



YOUNG LEADERS FORUM



Young Cultural Diplomacy A Quarterly Journal

Theme: *“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”*

(September 2013)





Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

Introduction

“Young Cultural Diplomacy” is a program undertaken by the Organization for Youth Education and Development. The intention of the program is to put forward perspectives of youth on cultural diplomacy - the way they view and understand it, while at the same time to explore how cultural diplomacy can be used in order to support the development of youth worldwide.

The main activities of the program include research, publications and conferences. One of the components of the program is this quarterly journal, where we assemble a collection of articles and interviews contributed by young practitioners of cultural diplomacy who analyze cultural diplomacy and offer innovative perspectives of how it can be utilized, implemented and practiced to support the youth.

The September 2013 issue of our quarterly journal is focused on the theme:

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for Fostering Youth Education & Development”

Topics addressed in this issue include:

- Initiatives to be undertaken to combat youth unemployment
- Volunteer work as a career catalyst
- Sports as cultural diplomacy
- Tackling poor educational conditions affecting youth
- The fight against corporate child labor
- Contemporary nationalism in Spain

Table of Contents

We are NOT the Lost Generation	4
An Interview with the President of American University in Bulgaria, Dr. Michael Easton	
 Bridging the Gap between Graduates & Employers - An OYED Initiative.....	10
 Global Civil Society as an Actor of Cultural Diplomacy - New Trends in Volunteering & their Implications for Cultural Diplomacy.....	14
 Olympic Athletes as Cultural Ambassadors: Young Cultural Diplomacy in Practice.....	17
 The Involvement of Youth in improving Education conditions through Cultural Diplomacy; The Case of Mexico.....	21
 Cultural Diplomacy as a Remedy against Corporate Child Labor	24
 'Catalonia is not Spain?' Cultural Diplomacy as a Prospect for the Future Easing of Tensions between Spain and Catalonia.....	28



Cultural Diplomacy as a Remedy against Corporate Child Labor

By Olga Karazei

Child labor is work that is likely to interfere with a child's education and development; labour that exceeds a minimum number of hours, labour that is hazardous; and/or labour performed by a child who is underage according to state legislation. A child is considered a person under the age of 18 years (UNICEF, 2009)



Despite the measures undertaken on the part of the ILO, the UNO, and particularly UNICEF, as well as the combined effort of independent states, many children worldwide are still victims of child labour. The choice of work from an early age for these children is different, but unfortunately mostly conditioned by severe economic conditions and a lack of educational possibilities in the countries they live in. According to UNICEF data (2009), child labour is mainly used in the following work areas: organized begging, domestic

work, bonded child labour, the fishing industry, food processing, the sex industry, construction brick making, agriculture, child soldiers, textiles, and tourism (including sex tourism). The recent statistics from the UNICEF fact sheet on child labour display some worrying trends:

- Some 246 million children are engaged in child labour;
- 171 million (70 per cent) of these children work in hazardous conditions – including working in mines and dangerous machinery, working with pesticides and chemicals in agriculture;
- The Asia and Pacific region harbours the largest number of child workers in the 5 to 14 age group, 127.3 million in total (19 per cent of children are working in the region);
- Sub-Saharan Africa has an estimated 48 million child workers. Almost one child in three (29 per cent) below the age of 15 is economically active;
- Latin America and the Caribbean harbours approximately 17.4 million child workers (16 per cent of children in the region are working);
- 15 per cent of children in the Middle East and North Africa are working; approximately 2.5 million and 2.4 million children are working in developed and transition economies respectively (UNICEF, 2011)

The statistics above clearly show that egregious child labor is an unresolved issue in certain regions of the world, mainly in Asia and the Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa. These regions comprise of less developed and developing countries, which, wallowed in poverty and mendacity, not only fail to protect their children, but, use them as daily workforce.

It is a fact that over the year after year child labor is becoming an issue of increasing severity. With a lapse of time the concept of child labor gained a mark of the new era: “era of transnational corporations”. Currently, one frequently hears of the notion of a “corporate child labor”. Several well-known transnational giants have already been involved in legal prosecution, during which they were charged for using child labor in their production cycles. Some multinational companies strive to take advantage of cheap labor offered by children in third world countries. They hire these children in sweatshops to work in extremely unfavorable environments. The children end up working for long hours with minimum pay.

In 1996 a huge scandal arose around Nike's company activity in Pakistan. A British magazine “Life” published a picture with a 12-year-old Pakistani boy named Tariq, who was stitching parts of a soccer ball together for 60 cents a day. This case inspired enormous indignation on the part of social activists. In the US and Canada people were standing in front of Nike outlets holding the pictures of Pakistani boy in their hands.

In 2010 another well-known sport wear company Adidas was involved in a child labor scandal (Burke, 2000). In Indonesia

Adidas violated international labor law on several accounts. Children as young as 15 were made to work 15-hour days; expected to do at least 70 hours a week and punished for refusing to do overtime; paid less than \$60 a month, rates below the International Labour Organisation's demand for a living wage; penalized for taking leave during medical difficulties and had illegal deductions taken from wages as punishments for minor misdemeanors (Burke, 2000).

The same year Microsoft's Xbox has been accused of exploiting children in between the ages of 16 and 17 to manufacture its Xbox console in Dongguan, southern China. It has been proven that in some of the findings, the factory was overcrowded with more than 1,000 child workers. As much as 14 children had to share a single room and work on less than 37p a day (Foley, 2010).

A very recent example of the use of child labor is that of American Apple company. As revealed by an internal audit, Apple Inc used child labor in the making of its products by employing 106 underage workers across 11 facilities in 2012. “According to a report, the company also discovered wage problems and forced pregnancy tests”. In 2013, three Chinese factories making Apple products run by Pegatron Group violated standards set by Apple. The organization said the 70,000 employees at the three Pegatron plants averaged up to 69 hours per week, and that „many workers“ were under 18. Pegatron, a Taiwanese company, came under the spotlight and was pressured to better oversee often-poor manufacturing conditions in China after 13 workers for one of its suppliers committed suicide in 2010 (RT, 2013).



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

Nike, Adidas, Apple, Microsoft, HP, H&M, DELL, Reebok, Speedo, GAP – all these companies have been directly or indirectly involved in child labor scandals. And the list goes on. It turns out that grand companies with big names stemming from the “Western world” are utilizing cheap labor forces from less developed countries. Here a question arises: is it a new wave of neo-colonialism or does it have something to do with a failure of the “corporate ethics” concept in the contemporary world? It looks like big sacks of gold are focused only on making more money, even while neglecting their breach of the international law. Or is it simply a poor local management that tries to create jobs for those in need and the whole hassle around child labor has nothing to do with the famous brands? It is difficult to give a definite answer, as the issue is not transparent at all.

Surprisingly enough, there are also those who argue in favor of child labor. These are usually economists, who see only the material benefit in creating more jobs. They believe that child labor may ultimately serve for the benefit of the underdeveloped country, which cannot offer alternatives and cannot create a better life for its people. Still being miserable, the wages for the child work are much higher at the transnational company rather than at a local firm or organization.

However, the arguments against child labor continue to prevail. Child labor is a worldwide problem and various laws have been developed to stop it. The affected governments are still too weak to implement these laws and successfully enforce them. Activists continue to fight to eradicate child labor and support the laws. One of the reasons given is that child labor robs the children of their childhood and they are prevented from being able to live normal li-

ves, furthermore children are unable to defend themselves and claim their rights, and due to . All children should have the right to childhood and the right to be protected against abuse of any kind including child labor. They also have a right to education, recreation, and the right to be included in the formation of policies that affect them. They have the right to be heard and the adults have the responsibility to listen to them.

Corporate child labor is a big problem in the world today and governments are unable to enforce the labor laws that prohibit it. There are various approaches that can be followed to fight child labor and ultimately prevent it. Stopping the companies and shutting them down does not solve the problem. The best method to fight child labor is to make sure transnational corporations are playing a fair game on international markets, especially in the sensitive regions mentioned above.

