalism in their teaching activities.

Some of the problem questions significant for this research are: *Do you know the meaning of terms such are, „intercultural upbringing and education “, „interculturalism“, „intercultural competency “, „intercultural sensitivity “? Do you recognize the goal of intercultural upbringing and education? Are you familiar with values that are promoted by intercultural upbringing and education? Which competencies are required in intercultural upbringing and education? What is the level of teachers' and librarians' capacities for intercultural education? What is the level of implementation of intercultural education in the learning process?*

Based upon research questions, we have formulated general directive hypothesis: Teachers and librarians have no adequate level of understanding and implementation of interculturalism in learning in class and off class activities.

Respondents in this research were teachers and librarians of elementary and secondary schools (N=163) which participated in the interactive workshop *Strengthening capacities of teachers and librarians in promoting cultural diversities, intercultural dialogue and tolerance through media and information literacy*<sup>1</sup>.

Our survey is consisted out of 14 questions with an aim to explore the following: (1) sociodemographic data of respondents (gender, work experience and the school of their employment. (2) Knowledge level of recognizing the basic characteristics of interculturalism and intercultural upbringing and education (explanation of terms, goals of intercultural upbringing and education, values that are promoted by intercultural education and preferable intercultural competencies for learning process). (3) Attitudes/opinions of teachers and librarians about importance of intercultural education and upbringing, their capacities for intercultural education and implementation of intercultural education in the learning process. In this set of question, we have added the question on personal motivation for further adoption of knowledge about interculturalism. All above mentioned was questioned by Likert scale from 1 to 5 with already created quality answers, "very poor", "poor", "fair", "good" and "excellent". Our research on understanding an importance of interculturalism in the learning process is conducted in the period of February 1 until March 2021. Online survey was created by Google Forms tool. Previously, in advance, respondents have received an invitation letter for the participation in this survey with an adequate explanation of our scientific and social aims together with the link of survey, previously displaced on the web. This survey was anonymous, participants were able to withdraw from it due to the social pressure and time limitation. For a data collating, data processing, and data analyses we have used software programme SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). In the process of data processing we have used statistical descriptive analyses, namely, we have used invariant (answer distribution) analyses of collected data. Results were displayed *via* tables with values in percentages, explicitly, relevant, or absolute figures.

### *Outcomes of the research*

It was 163 respondents participating in the research, of it 73,9% female and 26,1% male. The highest number of respondents is engaged in the schools belonging to the Canton Sarajevo (64,2%), Zenica-Doboj Canton (13%), Srednjobosanski Canton (Central Bosnia) (8,6%), Unskosanski Canton (4,3%), Tuzla Canton (3,1%), Canton 10 (1,9%), West Herzegovina Canton (0,6%), Republic of Srpska (1,9%) and District Brčko BiH (3,7%).

Most of the respondents in this research were female and male teachers of subject teaching (47,2%), then female and male teachers of classroom teaching (26,4%). Additionally, female and male librarians participated in the research (11,3%), school directors (3,1%), pedagogues (5,7%), while 6,3% respondents were associates in schools (social workers, assistants in the class). Around 45,3% respondents were engaged in schools with 250 to 500 pupils, 40,4% were engaged in bigger schools with more than 500 students and 14,3% work in smaller schools (up to 250 students).

Before we started to inspect attitudes/opinions of teachers and librarians on the importance of interculturalism in teaching process, our intention was to examine in what extent our respondents are familiar with terms that are denoting interculturalism. Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of development and promotion of the media and information literacy, social cohesion, and intercultural dialogue, Institute for social research Faculty of Political Sciences University of Sarajevo organized an interactive workshop „Capacity Strengthening of Teachers and Librarians in the Promotion of Cultural Diversity, Intercultural Dialogue and Tolerance through Media and Information Literacy“ which was part of the Mutual Regional Programme "Dialogue for the Future", which is in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monte Negro and Serbia implemented by UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP. The aim of this workshop was exchanging opinions and practical experiences between teachers and librarians as the key actors in upbringing and education processes, to accentuate challenges and problems in their work in the context of intercultural dialogue.

