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LiA Reflection

Spending several weeks working at the University of Sarajevo's Peace Education Hub was a truly enriching experience. My project at the Hub consisted of researching and compiling exemplary teacher training methods and seminar content focused on intercultural learning, peacebuilding, and facing the past in global and local contexts. The goal was to create a comprehensive resource for educators in the Western Balkans and beyond. The primary stakeholders in this project included the University of Sarajevo's Peace Education Hub faculty and members of their philosophy department, local educators, teachers-in-training, and students, the host community in Sarajevo, and international organizations like UNICEF, whose resources we utilized. Through conducting in-depth research on peace education initiatives, analyzing global and local peacebuilding strategies, developing presentations to facilitate further learning, and attending seminars on the use and methods of peace pedagogy.

With the support from the department, my internship tasks provided me with immense amounts of new knowledge from other countries such as the United States, South Africa, and the Western Balkans, among others, showing how we can learn from different parts of the world and societies. In my work, I selected key examples from international and local contexts, such as the UNESCO Resource Manual and scholarly studies previously published, and created bibliographies and presentations to facilitate further learning. Additionally, I curated online resources on peacebuilding and intercultural learning for educators and students, which were shared with the Hub for their use in future research. The impact of this project extends beyond my internship. The resources and comprehensive bibliographies I created will hopefully continue to serve as valuable tools for educators and students in the region. By working with the Hub and providing my work as a baseline for their research in peace education, we've ensured wider access and long-term sustainability as they continue to work towards a true peace education guide.

Immersing myself in the local culture through interactions with the local community aided in my research as I learned how divided the society is while still recovering from war and tragedy. This experience taught me valuable lessons about leadership in a multicultural context. I learned the importance of and was able to apply my lessons in cultural sensitivity, active listening, and adaptability when working in a post-conflict society. Furthermore, living with a host family challenged my preconceptions and enhanced my ability to navigate unfamiliar environments. With my hosts speaking little English and me knowing close to no Bosnian, I at first struggled to feel at home. However, I discovered that effective leadership in such settings requires a deep understanding of local dynamics and the ability to bridge diverse perspectives. Once we figured out a mix of Google Translate and hand motions, we were able to bond and laugh, which gave me a greater appreciation for perseverance and new opportunities to grow.

I hope that my research findings and recommendations can inform future peace education initiatives and public policy decisions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Western Balkans. This experience has significantly broadened my understanding and appreciation of the impact of peace education on public policy and intercultural harmony, reinforcing my commitment to pursuing a career in policy with a focus on peacebuilding and intercultural understanding.