Where has all the “corporate ethics” of transnational corporations gone? This is the right time to speculate on the value of Cultural Diplomacy in the contemporary world. Cultural Diplomacy has more power than it may seem at the first glance. Cultural Diplomacy is a strong and efficient soft power tool, which can be efficiently used to tackle human rights discrepancies. The concept of Cultural Diplomacy presupposes that all the cultures around the world are different, but equal. Cultural Diplomacy can be practiced by either public sector, private sector or civil society (Constantinescu, 2011). This means that transnational corporations such as private businesses, as well as civil society worldwide should take a lead in the transformation of the attitude towards human rights issues and tackling the problem of child labor. Once transnational corporations stop doing un-

fair business in the pursuit of bigger revenues, by enforcing control over their subsidiaries in developing countries, the amount of children involved in the cycles of production will formidably decrease. On the part of the world civil society, more significant effort can be put it to try and combat these practices. People all over the world can try to abstain from buying products of the companies which utilize child labor. At first glance it does not seem to bring any palpable effect; however, even if a small percentage of people do that, the issue will acquire a broad resonance.

Only through mutual collaboration can a good result be achieved. Companies can put labels on their goods to show that the goods are not made via the use of child labor. Companies can then put the labels on all of their goods in a visible location so that

the consumers can check and determine that the goods are not made by children and that the company is not involved with child labor and does not support the act.

A code of conduct can be established together with supplier guidelines, that can help curb child labor. The code can be used through the use of auditors to make sure that the suppliers of goods and services do not use child labor and end up convicting their clients. Standards can be used to encourage companies and big multinationals to achieve them. The companies can attain these standards and get an achievement and acknowledgement for not using child labor. All the above should be implemented worldwide. In this way cultural diplomacy will be exercised for a common benefit of combating child labor.

Olga Karazei

Sources

Burke, J. (2000). Child labour scandal hits Adidas, *The Guardian*. Retrieved on September 10, 2013, from <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/nov/19/jasonburke.theobserver>

Constantinescu, E. (2011). Institute for Cultural Diplomacy. What is Cultural Diplomacy? What is Soft Power? Retrieved on September 13, 2013, from http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy

Foley, S. (2010). Microsoft studies claims of child labour abuse at Chinese supplier, *The Independent*. Retrieved on September 13, 2013, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/microsoft-studies-claims-of-child-labour-abuse-at-chinese-supplier-1946356.html>

RT (2013). Apple accused of using Chinese child labour to assemble iPhones and iPads. Retrieved on September 13, 2013, from <http://rt.com/business/apple-accused-china-kids-labor-742/>

RT (2013). Apple products made with child labour. Retrieved on September 13, 2013, from <http://rt.com/news/apple-report-child-labor-781/>

TED Case Studies (2013) Nike: Nike Shoes and Child Labour in Pakistan. Retrieved on September 10, 2013, from <http://www1.american.edu/ted/nike.htm>

UNICEF (2009). Factsheet Child Labour. Retrieved on September 06, 2013, from http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/child_labour.pdf

UNICEF (2011). The State of the World's Children 2011. Adolescence. An Age of Opportunity. Retrieved on September 05, 2013, from http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/SOWC-2011-Main-Report_EN_02092011.pdf

UNICEF (2013). Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse. Child Labour. Retrieved on September 06, 2013, from http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58009.html



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

We are NOT the Lost Generation

By Vladislav Strnad



Young people are the most precious resource that a country possesses. They are crucial for the future of any society and that is why youth management is a key issue for social policies around the world and an investment for the future.

The make-up of those in the age bracket of 15-24 is very diverse; comprised of students at various levels of study, people in training courses, people working or looking for work, graduates with complete or incomplete educational qualifications and also those who are classed as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

These young people have been hit hard by the economic crisis; a large proportion of graduates find themselves jobless. Youth unemployment in Europe has reached a record level and in 13 Member States it has exceeded 25%. The highest unemployment rates are in Greece, Spain and Portugal whilst the lowest are in

Germany, Austria and the Netherlands.¹

The full scope of the unemployment crisis is outlined by President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy: “Unemployment levels are alarmingly high, concealing many different realities and causes that often run deep. And we are under no illusions: the problem won’t be solved overnight. But that is no reason for adopting a “mission impossible” mindset.”²

Increasingly the term “Lost Generation” can be found in the media. Young people cannot find work, potentially never knowing stable employment with its rising wages and income security in old age. Indeed, it is the current generation who are expected to have worse living conditions than their parents or grandparents.

In the labor market, young people are referred to as a “risk group”. There are several reasons why young people are often out of work. It is difficult to find the first job because they are lacking practical experience, which they cannot receive until they find a job; a classic “Catch 22”. A large proportion of unemployed youths are school drop-outs and, looking at current trends, it is likely that in the future there will be even less work for people with lower levels of education, further limiting employment options for young people. Furthermore the number of jobs is shrinking due to development and modernization, which causes companies to reduce their workforce to just a small number of highly skilled employees.

1 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-464_en.htm EU measures to tackle youth unemployment 28 May 2013

2 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/CS/ec/138191.pdf Vyjádření předsedy Hermana Van Rompuye po skončení první části zasedání Evropské rady , 28.6.2013

Generally education plays a key role in employability, but candidates’ skill sets must also match the demand of the labor market. Many industrial enterprises in the meantime are seeking graduates with the prerequisites such as appropriate language skills, organizational and management skills, knowledge of business environment and business processes, and with the willingness to comply with the requirements of the company.

There is a similar situation in vocational and craft schools. In many centers of education students do not receive the knowledge and skills that are required by the labor market. Simply, there is a gap in the skills students are taught and the skills employers require and in many cases diplomas do not guarantee expertise. The best evaluation of the quality of education is the market.

Whilst the development and modernization of enterprises is essential, the restructuring and optimization of modernization frequently results in jobless, with young employees often being the first made unemployed. Youths are frequently accessing part-time jobs and working for lower salaries. Furthermore, the lack of professional knowledge and also the irresponsible approach to school choice causes young people to do work which does not reflect their personal interests, or that does not motivate them nor bring them joy.

Even educated graduates are not safe from unemployment and some colleges are considered to be producing “non-working intellectuals”. After completing their education, graduates are often testing their luck abroad, hoping for better conditions, a better life and personal realization. If they get the job, they need to work hard to build on its position at the expense of their personal life, family, more specifically their future family, which they are more commonly establishing at a later age than their parents.

Notably, unemployment in the beginning of young peoples’ careers is bringing uncertainty and loss of confidence. Long-term unemployment or recurring job loss has profound consequences. Young people feel betrayed, redundant and demotivated and some of them are resigning themselves to unemployment leading to “deskilling”. They live off of support, becoming dependent on their parents or the state. Eventually they lose their qualifications, ability to study and it becomes difficult for them to return to an active life.

‘The EU leaders at the European Council meeting on 27-28 June in Brussels endorsed a comprehensive plan to combat youth unemployment. 23.5% of Europeans under the age of 25 (approximately 7.5 million) across the EU are currently out of work. The plan includes speeding up the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative and the Youth Guarantee scheme, as well as increasing youth mobility and the involvement of social partners.’³

In the June summit, the European Council representatives of the Member States took comprehensive measures which should help to improve the situation. The mentioned packages include the ‘Youth Guarantee’, which guarantees that all young people under the age of 25 years will receive quality jobs, apprenticeships and internships within four months after losing their job or terminating education. This system of guarantees for the young has been piloted in Finland. “Ausbildungsgarantie” (guaranteed apprenticeship) has been introduced in Austria. The inspiration lies in the German dual system of vocational education.

The European Council invited Member States to prepare for November a plan for establishing a guarantee scheme for young people. The initiatives will be funded through the EU

3 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/137631.pdf FACTSHEET ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

Structural Fund and six billion euros will be available in January 2014. The first contributions will be made available to the most severely affected regions of the EU, where youth unemployment rates exceed 25%. The amount will be increased by another two billion, drawn from the unspent funds of other structural funds. The European Investment Bank will contribute through its initiative “Working for the Young” and the program “Investing in Skills”. Additionally the European Council has backed these programs.