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around 95% respondents claimed to be familiar with terms „intercultural upbringing and education“, „interculturalism“, „intercultural competency“, „intercultural sensitivity“, while 5% of respondents stated that they don't know about the meaning of these terms. The highest number of respondents (37%) got familiar with these terms on seminar and education, around 34% *via* media, and only 17,4% stated that for the first time they heard about these terms in their own study period. It is very concerning that 8,4% of respondents heard for these terms at their workplaces, namely, when they became involved in the teaching activities.

**Table 1: Meaning of term interculturalism**

To what extent each of the following terms define „interculturalism“ in the best way?	Very poor %	Poor %	Fair %	Good %	Excellent %
Existing of different cultures on some territory	2,5	4,3	14,9	31,1	47,2
Tolerance towards diversity	3,1	5	14,9	25,5	51,6
Active interaction between two or more cultures in all areas of living	0	5,6	9,3	28,4	56,8
Respect and accept of differences	0	3,1	9,3	19,8	67,9
Adjustment of majority culture towards minority	34,6	19,5	19,5	11,3	15,1
Assimilation of minority culture into the majority	40,1	13,6	25,9	9,3	11,1

In order to see in what extent respondents understand the meaning of the term „interculturalism“ (*Table 1*), they mostly agree that interculturalism is defined as „respect and accept of differences“, (67,9%) and „active interaction between two or more cultures in all areas of living“, (56,8%). More than 70% of respondents (42,7% and 31,1%) consider excellent and good explanation of interculturalism as „existing of different cultures on some territory“. This is telling us that many teachers and librarians misunderstand the concept of interculturalism. Namely, in the bigger number of literature, terms as „interculturalism“ and „multiculturalism“ are viewed as synonyms, what is creating this misunderstanding. Although these terms are similar, their core and meanings are different. Therefore, most people talk about multiculturalism, which is existing of more cultures in one society, bearing in mind that is an interculturalism as well. Multiculturalism is actually the consciousness on existing of various cultures that leads towards interculturalism and development of intercultural relations and connections. On the other side, interculturalism is not based only on existing, but on the mutual living and active cooperation in the cultural plural environment. Accordingly, interculturalism presents an interaction and creation of relations among cultures based upon respect and reverence.

Furthermore, data from *Table 1* show that teachers and librarians mostly consider interculturalism as „tolerance towards diversity“ (51,6 excellent % and 25,5% good). Even that we can find in the literature *the clichés* such is „tolerance of differences“, the concept of interculturalism is grounded on respect not on tolerance, because tolerance means (*lat. tolerare*) „to bear“ or „to tolerate“. When we speak about interculturalism and tolerance in human relations, it is far more better to use terms that are pointing out the responsibility of members of all cultures (for example that somebody” has a responsibility for acts or words” in this case for „Others and Different“). The fact is that in the most societies, minority cultures often tolerate behavioural patterns of majority culture, that is why in the context of promoting interculturalism, the term „respect towards diversities“ is more suitable than the term „tolerance towards diversities“. In our opinion, there are results that concern us: 26% teachers and librarians (15,1% excellent and 11,3% good) consider that interculturalism is based on „adjustment of majority culture towards minority culture“, while more than 20% (11,1% excellent and 9,3% good) consider that interculturalism is based on the „assimilation of minority culture into the majority one“. Assimilation in its basis relies on withdrawal from own identity and acceptance of others' views and values and it cannot be identified with interculturalism. Furthermore, interculturalism in its postulates advocates an integration, connecting different views about the world into the one, unique view.

Through analyses of data, it can be seen that teachers and librarians subjectively consider that they are familiar with terms that are defining interculturalism (95% respondents stated that they understand the meaning), but indicators clearly show that respondents have a difficulties to understand the concept and the meaning of interculturalism.

