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IMPACT

Why this is the theme of our Congress:
The Challenge Of Defining and Measuring Impact

Sir John Daniel
Chair, International Board

Introduction

As the incoming chair of the International Board I am delighted that this UWC Congress is happening so soon after I assumed the office. These congresses are such rare occasions that my predecessor, Tim Toyne Sewell, never experienced one in his six-year tenure, so he was unable to brief me on what to expect. I would be interested to know how many people here have attended a UWC congress previously.

It seems that relatively few of you have been to a UWC Congress before. Let's turn that to our advantage. Rather than be the prisoners of precedent, let us try to ensure that this infrequent event has maximum impact on the future of the UWC movement.

Impact is my subject this morning. Why is impact the theme of our Congress and what is the challenge of defining and measuring impact?

Impact is our theme because we want to take advantage of having representatives of all the actors in the UWC movement together for a few days. Our other meetings mostly involve one UWC group: college chairs, heads, alumni, national committees, and so on. Those meetings naturally have a tighter focus on particular aspects of UWC's work. But here we can try to put it all together and think about the sum total of what we want to achieve – UWC's impact on the world

I was involved in the development and implementation of arrangements for quality assurance in higher education for a couple of decades. It was interesting to watch the focus of quality assurance evolve over that time. In any educational enterprise you can identify inputs, processes and outputs – outputs being what we are calling 'impact' here.

The traditional way to judge the quality of universities was by their inputs: such as the results that new students had obtained at school, the quality of the library, the qualifications of the academic staff, and so on. This approach was criticised, rightly, by those who argued that what counted was not the inputs but what the university did with them for the benefit of students.

That switched the focus of quality judgements to processes. How good is the teaching? Are counselling services useful? Are the administrative procedures effective and

incorrupt? This new approach gave some indication of institutional efficiency but raised the next and obvious question. What is the impact of all this on the graduates? What are the learning outcomes? That is what quality assurance bodies are trying to focus on today.

These are difficult questions to answer. We would like to think that UWCs have an impact on students that lasts a lifetime. We try to track the achievements of our alumni and take great pride in them. But we can hardly wait 40 years to decide whether UWCs helped their students to lead good lives before adjusting our aim.

So we tend to focus on what happens immediately after students leave us and attach great – perhaps too much – importance to where they go to university. I hope that we can get better at tracking what happens to them after that. Many of our students from poor countries secure places at universities in rich countries, which is fine; but what happens next – five years later and ten years later? Is the key impact of the UWCs to accelerate the brain drain of talent from poor to rich countries and, if so, are we content with that?

I have spent the last 12 years of my career in international educational development, and while I accept that some brain circulation is a good thing, I would be ashamed to chair an organisation whose overall impact is to strip developing countries of their most talented youngsters.

The virtue of focusing on impacts, however difficult it may be, is that it helps us focus back on our objectives. This applies to every part of the UWC movement, to all our stakeholders. Let me give examples – and forgive the ignorance of a recent returnee to the UWC movement if some of this does not resonate with you.

National Committees

I start with the National Committees. In my previous contacts with the UWC movement I was relatively unaware of the scope of this remarkable aspect of our organisation, which gives us a tremendous global footprint. How do National Committees measure their impact? Presumably their first requirement is to satisfy the requests from the colleges for students from their countries. But who are these students?

In any other international organisation that I know you would expect such committees to engage in some mutual back scratching, not to say corruption. However, whenever I have asked about this I have been assured that in the UWC this is remarkably rare. I am pleased to learn that National Committees are not in the habit of passing around the great gift of a UWC education to the children of their friends.

Let us admit that the national committees have a tremendous challenge. Most countries are made up of diverse ethnicities and religions. Ensuring that the youngsters sent to the UWCs reflect this wonderful variety is not straightforward. Even less straightforward is to address the main problem of our age, which is the growing gap between rich and poor.

How do you find youngsters living in poverty who, despite the inevitable shortcomings of their early education, have the potential to make it at a UWC?

But it can be done. When I visited Mahindra College some years ago, the Head pointed out a resource-poor village at the bottom of the hill that the College had adopted in a spirit of development. My most moving moment at last year's board meeting at UWC USA was to meet a girl from that village who had just started as a student and to all appearances seemed to be doing well.

I understand that UWC alumni are playing an increasingly important role in national committees. That may be the best guarantor of fair selection processes that give equal opportunities. Lester Pearson once said: *"How can there be peace without people understanding each other; and how can this be if they don't know each other?"* Our aim is to nurture a movement where a good sample of the people who need to understand each other to ensure peace can get to know each other. That could serve as a motto for the national committees.

Teachers

What about the outcomes for our teachers? They have both a wonderful opportunity and also a formidable challenge. They have the opportunity, which all teachers relish, to teach kids who are both bright and eager. The outcomes they seek would appear to be simple: good results in the IB. But, of course, the reality is more complex. The children are bright and eager but very diverse, so UWC teaching has to connect with that diversity.