Initiatives “Your First EURES job”⁴ and “Erasmus”⁵ are also supporting the cross border professional training. Great importance has been placed on other programs such as ERASMUS (program for education and training, that is focusing on the mobility and cooperation in higher education in Europe),⁶ COSME (Program for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium enterprises),⁷ and Horizon 2020 (program for funding European R & D and innovation⁸ and EASI (program for employment and social innovation).⁹

Member States have also undertaken measures to modernize their systems of training and education, to strengthen cooperation between

4 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=993&langId=en> Your first EURES Job

5 http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20130719-erasmus-plus-preparation_en.htm Preparation for Erasmus+

6 http://www.naep.cz/index.php?a=view-project-folder&project_folder_id=339& ERASMUS programme

7 <http://ec.europa.eu/cip/cosme/> Programme for the Competitiveness of enterprises and SMEs (COSME) 2014-2020

8 http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm Horizon 2020

9 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=cs&catId=987&newsId=1093&furtherNews=yes> New programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)

educational institutions and businesses, and to improve the participation of young people with few qualifications in the labor market. To improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships, the European Alliance for apprenticeships was created to provide greater involvement with the private sector, social partners, and businesses. The concept of dual links between schools and businesses has worked for many years in Germany and Austria. Countries that have strong systems of vocational education and training, such as Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Austria, also tend to have lower youth unemployment.¹⁰

Member States reflected the recommendations of the European Council in its budgets, structural reforms, social policy and employment policy. Governments bear the full responsibility for the success of national initiatives and for the maintenance of social dialogue and are responsible for the efficient utilization of EU funds. The European Council will discuss and regularly evaluate the economic situation.¹¹

States also undertook measures to reform the tertiary education system. These reforms will increase diversification, enhancing the quality of teaching and resulting in a more flexible labor market and graduates meeting employers’ requirements successfully. Budgets of public universities will become dependent on the quality of education, employability of graduates and outcomes of the institution’s research.

It is expected to introduce an effective system of student financial aid, study grants for all students, social scholarships for students from families with low income and disabled students,

10 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/137634.pdf European Council Conclusions (extract), 28.6.2013

11 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/137634.pdf European Council Conclusions (extract), 28.6.2013

business scholarship, education savings, student loans and occasional student employment offers. States will provide information which would enable students to make quality decision about their future career choices.

Member States reflected the recommendations of the European Council in its budget, structural reforms and EU employment and social policy. The European Council underlined that Member States must act alone to reform their education systems and the labor market. As van Rompuy said “Employment policies are primarily the responsibility of national governments, with the European Union supporting their efforts”. Leader States should therefore ensure the exchange of experiences and best practices with other members.¹²

Today’s world is very difficult for young people because the completion of school education alone is not enough to ensure employment with society and the job market having high expectations. You have to ask questions, analyze problems, and information to find solutions, to use scientific knowledge in different areas of everyday life. How successful young people are depends partly on themselves and on their ability to adapt to the realities of the labor market.

Indeed, those adaptive students are more and more eager to study abroad. They are attracted by a higher quality of teaching, the title of the school with a good name, creative freedom, greater consistency of study with practice, cultural diversity, and a better opportunity for personal development. The vast majority

12 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/CS/ec/138191.pdf Vyjádření předsedy Hermana Van Rompuye po skončení první části zasedání Evropské rady , 28.6.2013

participate in Erasmus, the European student exchange program. The ambition is not just for students to spend a semester or two abroad, specifically they want to complete their studies or even make a career abroad. Of course the majority return home to finish their studies with good experience and a good education.

These exchange programs, be they for study or internships, have also other and perhaps more important dimensions. Programs offer a chance to learn about and enlighten different environments and people, to learn and determine something new, but also to engage themselves with their land and culture. This interaction of cultures is reflected in Cultural Diplomacy. New friendships enrich and break down stereotypes and prejudices. National differences are blurring and cease to be an obstacle in coexistence and this knowledge contributes to the mutual understanding and a new generation of young euro-citizens. But the foreign environment requires more rigor and work. Difficulties are inevitable. Nevertheless, skills and experience in international teams give the courage and enthusiasm for life and increase the competitiveness for career building.

Youth employment problems, of course, are part of and a result of the economic situation. Their solution is associated with the restart of the economy. Joint efforts of the EU and the exchange of experiences lead to the increase of educational levels and their relationship to practice.

We are not the Lost Generation.

We will be the generation we want to be!

Vladislav Strnad



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

An Interview with the President of American University in Bulgaria, Dr. Michael Easton

By Vladislav Strnad

1) 1) *The American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) is a prestigious university with graduate employability rates and financial evaluation upon first job remaining very high. What do you think are the main reasons for this and where do you place the American system of higher education as a factor for this success?*

The American-style of education encourages student involvement in the teaching-learning process. This style of learning is present in all AUBG classes, whether they are taught by Americans, Bulgarians, or other international faculty. Our style of learning creates a confidence in our students to interact with others and fosters their ability to express themselves both orally and in the written form. Also the liberal arts experience, unlike the purely discipline-based education, gives our students a broad exposure to ideas, thoughts, and concepts in a variety of areas of study. Students become critical thinkers and problem solvers, skills which employers value highly. AUBG students have little trouble finding employment at home or abroad.

2) *United in Diversity' is how I can briefly entitle my yearlong Erasmus experience at AUBG. What impressed me the most about the university in general and the studying itself were the equal conditions and opportunities for all students. How does the AUBG manage to shape the coexistence between students from diverse places and cultures?*

First of all AUBG only accepts good students. Such students are usually quite open-minded and expect to experience new ideas, establish new friendships, and recognize that the world has become increasingly “flat”. Students come to AUBG with an expectation they are being prepared to enter a world community. Beginning with New Student Orientation much work is done by our staff to develop in our students an understanding of the diversity in people, cultures and religions. The residential experience, all students living together in on-campus housing, provides a learning laboratory where students learn to work, learn, study, eat, play and enjoy recreational opportunities together, regardless of their country of origin. This model has been very successful and was the basis for the founding of the University in 1991.

Global Civil Society as an Actor of Cultural Diplomacy New Trends in Volunteering & their Implications for Cultural Diplomacy

By Katarina Erdelyiova



How can current students and future employees operationalize the meaning of this powerful quote whilst the education systems in many countries are standing on such weak legs? Sadly, the reality of being a student enrolled in a study program lacking enthusiasm, with neither interest nor future aims, is a widespread phenomenon. Such a tendency proves to be a formidable vision. It is without question that one works best when the previously mentioned attributes are present. Failing this, one's work is usually not efficient, creative nor useful with respect to future self- and community development.

Why can voluntary work be more worth than a pay-check?

Recent years have witnessed the steady rise in popularity of volunteer work. Reasons for this trend are manifold and case-specific for each person seeking an experience in volunteering. For some, motivation lies with a desire to prove altruistic intentions, for others the rich experience promised by a variety of tasks and responsibilities seems to be a deciding factor. The globalized world we all live in is now allowing us to deepen this experience by combining this work with travelling, many times referred to as “volunteer travels” or “voluntourism”.

“Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself” (George Bernard Shaw)

Each year, an increasing amount of young people, mostly aged 18-25, decide to leave their home country for voluntary work. This usually happens in the summer, lasting from June until October. However, many of these positions are offered for six months to one year, whereas these opportunities are often used by the fresh graduates or university students taking a gap year. A common reason why graduates do not jump directly to the labor pool is that they are often not ready to make the sudden step from university lecture halls to the first job they get upon graduation, which most probably will not be their dream job. Seeking a voluntary job is the perfect way for a person to explore themselves and what



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

one wants, or indeed, does not want. In a similar situation are the students still in the process of completing their education, but taking a gap year. The vast majority of these students believe either that they chose a wrong career path or at least they are not outright convinced about its direction.

As published in one of the articles in Financial Times, a survey carried out by Time-Bank through Reed Executive, the following career benefits of volunteering were the strongest. While 84% of those responsible for hiring agree that volunteering is a way to help people find work, over 70% of employers believe that those who volunteer have a better chance of earning a higher salary and gaining promotion. Not to mention the fact that when recruiting, 80% of employers value volunteering on a CV.

Volunteering and Cultural Diplomacy

Volunteering can be easily associated with citizen diplomacy (people's diplomacy) - a concept in international relations having its origin in U.S. foreign policy - when an average citizen or group of citizens of one country purposely engages in a mutual relationship with one or more countries in order to support, promote and shape the reciprocal foreign relations in a meaningful, constructive and mutually beneficial way. The “delegates” of citizen diplomacy are usually students, teachers, artists, humanitarians, athletes, business-people and last but not least volunteers abroad - a combination of adventurers and tourists.