One of the most imperative elements of intercultural upbringing and education are its goals (Gundara, 2001; Spajić- Vrkaš and Sarad., 2004; Piršl, 2005; Portera, 2008, according to Piršl, 2011). The core of this theoretical views is within the learning process and acknowledgment about own and cultures of others as one of the most important tasks of intercultural upbringing and education, with an aim of developing intercultural sensitivity. Analyses of collected data in *Table 2* we could see that the most of respondents assess that „promoting of solidarity“, „knowing and understanding the basic characteristics of culture of the Other“ (such are norms, customs, values, language, symbols), „awareness on stereotypes and prejudices towards culturally Different“, and „understanding of cultural differences as values“, are basically the most imperative aims of intercultural upbringing and education. Less significant goals of intercultural upbringing and education, our respondents consider the following: „promotion of sustainable development“ and „respect and preservation of the world's cultural heritage“.



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**Table 2: Knowledge about the goals of intercultural upbringing and education**

In what extent the following sentences define an aim of intercultural upbringing and education?	Very poor %	Poor %	Fair %	Good %	Excellent %
Knowing and understanding the basic characteristics of culture of the "Other "	0	2,5%	11,2	28,6	57,8
Developing capacities to understand and accept the cultural differences as value	0	3,7	6,8	21,6	67,9
Developing capacities for communication with culturally different	0	3,1	8,8	24,4	63,7
Awareness on stereotypes and prejudices towards culturally Different	1,2	3,1	12,3	24,1	59,3
Developing capacities and skills for critical self observation in meeting culturally Different	0	3,7	15,5	28,6	52,2
Respect and preservation of national cultural heritage	1,9	2,5	12,4	26,7	56,5
Respect and preservation of world's cultural heritage	2,5	3,1	11,9	22	60,4
Nurturing the feeling of solidarity towards culturally Different	0,6	2,5	13,7	18	65,2
Developing open multicultural identity	1,9	3,7	9,9	26,5	58
Promoting sustainable development	3,1	6,2	17,4	28,6	44,7

As the school today is perceived as the place for learning and place for living, teachers got a very challenging task that is based upon upbringing and education for interculturalism. School is the place for transferring and adopting values, it is fruitful field for knowledge, critical thinking and valuing, and teachers are actors and „mirrors“who are expected to enable pupils for cultural adjustment (Kragulj and Jukić, 2010). Development of intercultural dialogue is one of the most important tasks of all education institutions, and it is measured, in its narrow sense, in recognition and acknowledgment of differences and their values and interaction between them. Cultural differences and their role in everyday life of every individual reflects on behaviour of pupils and teachers in schools (Bakić, Popov-Momčinović, Dudić-Sijamija, 2021). That is why it was important to ask respondents, teachers as carriers in the upbringing and education process, about values that are fostered (or should be fostered) by interculturalism in the learning process. According to the statements of teachers, the most significant values that should be fostered by interculturalism should be „combat against discrimination“ (70,9%), coexistence of various cultures (68,1%), equality of all people (67,1%), combat against ethnocentrism and nationalism (63,5%), reduction of stereotypes and prejudices (62,9%), tolerance towards culturally „Different“ (61,3%), combat against xenophobic attitudes (60,4%), and rule of law (50,9%). When speaking about values, we should bear in mind that each culture has its specific core values that are influencing an identification characteristic of that culture (Haviland, 1990). Therefore, level on which values of intercultural upbringing and education are appreciated as an idea depends highly on if they and how are they achievable within society. Although respondents have showed that they know values promoted by intercultural upbringing and education, there is a question in what extent are they prepared and capacitated to promote and nourish certain values in their teaching practice? According to what is already claimed, we can conclude that in order for interculturalism to come to life in the society, and then in school, interculturalism should have its root within society, namely state that will systematically promote it, supporting and developing relations that would be based upon trust, productive communication and dialogue of all participants within society (Previšić and Mijatović, 2001, according to Šehić, 2019).