When I was at the Open University in the 1990s and we began to have thousands of students enrolled with us across continental Europe whose native language was not English and who mostly had never been to the UK. We realised that we had to change the discourse of our teaching, not merely by unpacking unfamiliar acronyms, but also, as one of our professors put it, 'by challenging every assumption of normality that our teaching contained'. This is a difficult but ultimately rewarding activity and our UWC teachers are engaged in it every day.

Last week I visited the IB Headquarters in The Hague and spent time with Director-General Jeffrey Beard and Academic Director Judith Fabian. Both will be joining us later in the Congress. I was very impressed by the air of purposeful dynamism and efficiency that I found. As well as re-organising itself to cope with years more of 10% annual growth, which would fully occupy the energies of most organisations, the IB is continuing to innovate with its Career-related Certificate, an assessed option for the MYP, a programme for infants and its online courses.

I was especially proud to learn that although the UWCs are now only a tiny proportion of the 3,500 IB schools, we play a disproportionate role in its development because of the numbers of our teachers who act as examiners, workshop leaders, curriculum developers and so on. Jeffrey Beard remarked that the IB thinks of the UWC as its research and

development arm, citing the new course in Global Politics as an example of an initiative that came from the UWC.

But let us not be complacent. Last Sunday, on the way over from Paris in the Eurostar I read the IBO's Strategy and Implementation Plan, titled *Impact through Leadership*, from cover to cover. It is a most impressive document that sets the bar very high for our own discussions of the UWC's vision and aspirations. We shall need to be very clear about those if our statements are not to seem like a bunch of imitative waffle.

We have a challenge. In the 50 years since Atlantic College was founded, the educational world has flattered the UWCs by imitating us. IB programmes now reach one million students; schools in my home city of Vancouver are almost as diverse in ethnic and linguistic make-up as a UWC; and everyone seems to be doing community service.

So our challenge, with our teachers in the forefront, is to stay ahead, to continue to be the pioneers of international education, to be sharper than any other organisation in defining what the outcomes of an international education should be and how to attain that impact. We must say more than that we offer the world's most highly subsidised international education.

It all comes down to being explicit about the aims we want to achieve and not leaving the means of their achievement to chance. For example, I am impressed by what Atlantic College is doing to bring what are usually called extra-curricular activities into the mainstream organisational structures of the Colleges so that no one can regard them as subsidiary or secondary.

Governance

As the chair of the International Board it is my duty to pay special attendance to governance. Since taking office I have noticed that the UWCs most frequently on my radar as needing attention have one thing in common, which is that the UWC system did not take adequate care to ensure that solid governance structures were in place before it gave the go-ahead to the college when it was new.

Open in haste, repent at leisure is a phrase we should bear in mind as we examine the new proposals for UWCs that may come thick and fast in the coming years. Good governance is not just important for its own sake. It is not just there to provide a helpful framework when things go wrong. Increasingly, we will find that donors check on the robustness of governance in our organisation before they even think of giving funds to it.

The harmful impact of poor governance – or lack of governance – can undermine all the excellent work that we do.

Alumni

I shall say little about UWC alumni. I have two of them in my own family, which is enough to make me realise that it is impossible to generalise about them. In my short time

in this role I have noticed that heads and others often speak of alumni as a problem. They are not being negative. What they mean is that although alumni are eager to help, schools do not know how to best channel their energies.

I fully understand, as an alumnus of various institutions myself, how frustrating it is to feel that my former institutions are only interested in me when I have my chequebook in my hand.

It is good that there be representation of alumni on each UWC council, although the alumni who play this role must be careful not to appear to want to re-create the institution that they attended decades ago. In harnessing the energy and idealism of alumni I see the national committees as our greatest asset. A strong alumni presence on these committees should help to ensure that they remain true to UWC ideals.

What of the future?

You will be relieved that I am not going to review all the UWC stakeholder groups with respect to their impact. I will simply conclude with some thoughts about the future.

UWC is a very small movement in world terms. As a newcomer – even a newcomer who spends most of his time among educators and international types – I have been surprised to find how little known our movement is. Does that matter? UWC will never become a household word – but it clearly is important that we be well enough known for potential parents and children to find us, and for that knowledge to extend beyond the elites.

No doubt the number of UWCs will grow, and we should ask ourselves whether we should continue to multiply the present model or try others. When I met David Sutcliffe a few weeks ago he suggested that the UWC should try putting smaller units in discordant corners of the world, rather on the example of Mostar.

Furthermore, I hope that the UWC will examine the opportunities for growth and impact offered by going online. Today's students like and expect to study online and the IB and its partner Pamoja have invested \$10 million in putting a dozen of the Diploma courses online to high standards of quality. However, the IBO has stated that it will not compete with its schools by becoming a global online high school. The online courses are there for the existing IB schools to use.

Might one of our more dynamic UWCs seize this opportunity to branch out and take up the challenge of offering the UWC experience globally at scale? Within a few years there will be various global online high schools enrolling tens of thousands of students. Might one of them carry the spirit and the impact of the UWC movement to a world thirsty for education for peace?

Thank you. I wish you all an excellent Congress that will impact on the future of UWC.