If we think about the strong bond that connects citizen diplomacy with Cultural Diplomacy one can easily presume that these two cannot exist without each other since

Cultural Diplomacy as well as citizen diplomacy has the power to act as an effective tool in improving foreign relations. It has the ability to embrace many forms, for example being a complementary part of official governmental foreign policy trends, as well as it can function separately by itself in situations where official diplomacy fails.

Anyone who cares about their country's reputation, anyone who feels comfortable in the vibrant society of nowadays globalized world, anyone who has the courage to spend quality time in a foreign country and anyone who feels responsible for the overall welfare and is willing to take crucial steps for changes in order to achieve it - can automatically become an ambassador for their country while working on their future and prospects.

As for the examples of volunteering as a tool for Cultural Diplomacy, these are represented by various NGOs which are supporting intercultural dialogue, either in a broader or narrower sense. When it comes to specification, one could mention Zugvögel, interkultureller Süd-Nord-Austausch e.V., a German organization which is offering south-north exchanges lasting for up to 12 months for adventurous inhabitants and people from Latin American and Africa seeking knowledge and experiences from the more economically developed Germany. Obviously, the program is based on a bilateral agreement, which allows German people to travel, offer their know-how, and take action in countries like Ecuador, Nepal, Rwanda and Uganda.

There are a plenty of similar organizations and programs such as the European Voluntary Service, VolunTourism.org, CrossCul-

turalSolutions.org, NetAid, UNVolunteers just to name a few. With a little research and effort, each person can find voluntary service providers and NGOs in their area and filter them easily accordingly to one's interests for a cause.

How to become a volunteer:

Either before, throughout, or after our study years, each of us tends to have an interest in a certain cause. The basic point is to consider why one wants to volunteer. It could be beneficial for a common cause or to help one's community, as well as for improving the volunteer's skills, making new friends and learn more about the obstacles that arise whilst fighting for the particular cause.

Look for NGOs and organizations via various search engines. Unless one is not a “voluntourist” it is recommended to start on a smaller scale and look for an organization or NGO that is concerned with the cause in one's area.

Choosing an organization might seem as an easy task, but one, however, does need to run a process of self-examination to reach a certain level of self-knowledge to become self-content and to be able to self-create. Despite this complicated formula, it is very important for each potential volunteer to know their qualities, strengths and weaknesses in order to make the best out of their work. Voluntary work can be both office and field based.

Once all these steps have been completed, the only thing that is left is to let those in charge know about your preferences within the organization so that the most conve-

nient working environment can be set up for both the volunteer and the organization.

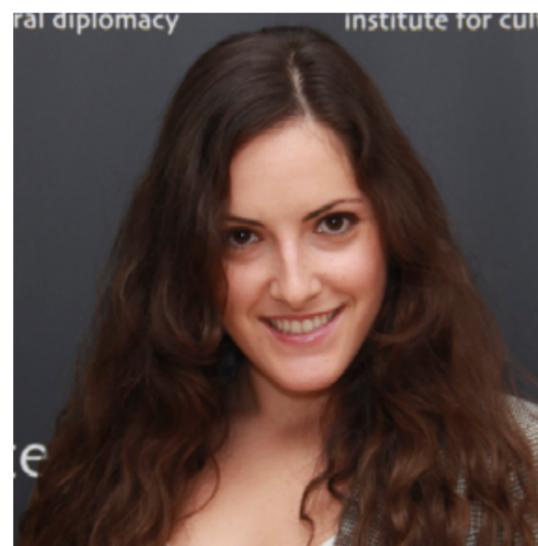
It is rather difficult to make predictions about the way in which will trends in volunteering will evolve. As argued above, voluntourism is one of those tools that does not cost much effort or money, the only things needed for successful action are a good sense of coordination and organization within or between countries and continents, human willingness to help, and engagement for a particular cause or against a specific matter. It has the power to create or improve the cultural equilibrium between two or more countries whilst a win-win situation can be easily maintained. Nevertheless, throughout the years, several experts made undeniably clever and justified remarks upon the possible chance of damage that might occur especially in the case of voluntourism, in the sense of the negative impact on the development of societies, whilst intervening into other countries' domestic affairs (examples usually lead to volunteers working at orphanages). However, while these claims are valid, volunteering service providers and cultural organizations are actively keeping track, making estimates in advance and taking control over the possible effects their actions might have on the society of the host country in order to avoid any negative impact and create the space, environment and conditions for the mutually most advantageous help.

Katarina Erdelyiova



Olympic Athletes as Cultural Ambassadors: Young Cultural Diplomacy in Practice

By Sanja Pancic



The Olympic Games represent one of the the largest international gathering in the World. It provides the opportunity for nations to send delegations of athletes which can serve as cultural ambassadors for their respective nations. The Olympic stage has been seen as a positive environment for establishing and maintaining international relations, providing the opportunity for countries to present themselves on a global stage, pursue recognition and cultural validation as part of a diverse community. The attractiveness and universality of the Olympic Games is something that motivates different cultures to become involved in global exchange and to contribute to the ideals of a universal world.

Sport is frequently used as a vehicle for cul-

tural diplomacy with athletes able to act as cultural ambassadors for their people. With the purpose of presenting Cultural Diplomacy in practice, this article will be focused on the values of sport and the personal experiences of two Olympic Athletes in order to raise awareness about universal values, global communication and cooperation between people.

The Olympic Athletes Biographies

Sofia Papadopoulou is an extraordinary Olympic athlete honored with bronze medal in sailing at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games for the Greek National team. As a current Olympian she hopes to surpass her result at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. As a young Olympian she works hard to teach and motivate young sailing generations to accomplish their dreams and become valuable ambassadors of the country. Aside from her sport career she is also a Masters student at the International Olympic Academy, strongly believing that education plays a very important role in shaping personal identity and the identity of the culture.

Dr. Hussain Haleem is a passionate Olympian who was the first flag carrier and captain of the Maldives National Team at the 1988 Seoul and 1992 Olympic Games, competing in the marathon race. His sport career is glorified with many medals and national records in athletics that still inspire others and gives him the strength to take part in the most difficult sport competitions such as the Ironman

triathlon. As an official vice-president of the Maldives Olympic Committee, he has had the chance to compete in 3 difference Olympic Games, as well as the chef de mission at the 2010 Singapore Youth Olympic Games and the team leader for the Maldives 2012 London Olympic Games. As a sport expert he has written four books as well as a number of articles and publications in order to share his experience, hoping that they can motivate youth to celebrate the joy of sport and become better people upon moral values and strong dialogue skills. His personal motto is to never give up on dreams, love life, and respect others.

The Olympic Games as an Environment for Dialogue

Sport has been acknowledged as a tool of Cultural Diplomacy that celebrates positive values such as fairness, social inclusion, communication and friendship. Moreover, the personal experiences of the Olympians highlight the importance of a dialogue in a sporting environment, that strengthens the relations between people and neglects all the differences between them.

Hussain: “Being part of the Olympic Games, athletes have the chance to experience life in the Olympic village, meet different cultures and introduce their role models. It is unique opportunity to hear the life stories of the athletes and motivation that stands behind the hard work and persistence. It provokes interaction between young people enhancing the mutual dialogue, based on shared experiences and values. At first such communication could be perceived as modest, but eventually all the timidity evanesces. This unique environment creates opportunities for dialogue based on common ground leading to the one ideal sprit of equality.

Sofia: “You feel like you belong to a big family where everyone respects your perso-

ality, recognizes your abilities and your efforts, no matter which religion or culture you are”. Being part of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Sofia had the opportunity to share ideas, skills and feel accepted and protected. As a personal example, she faced disadvantages that changed her perception on life and inspired true sympathy and belief in people. During the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games training session, along with her sailing partner, they faced serious complications in transporting their boat into the water, due to some electrical malfunctions and an issue with a crane. It seemed that nothing was possible to carry the 900kg boat into the water in order to have a proper preparation before the competition. Noticing the problem from a distance, a group of Chinese volunteers did not hesitate to approach and kindly offer their help.

Sofia: “We couldn’t understand each other because they did not speak English but we just started working together to put the boat into the water”.

This incident demonstrates that people are capable of working alongside one another despite the language barriers and cultural disparity. It has been represented as an example how Culture Diplomacy can greatly contribute in enhancing the country’s international perception.