**Table 3: Knowledge about values that are promoted by intercultural upbringing and education**

In what extent intercultural upbringing and education are encouraging...	Very poor %	Poor %	Fair %	Good %	Excellent %
Reduction of stereotypes and prejudices	0,6	3,8	8,8	23,9	62,9
Coexistence of various cultures	0,6	1,9	4,4	25	68,1
Combat against ethnocentrism and nationalism	1,9	1,3	12,6	20,8	63,5
Rule of law	2,5	3,1	18,2	25,2	50,9
Tolerance towards culturally "Different"	1,9	1,3	10	25,6	61,3

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Equality of all people	1,9	1,9	8,7	20,5	67,1
Combat against discrimination	1,3	3,2	8,9	15,8	70,9
Combat against xenophobic attitudes	1,9	2,5	10,1	25,2	60,4

We have already mentioned that, in the context of teaching intercultural education, teachers are creators and moderators of intercultural relations. In order to convey communications and messages on intercultural dialogue, teachers as well should be prepared on changes and be able to accept intercultural education principles. Their readiness is closely connected with the development of intercultural competency

(Drandić, 2015). Therefore, through this research, it was important to assess which competencies, according to opinion of our respondents, are key ones for teaching an intercultural upbringing and education.

**Table 4: Adequate competencies for teaching process**

<b>In what extent underlined competencies are adequate within intercultural upbringing and education...</b>	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Understanding of key terms (interculturalism, multiculturalism, identity, ethnocentrism, etc.)	1,3	1,3	8,1	23,8	65,6
Sensitivity on discrimination, feeling of empathy towards Others	0	1,9	5	21,3	71,9
Skills for nonviolent conflict solving	0,6	1,9	6,9	19,4	71,3
Communication skills	1,9	0,6	8,8	22,5	66,3
Skills for teamwork	0	2,5	10,6	25,5	61,5
Critical approach towards society	0,6	1,9	8,1	34,2	55,3
Capability to work on socially sensitive topics	1,9	0,6	12,4	33,5	51,6
Skills for implementation of dynamic methods and teaching strategies	0,6	3,8	12,5	33,1	50
Capability of assessing problems from the pupils' perspectives	1,9	1,9	11,2	30,4	54,7
Motivation for constant information and education	0	3,1	11,3	23,8	61,9
Openness for various cultures	0	1,9	7,5	16,4	74,2
Capacity to view problems from pupils' perspective	0,6	1,9	9,3	30,4	57,8

From the previous *Table 4*, it is perceptible that teachers are aware of their competencies that are important for intercultural upbringing and education. So the highest percentage of respondents (74,2% excellent and 16,4% good), consider that openness for various cultures, feeling of empathy towards Others (71,9% and 19,4%), skills for nonviolent conflict solving (71,3% and 19,4%) and communication skills (66,3% and 22,5%) are the basic competences that each teacher and librarian should have if they want to convey messages on intercultural dialogue. In this research, respondents showed the lowest level of approving an importance of skills for implementation of dynamic methods and teaching strategies.

Even though 50% of respondents completely agree that skills for implementation of dynamic methods and teaching strategies in teaching interculturalism are important, it is surprising that 12,5% of respondents consider that they are not important, and almost 4% that their position is not important at all. Beside that teachers and librarians are one of the most if not the most important bridge between other cultures, combating stereotypes and prejudices, they should be also a creators of successful intercultural relations. In this regard, they need skills for an adequate teaching methods in order to teach pupils the communication and acceptance of other cultures. Interpretation skills are one of the valuable indicators of intercultural competencies (Benson, 1987; Spitzberg, 1989; Kim, 1991; Taylor, 1994, according to Hrvatić and Piršl, 2005). In the teaching process that leans on interculturalism, it is important for teachers in a pedagogical way know how to present and draw closer a sensitive topics to the pupils. In this research, majority of teachers and librarians (around 80%) agree that capability to work on socially sensitive topics is one of the most important competency for intercultural upbringing and education. But, 13% of them partly agree or agree a bit with mentioned skills. Interpretation skill and assessment of socially sensitive topics, methods that are used by teacher and librarians to convey to pupils these types of topics in the on class and out of class teaching processes, are very much significant because they shape the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Teachers' interpretation, pedagogical approach and sensitivity towards interpreted ideas, texts and events that tackle other culture and their capability to compare adequately and affirmatively their own culture and others are extremely important competencies that teacher should has in the context of interculturalism.

