



International E-Learning as an Emerging Cultural Diplomacy Practice

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Abstract

With the rise of new technologies, e-learning programmes are even more attractive for people who want to improve themselves. They are mostly preferred since they bring an end to many limitations such as time, place, and financial barriers. Thanks to this emerging education type, options regarding the countries one wants to get a good education from are also various as it is easier to find out that high-quality education is not limited to 3-4 certain countries.

Cultural diplomacy is one of the main areas countries function to gain more soft power. It is an important part of diplomacy that needs to be studied in detail and planned ahead as it gives not only short term but also long term results. International e-learning is to be included in cultural diplomacy techniques as it is closely related to country image and branding. This paper aims to analyze international e-learning programmes within the framework of cultural diplomacy. After a brief literature review on e-learning programmes and cultural diplomacy, the relationship of these two terms is to be analyzed to be able to present a road map on what should and should not be done to gain soft power via high-quality e-learning education.

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1. Culture and Culture Diplomacy

Culture is the way of life that people in a society share as society. The sum of knowledge, belief, morality, art, law, tradition, customs and habits that human beings gain as a member of society constitutes culture. Societies are based on culture. Society and culture can not be separated. While culture is understood as a privilege of daily intellectuals, it is understood as scientific underground civilization, human field training, aesthetic field arts, fine arts, technological field

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production. Sociology, on the other hand, describes the material and spiritual things that culture has acquired and communicated to each other and later generations in various ways. In other words, culture is the sum of all the material and spiritual items that people have created in social and historical development (Kocacık, 2003, p.86).

Culture is the whole of values such as language, knowledge, beliefs, arts, customs, law, customs and customs, which are transmitted to and are internalized by people in society as a result of man's ability to understand life and the universe through symbols. In this sense, each society has a complex socio-cultural system with its own sociological, technological, political and ideological dimensions. Culture is a form of society's general life. Thus, culture encompasses everything that people in a society have learned and shared (Yildiz, 2005, p.5).

Cultural products are used in communication processes and culture is spread through communication. Young generations gain the necessary knowledge about their culture through communication. This knowledge (culture) is the family, friend environment, etc. As well as through communication means. It can be known how to be treated even in an environment that has never existed before; We learn it through communication tools. In short, without communication, it will not be possible to talk about culture. Many definitions have been made by the local and foreign scholars or thinkers on the concept of culture. In general, a culture is a society that includes elements of language, religion, history, art, economy, life style, which provides unity and cohesion of the society (Yildiz, 2005, p.3).

According to Yıldız (2005, pp.11-12), cultural properties are:

- Culture can be learned and taught.
- Culture is historical and continuous.
- Culture is social.
- Culture is the ideal or idealized rule system.
- Culture is a satisfying and satisfying provider of needs.
- Culture changes.
- Culture is unifying and integrative.

According to Erdoğan and Alemdar (2005, p.23), there are two dimensions to consider about culture. The first is developed by people who have the ability to make cultural conscious choices and question what their experiences are. Secondly, people are the founders of these activities in the sense that they are inherited by the elections and evaluations of the people who lived in the past. Hence, human beings are both a creator and a creator of culture. When the size of the founder of the culture is taken into account, it is observed that there is a proper understanding of social life, but a strong obstacle to changing or changing it is observed.

Culture is only values, judgments, attitudes, etc. is not an intellectual process. Culture has lived and lived; It is about the lived and the living. Culture is shaped by people's own experiences of life. It is the whole of life forms. This experience of life

has been formed by local and direct interrelationships belonging to a certain geographical area. Today, it is intensively involved in the experiences of others who are mediocre, from the outside and from the distance, and in particular the experiences of planned life, determined by the conditions of life of a market dominated by the world. (Erdoğan and Alemdar, 2005, p.8).

Especially after the 1990s, the rapid change and transformation in communication technologies has transformed the whole world into a universal keeper by the words of Marshal McLuhan. On the one hand, while the nation-states are trying to maintain their assets, on the other side, globalization has almost extinguished the borders. Although the limitations in the physical sense still continue, each individual user is becoming a citizen of the world through internet-based communication tools. The collective culture that we exist in is interacted with other cultures in the international arena by virtue of crossing the boundaries in the virtual sense.