Sport inspires Youth Communication and Socio-cultural Closeness

Throughout history, sport has played significant role in softening the relations between countries. Back in the Ancient times, the Olympic Games were held even during the war periods, which did not influence the realization of the global event and gathering of sport and cultural representatives. Countries have for centuries been using sport as a tool for reducing tensions and establishing sustainable socio-cultural relations.



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

Hussain: “Sport can bridge differences in a way of bringing people together, learning about others culture, religion and customs. It helps us to understand each other better”. During the qualifications for the 2008 Olympic Games, Sofia Papadopoulou and her sailing partner had to compete against thirty other countries, representing the deciding moment in their career. Often it can be difficult to establish positive communication with their opponents due to the high pressure of the race and concentration required. However Sofia’s personal experience has demonstrated an opposite image. Her sailing partner and her had trained and worked closely with the Russian team, preparing the boats together, exchanging knowledge and experience in order to maximize the chances to qualify. Sofia: “We learned their language, culture, and tasted each other’s food”. It represented a unique opportunity for young people to become closer to each other, exchange practices and serve as promoters of their countries.

Youth Olympic Games as a Lasting Legacy for Intercultural Relations

Every country has a chance to present itself on the global Olympic stage and acquire certain recognition. Although it is not always easy to establish an equal representation of the countries, due to their economic and social status, however such challenges can be overcome via sport educational programs (Hussain Haleem). The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) represents an ideal cultural exchange and sporting event with an effective strategy to bring young people closer by offering competitions in different activities. YOG features a Culture and Education Pro-

gram (CEP) which aims to increase youth participation and bring innovative exchange of values and experience, particularly of the smaller and developing countries. Hussain: “Through the sports educational programs for youth we can improve the understanding between each other and close all the gaps and misunderstandings” YOG provides opportunities for the young to enhance their social status, meet different cultures and provide an opportunity for developing countries to enhance their position on the cultural map. Sofia: “We must unite our ideas, knowledge, strength in order to pass the universal message of friendship between the countries”.

Tradition and customs reflect each country and people, creating the basis for positive dialogue. It generates the lasting legacy valuable not only for the further development of the international relationship but personal maturation and satisfaction. Young people of the modern era are facing great challenges with communication due to modern technology and social media. It is essential to cultivate traditional values that bring people together and open opportunity for exchange of experiences and ideas. By practicing sport, young people become stronger individuals, capable to socially adjust to the environment and show tolerance and respect on every ground. It is a path that leads to the creation of valuable cultural ambassadors able to spread the positive message and values around the world, thus establishing sustainable international relationships.

Sanja Pancic

Note: Deepest gratitude to Miss Sofia Papadopoulou and Dr Hussain Haleem for taking part in this interview.

References

Miller G. Stephen (2006); Ancient Greek Athletics, Yale University Press New Haven and London

Toohy K. James V. Anthony (2007); The Olympic Games: A Social Science Perspective, CAB International, 2nd edition

YOG, International Olympic Committee: <http://www.olympic.org/youth-olympic-games>

The Involvement of Youth in improving Education Conditions through Cultural Diplomacy; The Case of Mexico

By Valentina Martínez



to UNESCO, human development factors such as unemployment and poverty are doubled amongst the sectors of the population that are unschooled or have had to drop out of school prematurely.

The core of the problem derives mainly from the lack of financial resources that countries are capable of allocating to educational infrastructure, technology, research, as well as teacher training. For some countries though, the effective monitoring of the allocation of resources to the appropriate areas in education is a major issue that requires collaboration with the international community as well.

Mexico, despite being the country which spends the highest percentage in education out of all the OECD members, has one of the world’s lowest education standards. In the most recent Pearson Global education report, The Learning Curve, Mexico’s education system was ranked 49 out of 52 evaluated countries.¹

Many education experts in Mexico consider it a „failing system“. Statistics from the private organization *Mexicanos Primero* indicate that out of 100 students be-

The current landscape of education both in the developed and developing world is characterized by persistent inequalities. Universal primary education is a major challenge, particularly for emerging countries, where marginalization related to sex, health and ethnicity has an undeniable downward-spiral effect on its people’s social and intellectual development. It is a fact that the improvement of children’s living conditions is hampered by the lack of access to quality basic education. According

¹ OCDE (2011). Education at a Glance 2011. Trends in entry at the tertiary level (1995-2009), p. 317



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

ginning elementary school, only 24 finish high school, and only 10 will graduate college. Moreover, 51 percent of 15-year-old scholars in Mexico are considered to be under-skilled and to be lacking knowledge in sciences.² There are many fronts that need to be battled towards reducing the number of unschooled or poorly schooled children in Mexico. The first one would be the extension of education across the country.

According to the OECD, half of the 15-year-olds in Mexico struggle with basic math and 40% of students rank low in reading proficiency. Andreas Schleicher, advisor to the Secretary-General on Education Policy and Deputy Director for Education at the OECD, determined that Mexico ranks among the weakest countries in student achievement despite dedicating over 6.2% of its budget on national education. However, 130 million pesos from that percentage are drawn annually by 22,000 union employees who do not engage in teaching. As a result, the system maintains low teaching standards. The problem of unschooled children goes beyond the conditions of poverty, and critique is mostly concentrated on the poor quality of teaching. Thousands of texts are produced, but according to experts in education such as Professor Carlos Ornelas, they are often obsolete and irrelevant. The curricula of public schools are said to be too extensive, yet lacking in detail. Having the most bloated curriculum amongst all OECD countries is not only unrealistic for students to grasp in full, but also only provides them with superficial knowledge of each subject reviewed.

2 Annual Report 2012. Mexicanos Primero. p. 14

Another important focus point lies with the teachers themselves. Most of the public school teachers belong to the National Union of Education Workers, Mexico's largest union. Since the 1990s, the union has taken control over hiring teachers and approving quality standards, whilst also managing the budget allocated to education. Teaching positions are limited, but once a teacher obtains tenure it is considered an assured position and from then on the teacher cannot be laid-off. Applications to these positions only started to be given through contests in 2008, and for the most part these tests showed that teachers were generally not yet qualified to teach a class. A tendency in the system, as Mexicanos Primero declares, is that it does not necessarily promote or compensate well-qualified teachers. Corruption and nepotism in education has been widespread for decades. Teaching jobs and promotions are often sold or exchanged, or passed down through families. Additionally teachers often skip classes or use unqualified teachers as substitutes such as last year students, while still receiving their full salary for the class. A survey from the Research Institute for Education Development (INIDE) of the Iberoamerican University in Mexico shows that 67.5% of junior high school teachers have skipped class, and 70%³ of them lack qualification to teach. This lack of qualification, although measured through standardized tests, has no negative consequence for the teachers whatsoever. However, the low teaching standards and missed classes by the teachers have, in turn, led to

3 Research Institute for Education Development (INIDE) of the Iberoamerican University. 2005. p. 38.

student absentees.

The lack of quality education and its unequal distribution has shown to be a continuous threat to major human development areas in Mexico such as health, citizen participation, and law abidance. Criminality statistics are directly related to the sectors of the population that have not finished their basic education. According to the INIDE, 30% of the people who are in the Mexican jails are between 18 and 30 years old.⁴

Reforming the failing education system is one of the country's most challenging goals. Long-term economic competitiveness, as widely stated by economists, has shown to have a strong link with the knowledge and skills of the young people who enter the workforce. If well-trained workers tend to be more productive and earn more money, then focusing on training the country's future workers will be a determining factor of its economic success and stability.

As in Mexico, education remains a highly inaccessible right in developing countries. More than 72 million children aged between 5 and 10 are not in school, according to the UNESCO report on Education for 2012.⁵ Most importantly in achieving universal primary education within a country is the capacity of the young population to become aware of this need and actively

4 Ibid. pg. 39

5 UNESCO. International Office for Education. Worldwide Data on Education. 2011/2012 <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/es/servicios/documentos-en-linea/datos-mundiales-de-educacion.html>

participate in reclaiming efficient reforms in this sector to its government.