It is important to mention that 58,1% of teachers and librarians in this research have stated that intercultural education requires different strategies, contemporary methods and creative approach towards the learning process. According to the self-perception, almost all respondents consider to have an intercultural competencies (66% excellent and 24,5% good). Only 9% of our respondents (8,8% fair and 0,6% poor) have said that their intercultural competencies are not satisfactory. (*Table 5*).

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**Table 5: Capacities for intercultural education**

Capacities for intercultural education	Very poor %	Poor %	Fair %	Good %	Excellent %
I can say that I have cultural competencies.	0	0,6	8,8	24,5	66
My professional education enables me to successfully comprehend different cultures	1,3	4,4	9,4	29,4	55,6
Through teaching process I have an opportunity to develop my cultural competencies.	3,2	4,4	14,6	31,6	46,2
Due to insufficient capacities I need additional education.	6,3	7,5	24,4	26,9	35

Even though the highest number of respondents, teachers and librarians (86%) claim to advocate for intercultural relations in school and to use various teaching materials and other sources for understanding other cultures (86,3%), we cannot ignore the fact that more than 22% respondents within teaching activities have no opportunities to transfer knowledge on intercultural dialogue, which is based upon respect of diversity, individual ethnic and national identity, language and history, through active and constructive interaction with others. Reasons for this situation are multiple: (1) more than 55% teachers and librarians state to have too extensive teaching contents, (2) around 48% of respondents consider to have no enough time available to teach about different cultures (3) about 40% of responds have difficulties to find valued and satisfactory examples that could make pupils interested in. Much extensive teaching contents do not provide enough space for adopting significant topics that are not recognize by curriculum, they often embolden social inequity, glorifying dominant culture, and decrease contribution of minority cultures to the society as a whole. To indorse this claim, it is valuable to bear in mind an analyses of text books from national groups of subjects in Bosnia and Herzegovina confirm that „education, according to its contents and structure, encourage segregation and divisions within entire society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Textbooks, instead providing knowledge and skills for living in plural society, create atmosphere of antagonisms and serve as an instrument to separate pupils upon their ethnic background“ (Open Society Fond Bosnia and Herzegovina and proMENTE social researches, 2017).

### Another analyses of 19 textbooks tackling

Bosnian/Croat/Serb language and literature found out that out of 1055 lectures, only 246 speak about respect of human rights and basic freedoms (in 157 lectures these terms are not mentioned at all). Therefore, results of these analyses showed that textbooks are dominated by contents, which glorify only one constitutive group, language and tradition ignoring other nationalities. These kind of teaching contents that only insist on knowing certain terms, inspire nor support learning about Others, do not encourage intercultural understanding, equity and responsibility. On the other side, interculturalism within learning process considers active interaction and work on promoting and creating intercultural relations and dialogue among pupils.

As curriculums mostly do not encourage learning on importance of interculturalims in the learning processes, it is very often that pupils do not foster intercultural relations (almost 24% teachers think that in their school, pupils very poorly or poorly foster creating relations based upon intercultural dialogue). This information is not surprising if we take into the consideration that in spite of violation international conventions and local regulations, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, still exist over 50 schools that are marked as „two schools under one roof“ (only in one entity, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina exist 30 schools like this). Teaching process in these schools is organized in a way that pupils have possibility to attain one out of two schools. But, empirically, it is showed that pupils attain school dominated by one ethnic group, because school environment, including teaching plan and programme, is favourable towards only one ethnic group. Creating one national schools in multinational societies, together with physical separation of children, creates atmosphere of children segregation among themselves. This kind of segregation confirms the feeling of division, together with ethnic prejudices and differences. All this encourage mutual mistrust because children learn that there is only one right approach, and that attitude is an attitude of their ethnic group (Dudić-Sijamija and Adilović, 2021). Research data speak out that presence of intercultural contents is insufficient and it requires re conceptualization and revision of teaching contents, which should inspire and encourage intercultural dialogue, intercultural competencies development through new programs based upon basic human rights and values. The role of teachers and librarians as carriers of teaching process within strengthening dialogue is the key one, focusing at the same time on education premises to introduce to pupils another cultures and identities.