Outstanding educational performance and a qualified workforce in a country where more than 70% of the population is under 25 years old is an imminent must for Mexico. In 2012 the organization Mexicanos Primero launched a widespread campaign raising awareness about the state of the education system in Mexico. The documentary called “Barely Passing”, filmed in most part by students with borrowed cameras, inspired hundreds of thousands of young people to demonstrate for education reform. The documentary not only succeeded in permeating traditional domestic media and cinemas across the country, it was also available through the internet and was screened abroad. Appealing to the youth through cinema and the domestic media, the movement gained visibility and resonance and this year 180,000 young Mexican students voted for a quality education framework.

After a year of intense petition rounds and demonstrations carried out across the country this past August 24th President Enrique Peña Nieto pushed forward a new reform of Mexico's education system, aiming towards lifting poor standards and helping boost economic growth. The reform states clearly that professional merit will be the only way to become and remain a teacher. It does not, however, specify any institution that will oversee teaching standards or how they will be assessed. Experts and economists fear that Mexico's largest teachers union, the National Union



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

of Education Workers, will lobby against a implementing any such institution. Ricardo Raphael, researcher for the Center for Investigation and Economic Teaching says proper implementation of the education reform in Mexico will inevitably reduce the rates of uneducated or poorly educated people, which in turn will lead to a more prepared workforce and a boosted economy.

The value of Cultural Diplomacy, though the use of cinema and cooperating with national and international media, has shown to be an effective soft power tool in appealing youth to mobilize and participate towards an education reform. Civil society took the lead in the transformation of the attitude towards such an important sub-

ject for the development of a country. The global civil society is also at stake of the quality and coverage of education across borders. The OECD's 2012 evaluation recommended awareness and citizen participation to claim better monitoring and establishing clear and evaluable standards in education. Cultural Diplomacy is thus an undoubtedly relevant tool to push forward to activate the civil society and appeal the much needed reforms that will transform the education system in full and that will be recognized by all stakeholders. This is undoubtedly a priority to undertake at this point in time. point in time.

Valentina Martínez

Sources

Annual Report (2012). Mexicanos Primero. p. 14 <http://www.mexicanosprimero.org/recursos/203-publicaciones-de-mexicanos-primero.html>

CNN Mexico. (2013) Peña consume la reforma educativa pese a la oposición magisterial. September 10th, 2013. <http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2013/09/10/pena-nieto-consume-la-reforma-educativa-a-pesar-de-las-protestas>

Mexicanos Primero (2011). Metas. Estado de la educación en México 2011, <http://www.mexicanosprimero.org/recursos/203-publicaciones-de-mexicanos-primero.html> pp. 15 y16 con datos del INEE.

OCDE (2011). Education at a Glance 2011. Tabla C2.2. Trends in entry at the tertiary level (1995-2009), <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/educationataglance2011oecdindicators.htm> p. 317.

Research Institute for Education Development (INIDE) of the Iberoamerican University. (2005). <http://www.pensamiento-educativo.uc.cl/files/journals/2/articles/354/public/354-pp-38-51>.

Rulfo, Juan Carlos (2012) De Panzazo. Documentary. 80 min. 35mm. Mexico. <http://depanzazo.mx/numeralia.aspx>

UNESCO. International Office for Education. (2012) World-wide Data on Education. 2011/2012 <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/es/servicios/documentos-en-linea/datos-mundiales-de-educacion.html>

‘Catalonia is not Spain?’ Cultural Diplomacy as a Prospect for the Future Easing of Tensions between Spain and Catalonia

By Jennifer Velasco



ly influenced by the severity of the current economic and financial crisis in Spain, Catalonia has made a firm claim for independence, with its Prime Minister Artur Mas acting against the Spanish Constitution and vowing to conduct a referendum in the region in the form of a secession consultation in 2014.

In purely institutional terms, the Spanish-Catalan conundrum adopts its peculiarity from the fact that Spain is considered to be a state having a government half way between centralised-unitary and federal. On the one hand, and as their names indicate, Spanish counties (comunidades autónomas) enjoy a higher degree of autonomy than those pertaining to an entirely centralised state. However, on the other hand, these autonomous communities possess less independence than strictly federal counties- a fact that complicates the division between central governmental and autonomous communities' powers within the Spanish territory; for instance where the divide lies between legal, political, educational or economic policy-making in Spain.

This article will be structured following a series of interviews conducted with young Spanish and Catalan individuals, enquiring into their views of the reasons behind the newly-sparked tensions, their views on the

Catalonia is an autonomous community in northeastern Spain, bordering France and the Mediterranean Sea, and is recognised as a nation containing its own nationality by the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, establishing Barcelona as its capital.

Throughout the history of Spain, and even prior to the establishment of the Spanish state as we know it today, the Catalan region has enjoyed a distinctive culture, gastronomy, literature, history and language as compared to the country it belongs to; forming a unique and singular Catalan identity. In recent years however, and part-



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

referendum claim, and how Cultural Diplomacy may or may serve to ease the existing conflict.

In response to the general question ‘what do you think of Catalonia’s talk of separating from Spain?’ Irene Izquieta (22), a student in Comillas Pontifical University in Madrid, answered ‘I do not want Catalonia to separate from Spain because, during these economically-complicated times, this would only cause more upheaval in a country whose population is going through very hard times.’

However, Catalonia’s claim is a historical one, and even if I do not agree with the secession, I understand the reasons that justify the claim’. It wasn’t until the marriage of Ferdinand II of Aragón and Isabel I of Castile that the region of Catalonia was unified with the rest of Spain, as, prior to this union, Spain was divided into two kingdoms: the kingdom of Aragón, grouping today’s regions of Aragón, Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and Valencia, and the kingdom of Castile. Anna Boira (21), a Catalan student, expands on the historical bifurcation that Catalonia feels towards Spain by citing two historical occasions in which the region has attempted secession and this, in turn, has been denied by Spain: Barcelona’s fall on September 11, 1714 and the 1934 failed attempt for independence, to which Madrid reacted by declaring a state of war. The former, which culminated in the War of the Spanish Succession that began after Charles II of the Habsburg dynasty died without an heir, was perhaps the most significant loss of autonomy for the Catalan region, as the Nueva Planta decrees, introduced by Phillip V as the new king of Spain, incorporated the territories of the Crown of Aragón, including Catalonia, as provinces

under the Crown of Castile in 1716; thus terminating their separate institutions and hence constituting a united administration under Spain. Moreover, just almost four decades ago, Anna continues, ‘the Franco dictatorial regime, after the Spanish Civil War, imposed linguistic, cultural and political restrictions in Catalonia. The Franco regime banned the use of Catalan in governmental institutions and in public events. Also, the pro-republican Prime Minister of Catalonia at the time, Lluís Companys, was tortured for the crime of military rebellion and later executed. Consequently, and after many humiliations throughout history, it is just natural that Catalonia vows for independence’.

After Franco’s death in 1975, Catalonia voted for the adoption of a democratic Spanish Constitution in 1978. With the return of democracy to Spain, Catalonia was able to rebuild its national heritage by recovering political and cultural autonomy, so we asked young individuals on their thoughts regarding the main reasons and motives for Catalonia’s pleads for secession. In response to this question, Irene declared ‘there are many reasons behind the secession pleads, but overall, Catalonia has a unique culture and this creates a very strong feeling of belonging to this area.’

Another very important reason is the fact that they do not feel their culture is represented with the general Spanish culture’. Expanding on Irene’s assertion, Francesc Homs, a Catalan economist and politician, declared in an interview for The Guardian ‘our statute of autonomy, agreed between our parliament and the Spanish parliament in 2006, and then supported by our people in a referendum, was unilaterally rewritten by the Spanish constitutional court in 2010,

in a case brought by Mariano Rajoy, now prime minister of Spain. Furthermore, the Spanish education minister, José Ignacio Wert, has made explicit threats against Catalan language education and the Generalitat’s control over Catalan education, such as the ‘Wert Law’ in 2012. These events have changed the relationship between our citizens and the Spanish state’. Having a distinct opinion with respect to the Catalan question, Marina Rodríguez (22), a student born and studying in Madrid, proclaims ‘as far as I am concerned, the Catalonians believe they have the historical right to be independent, as well as having their own sense of identity and belonging to a Catalanian nation. I can see why they claim it but I do not think it is legitimate. I think that it is a historical and cultural claim that has torn apart the national belonging of people of Spain’.