It is factual that Bosnia and Herzegovina's society is defined by richness of diversity of various cultural identities, it is recognized as an immanent culture, but today, in most cases, used as a *cliché* value as well. Therefore, combat against already mentioned closing of society, means to understand that development of intercultural dialogue based upon respect of Other and Different is necessary work. Beside development of horizontal communication with parents and pupils, there is an imperative for everyday pointing out on need towards core reforms in the education system, trying to foster changes that will be triggered from the top, from the decision makers (Dudić-Sijamija and Adilović, 2021).

## Understanding an Importance of Interculturalism in the Learning Process

In the last part of survey, we have examined teachers' and librarians' attitudes on models that should be used to teach and think interculturalism throughout elementary education. The highest number of respondents (52%) consider that interculturalism in elementary and secondary schools should be taught interdisciplinary. Intercultural competencies development throughout all levels of education should ensure conditions and quality that is necessary to create quality relations for co-existence in wider social community for each individual (Bognar, 2008). But, some respondents are not sure about this all: 11, 7% consider interculturalism should be taught as an obligatory, 9, 3% as elective course. Moreover, 17, 3% respondents claimed that interculturalisms should be taught only at the class community hour, and 8% stated that interculturalism should be taught through out of class activities. Even though imperceptible percentage, (0,6%) teachers and librarians consider interculturalism to be obtained out of schools and that schools are not place where children should learn about cultural and other diversities.

Around 84% respondents expressed their interest in additional education regarding interculturalism in the school, while 14% of them are fairly motivated to learn. It is concerning that 1,3% respondents have no interest for these topics. Besides initial, basic education, teachers and librarians should expand their competencies throughout life long education on interculturalisms in order to be able to create intercultural school community.

## CONSLUSION

Upon this applied research, aiming to explore understanding of teachers and librarians on importance of interculturalisms, we can conclude that teachers and librarians have no adequate level of understanding and employing interculturalisms in their teaching and out of class teaching activities regardless that most of them presented their willingness to teach interculturalism in schools and that they are introduced to the basic terms. Even though most of respondents confirmed variations of statement that they are competent for intercultural education, considerable number of teachers and librarians had no aspiration for additional education. Also, we can add to this the statement of higher number of respondents that the most adequate intercultural competency is motivation for continuing their knowledge and education. Most teachers and librarians in this conducted research stated that interculturalisms in elementary and secondary schools should be taught interdisciplinary, but in the context of entire research sample, higher number of respondents consider interculturalism to be taught exclusively on class community time available. This shows that they have not enough understanding about importance of interculturalisms in the learning process. Research results have shown us additionally that there is a certain number of respondents who is not interested for topics of interculturalisms. As we underlined already in analyses of results, important data are the ones showing insufficiency of intercultural contents that requires re conceptualization and revision of teaching materials and contents, which should impose intercultural dialogue, intercultural competencies development through new modern programs based upon human rights and civilization values. Bearing in mind that participants of this research were also participants of workshop regarding importance of promoting intercultural dialogue, it seems important to question an understanding of other teachers and librarians in elementary and secondary schools in entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the way we would get wider picture of their readiness and capacities to teach interculturalisms in general. Surely, it is necessary to systematically invest efforts and readiness towards various seminars and education workshops, in order to further develop competencies of teachers and librarians as key carriers within learning processes for intercultural upbringing and education. For today's world in which we are all living in, it is appealed that development of culture and education has been far behind from technological and financial development. But, on a contrary, it's never like before, adding to this the crisis caused by COVID 19 pandemic, that the need for another people, friendship, understanding and closeness was deeper and bigger than it is today. Therefore, differences among those who have and have not have never been more expressed than today. 'Ideological awareness' on the global and domestic political scene in our century surely make easy for culture and education to be misused and misrepresented in many contexts.

What should be done and what should we do constantly? Basic concept of interculturalism should be to understand various cultures as the most richest and the largest legacy that we have created all together, and *via* assistance of culture to further create what has not be created yet (Bakić, 2013:75).

Represented and 'lived' in this manner, our youngest generations can embrace interculturalisms, they can criticized it as well, to improve it, which basically makes them an active members of society, society that is in these days passing through not only the crisis of education and culture but crisis of self-respect and self actualization.

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