Lastly, some believe that propaganda plays a strong role in Catalonia with respect to the Catalan’s feeling of uniqueness in terms of culture, as exemplified by Cristina Fernández (21) and Joselu Montojo (21), two students from Madrid who affirm that, throughout time, the Catalan government has manipulated its population to trust in the cultural distinctiveness of Catalonia as opposed to Spain.

Despite this cultural discrepancy, the recurrent manifestations advocating Catalonia’s secession from Spain have become more prominent in the past two years due to the devastating impact of the financial and economic crises in Spain. As Carlos Rodríguez (21), a student in Madrid, explains ‘Catalonia has got it into their heads that it wants to be an independent state as it is being negatively affected by the rest of Spain’. Anna provides a much clearer view

on the issue by stating ‘I think that most of the Catalans favor independence because they do not feel identified with Spain culturally. However, nowadays many more Catalans favor independence due to the economic crisis as many Catalans consider that the economic distribution within Spain has a huge negative impact in and for Catalonia; Catalonia having the highest regional debt within Spain’. Advocates of Catalanian independence claim that, due to the fact that Catalonia currently provides the rest of Spain with €16bn a year, this amount -equivalent to 8% of regional GDP- would not only relieve Catalonia of debt and deficit but also provide for greater investment and a better welfare state.

Following the 2012 rejection by the Spanish government of a Catalan government proposition to possess the same fiscal relationship as enjoyed by the Basque country and Navarra, as well as fuelled by the aggravation the financial and economic crises have perpetrated in Spain, Catalan Prime Minister Artur Mas publicly pledged for secession and announced his intention of conducting a referendum in order for the people of Catalonia to voice their opinions and declared ‘although we contribute much more to the Spanish treasury than most regions, we get disproportionately less in return. Catalonia ends up with considerably less per capita public expenditure than the average for all Spanish regions. Madrid has not honored its financial commitment to us under the revised autonomy statute, while the Catalan people are effectively being told that we are not partners but subjects’. Nonetheless, this referendum would not result in Catalan independence immediately if the outcome results are positive, but it will be conducted, according to Prime



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

Minister Mas' words, in the form of a consultation that would then have to be agreed upon by the Spanish central government. Unlike the Scottish case for a secession referendum, which receives the support of British Prime Minister David Cameron, the Spanish government has voiced its firm opposition to Mr Mas' promise, and has warned the Catalan government that if it goes ahead with its secessionist tendencies, the government would allow the Constitutional Court to ban this alleged referendum in advance.

'In legal terms this action would be a coup d'état; There is no right to self-determination and no right to secession allowed by the Spanish Constitution' Spanish minister for foreign affairs José Manuel García-Margallo declared for The Guardian. In response, Mr Mas declared in a speech on Catalonia's national day September 11, 2013, 'my commitment with our pledge for a referendum is certain. I am willing to exhaust all and every single diplomatic route and legal instrument to make this happen. Catalonia desires and vows to become a socially just, economically stable, culturally advanced and democratically exemplar country. After all, what can individuals be if they are not first free'. Indisputably agreeing with the words of Prime Minister Mas, Anna, when asked about her opinion on a possible Catalan referendum, answered 'I want to live in a country in which referenda are actually encouraged so that people are involved in the process of decision-making, and in which the rights to self-determination and secession are present. If there is a majority in favour of being independent, that is a 2/3 majority in the case of referendums, then it should go ahead'. Likewise, Carlos displays a positive opinion towards

the idea of conducting a referendum for self-determination in Catalonia, yet argues 'if Catalans want to be separate, every Spaniard should vote in the referendum'. On the other hand, Marina questions the Catalan referendum process by stating 'as far as I am concerned, the Catalonians believe they have a historical right to be independent as well as having their own sense of identity and belonging to a Catalan nation. I can see why they claim it but I do not think it is legitimate, as this historical claim has torn apart the national belonging of the people of Spain. Therefore, I do not agree with a possible referendum: not only does the Spanish Constitution not show any evidence of an independence claim being possible, but having a referendum on that matter would not even be constitutional'. Likewise, Joselu maintains that, because the alleged referendum would be unconstitutional, 'the Spanish government would not have to actively consider the results of the referendum. Also, has anyone thought about the 43% of Catalonians who are against independence?'

Finally, Irene contends that, despite her not agreeing with a Catalan consultation, as it would be illegal, 'the recent demonstrations in Catalonia show not only that the claim is legitimate, but that the referendum could possibly happen due to social pressure'.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, I enquired about the future prospects for Catalonia and Spain by inviting young individuals to expand on their views regarding Cultural Diplomacy, as well as the way this branch of diplomacy could aid in the easing of tensions within Spain.

It is of utter importance, however, to first

define Cultural Diplomacy, as conceptualized by former Romanian President Emil Constantinescu, who describes this phenomenon as 'a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation or promote national interests'. Accordingly, perhaps the most radical of responses is that of Anna, who declared that 'Spain and Catalonia's problem can not be solved any other way than having a referendum and having the Catalan population decide what they want'. This view, nevertheless, does not discredit Anna's belief in Cultural Diplomacy as a possible viable solution, as she explained when she argued that 'Madrid has stated that there is no possible legal let alone legitimate path for us to vote on our future. I disagree.

Catalonia has tried persistently a number of perfectly workable options and diplomatic solutions in which Cultural Diplomacy was exercised, such as the Statute of Autonomy in 2006 and a newly proposed fiscal relationship in 2012. The issue is clearly not legal but political. If Britain could delegate powers to Scotland to conduct its independence referendum, Madrid can respond to Catalonia's demands with similar cultural and diplomatic flexibility'. Correspondingly, Irene affirms 'Cultural Diplomacy will help if it is used to build bridges and find the links between the two different cultures existing in Spain and Catalonia respectively, as, ultimately, and despite the fact that culture is one of the reasons why the secession claims exist, due to the fact that it is used to accentuate the differences, these two cultures have a lot of things in common'. Consequently, it is of essence to expand

on the former points raised as they are of undeniable significance. In the case of independence talks in Catalonia, as well as towards Catalonia within the rest of Spain, culture is being branded as the cleavage behind the secessionist process. While it is certainly true that Catalonia possesses a unique and remarkable culture, incomparable with that of Spain, it is also a fact that these cultures share some core ideas and values.

For this reason, it could potentially be of great importance that the Spanish government apply Cultural Diplomacy in their rulings against Catalonia and its secessionist momentum, as, by doing this, the Spanish government, instead of refuting every course of action proposed by the Catalan government, would find similarities between both cultures in order to develop lines of communication that could perhaps result in a diplomatic solution without culminating in complete and total Catalanian independence, such as a fiscal pact like the one the Basque country and Navarra enjoy. As Anna explained, 'Spain's justification for why it opposes Catalonia's independence is flawed: because Spain as a nation would disappear. Catalonia's desire is to be independent, not to fragment Spain. The Basque Country does not want independence from Spain because Catalonia is thriving for secession. Rather, it is because Basques are too a different national identity within Spain, and as such, feel they should have their own sovereign state to defend their unique culture'. If this attempt of cultural understanding fails, however, Cultural Diplomacy could be exercised by the Spanish government by allowing the Catalan population to democratically express their opinion in a regional consultation. Here it is



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

important to distinguish between the terms legal and legitimate. Although the referendum would not be legal, as it is prohibited by the Spanish Constitution, it would be legitimate or imperatively moral and ethically correct, to permit the population of a given nation to decide over their future, particularly if it involves self-determination. Yet, not only can Cultural Diplomacy be utilized prior to an alleged referendum, but after, and if, the secessionist consultation fails. In this case, not only would Catalonia be in need of moral support after a failed attempt for independence, but, also, it would be the Spanish government's duty to socially, economically, politically and culturally reintegrate Catalonia within the Spanish state through cultural diplomatic channels

so as to cooperate with Catalonia on what it desires rather than imposing its will over it. Lastly, Cultural Diplomacy could also be in use during a hypothetical progression to self-determination after a favorable result in a potential referendum.

Having explored the opinions of young individuals, Catalans as well as non-Catalans, about the current situation in Spain, this article concludes that Cultural Diplomacy may certainly be a viable solution for the Catalan question in a vast amount of ways, all of which provide for positive future prospects for the Catalan region.

Jennifer Velasco

Bridging the Gap between Graduates & Employers

An OYED Initiative

By Anja Šumberac, Veronika Deésy, Hanah Bredikova, Anita Repic



A diverse global landscape, novel developments and continuously interacting cultures and nations are creating trends which are becoming increasingly difficult to follow, especially when we address issues diplomatically. Today's youth, who are actively living and shaping these contemporary realities, are a vital component in any attempt to comprehend the phenomena of globalization and transcontinental relations.

The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD) was established in order to strengthen intercultural relations in order to promote global peace and stability, with the help of Cultural Diplomacy. A significantly increased emphasis has been put recently on Cultural Diplomacy, which is seen as a tool of fostering better understanding between nations, as well as solving conflicts.

Culture is now seen as an important form of Soft Power which cannot be overlooked in the everyday operation of international relations. The ICD considers young people to be an invaluable actor of Cultural Diplomacy, delivering new ideas, enthusiasm and willingness to play a crucial role in resolving global challenges and to contribute to the extension and sustainability of Cultural Diplomacy.

It is for these reasons that the ICD established the Organization for Youth Education and Development (OYED) as a center where culture can be used as a mechanism to improve young people's lives by increasing their chances for professional development. Through cooperation with national governments, the OYED Initiative Bridging the Gap between Graduates and Employers promises to act as an effective



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

forum for youth development, facilitating the challenging transition phase faced by young people today; from graduates to a fully compatible labor force.

As young people are the future, the issues faced by the youth today should not and cannot be overlooked in comparison to other global uses. In the European Union, youths are facing great difficulties in accessing the labor market. The ICD Initiative on Youth Issues is a practical attempt to bridge the gap between graduates representing the youth, and employers representing the labor market. With this project the OYED aims to facilitate better communication and heightened interaction between the youth and employers in order to resolve basic employment issues. If implemented successfully, a solid and symbiotic relationship between these actors would be established. On the one hand, graduates would gain increased access to suitable jobs that match their fields of studies and interests. On the other hand the labor market will benefit immensely from innovative and bright young minds, which are essential ingredients for its future progress and profitability. Therefore the initiative, in cooperation with national governments, aims primarily to diminish youth unemployment and to create sustainable policies for educated job-seekers, simultaneously benefitting actors of the labor market.

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future (Franklin D. Roosevelt)

The fight against youth unemployment is the most urgent priority of every government in the world, whether they realize it or not. The key challenge is to ensure

that youths are equipped with the skills required to grant them a competitive advantage when working within the EU, be it the political, social or cultural sphere. In an effort to resolve salient issues encountered by youths on a daily basis, the OYED initiated the project to devise fruitful solutions that will address many, if not all, of these issues. The most important one, youth unemployment, can be partially traced to a lack of communication and coordination between young, fresh and innovative minds as future employees and companies as employers.

In order to succeed in the seemingly impossible mission of correctly addressing the challenges the youth in the EU face, Cultural Diplomacy should be seen as the main tool of action. It is nowadays undeniable that Cultural Diplomacy is becoming more prominent and important as a tool in the conduct of international issues. The exchange of languages, cultures, and experiences within our transnational world constitutes a great form of Soft Power which should be seen as powerful mechanism through which to achieve our future objectives. The ICD saw the potential of Young Cultural Diplomacy and created the OYED, an organization where young leaders and senior professionals work side by side to give impetus to already existing but not implemented initiatives and jointly creating new ones.

The OYED Initiative: Bridging the Gap between Graduates and Employers is a project that offers the youth of today possibilities to avoid unemployment upon graduation and seeks to ease the difficulties of finding a suitable job, thus stimulating further professional development. The OYED

is aware that this is not a one-way street and that changes should be positive not only for employees but for employers as well since that is the only way to guarantee a successful working environment.

As a tool of implementation, the OYED proposes the creation of a central database named EQYouth (European Qualified Youth). Through this central database, which will be connected with Ministries of Labor and Education in each of EU member states, access to reliable and verified employers will be facilitated. EQYouth would target entry-level graduates in the EU and would offer all open vacancies posted by the participating firms and organizations, previously verified by the relevant Ministries of the EU member states. To make application procedures quick and transparent, there would be a standardized online form as an initial filter, which would select candidates for the further steps. To be able to have an improved, easier and more effective overview, the database would be divided into different industries and sectors to make the search procedure more convenient for the applicants and the companies as well.

Accordingly, in each sector a council of human resources specialists would filter applications according to the needs of employers, thus providing companies with a skilled labor force with the qualities they desire and necessitate. With the additional intention of presenting our project as a tool to fight against all kinds of discrimination in the EU, each member state should have at least one delegate as a member of the council. As our policies support equality, the system will provide the same oppor-

tunities regardless of nationality, sex, race (ethnic origin), marital status or disability. Moreover, some personal information of the applicants would be hidden from the companies, for example first name (for example: A. Smith) and gender.

To emphasize the importance of networking, the EQYouth will also work as a social network for the applicants where they can share their experiences, allowing for better communication. In addition, there would be also a question and answer forum between companies and applicants. Once the applicant is hired, rules for both employers and employees would exist in order to prevent discrimination.

To ensure the smooth functioning of the EQYouth system it is necessary to operate in a single language. The OYED considers English to be the Lingua Franca, not out of disrespect to other EU languages, but due to the fact that it is the sole transnational language that is used both in the EU and worldwide. It is vital to establish English as the Lingua Franca to further cooperation and development outside the EU, allowing the connection between youth and labor markets within the EU to the BRIC countries and the ACP. As the company could be based in any EU member state, the local language has to be taken into consideration too and therefore the knowledge of the local language can be an additional employer requirement.

The OYED's focus is not limited to youth unemployment. Through ICD channels and Cultural Diplomacy as a tool, the OYED is reviving already existing initiatives on global issues such as the UNODC



Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool for fostering Youth Education and Development”

(September 2013)

Youth Initiative on positive drug awareness and healthy lifestyles in schools and communities, the UNESCO Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education and Civil Engagement, Democratic Participation and Social Innovation and the UN Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education. With their proper implementation a better Europe could be achieved, resulting in long term youth development and a better future for all. However, the OYED will not limit its mode of operation to EU borders, but aims to re-initiate transnational initiatives such as the UNESCO SHS Strategy on African Youth (towards an enabling policy environment for Youth Development and Civic engagement in Africa).

The aim of OYED initiative is to insert a cultural dimension into already existing projects. Cultural Diplomacy should be the main tool for youth involvement in politics and tackling the existence of the so called lost generation. Through channels of Cultural Diplomacy, the youth can contribute fresh and new ideas not only within the EU but on a worldwide scale. With EQYouth, the OYED is trying to transcend the barriers between employers and employees, aimed at the ‘lost generation’, meaning the graduates with academic qualifications yet a lack of professional experience.

With a classification system, EQYouth is granting future employees access to tailored job opportunities, and is providing employers which a qualified labor force, thus lowering unemployment and increasing welfare within the EU. At the OYED, we consider the EU to be a multi-cultural melting pot and as such, the integration

of cultural perspectives in both youth and global issues is vital. Through cultural and educational exchange, a process already started with EU programs like Erasmus, the OYED is trying to intensify and extend these patterns to the global level. Much as small countries are using Cultural Diplomacy as a tool to establish their positions next to leading world powers in conducting their external relations, the youth of today is also using Cultural Diplomacy in a similar way to appeal to big companies, enterprises and organizations as future employers.

There exists a necessity for a common working language within the EQYouth initiative in order to allow for better coordination, not only in the culturally diverse and borderless EU, but also in relations with the rest of the world. Misunderstandings, lack of communication and incorrect translations could be avoided by using one language; respectfully and in coordination with local languages.

The ICD sees Cultural Diplomacy as being committed to intercultural dialogue and Soft Power as tools through which to resolve both local and global issues. The integration of the younger generation into such initiatives is crucial for the success of Cultural Diplomacy and its sustainability in the future. It is for these reasons that the OYED, a culturally mixed coalition of multiple actors, has been established as an operational arm of Cultural Diplomacy.

*Anita Repic
Anja Šumberac
Hanah Bredikova
Veronika Deésy*



© Organization for Youth, Education &
Development 2013

Kurfürstendamm 207-208, D-10719 Berlin, Germany

Tel.: +49 (0) 30 2360 768 0

E-mail: info@culturaldiplomacy.org

Center for Cultural Diplomacy Studies Publications www.ccds-berlin.de