In recent years, public diplomacy in general, especially culture and art diplomacy has become increasingly influential in the field of international relations. The most determining criterion of this approach is that of democracy. In addition to democracy, the masses of people are able to use their freedom to express their opinions and thoughts more effectively in foreign policy. Foreign policy should now take into account not only the official authorities of other countries but also the peoples of that country and the public. In this sense, cultural diplomacy is a subject that needs to be focused sensitively.

Cultural diplomacy that we can define as a way of expressing oneself correctly by sharing ideas, thoughts, world view, lifestyle, aesthetic sense, pleasures and flavors; It is the catalyst for social change and transformation as well as the interactions between the societies. Through cultural diplomacy, mutual respect and trust are established between the people through dialogue and dialogue, as well as the adoption of new ideas and methods. The cultural diplomacy which has been carried out since the beginning of the twentieth century has been influential both in the change of Turkey and in the change of the perception of Turkey in the whole world (Purtaş, 2013).

The development of human and cultural relations plays an important role in ensuring regional and international stability. Cultural relations contribute to strengthening ties between neighbors and allies, and are also the first step in overcoming problems. Cultural diplomacy, therefore, is the key to regional and universal peace, while at the same time being the beginning of multilateral cooperation.

In addition to improvements in information, communication, and transportation technologies, the increased availability of e-learning opportunities has increased the importance of cultural and arts diplomacy so that it can not be compared with previous periods.

Countries that have succeeded in using today's technology opportunities extensively use language, literature, music, series and cinema products, and education as tools to achieve their cultural diplomacy goals. What is important in

cultural diplomacy is that all these tools are used consciously in an integrated framework and in the same direction.

2. E-Training and International E-Training

Developments in information and communication technologies over the past two decades have also changed the way people interact, recognize different cultures. This technological evolution has brought significant developments in terms of educational practices and the development of tools. The concept of "learning" is important for individuals and organizations in the era of informatization we live in, with new methods and tools. Technology has taken the drop in the sense of education from facilities that facilitate life. As a result of digital development, well-established educational institutions are seen to organize in virtual institutions in addition to physical structures. In order to provide a more qualified and quality education, the creation of the e-education system is the most expression of education and technology brotherhood.

The spread of new educational technologies such as computer, internet, e-library, e-magazine, smart board, intelligent classroom, multimedia tools as well as new education models such as distance education, e-education and e-school have given a new dimension to learning and teaching strategies. In global age, the school is not a building, and the classroom is not just four walls. The world is a "global school", and every space we find is class. As the sources of information are constantly open in the global education system, there is no need to squeeze training into specific time periods as it used to be (Karaman, 2010).

Today, the internet, which represents the state of the information society as an integral transformative tool, has brought about a transformation that enables rapid access to information. Competition in the access to information has taken place in the information society, which is the inevitable reality of competition between companies, which enables people to have different positions and statues and gains. The most obvious change in the field of teaching is the presentation of millions of independent teaching environments in time and place, in parallel with the developments in communication technologies. In addition to the individuals involved in a particular curriculum, there is a constant demand for education all over the world, under the influence of the philosophy of lifelong learning.

Education has also demonstrated the ability of individuals who want to be adhered to the information society to do this quickly, without adhering to time and space, by means of a training function that removes the time and place by adapting itself to it instead of detaching itself from the enthusiastic speed change of the information society.

With the ever increasing demand for teaching, it has become compulsory for the advanced technology to effectively use the resultant technology that the boundaries are left as a result of the understanding of movement in the field of teaching and the existing teaching methods and methods are insufficient.

While technological applications for this purpose use information sharing more quickly and economically, a certain quality of learning can be achieved with the possibilities provided by the virtual environment. This superiority of electronic

teaching (e-learning) environments in economic sense; The technology used, the number of students attended, the design of instructional materials, and interaction. A lesson prepared on this site covers the learning needs of millions of people.

Computer and communication technologies, business, engineering and science are among the most frequently used areas of distance education in the world based on internets. While the University of Phoenix is only offering online training, Stanford University has a serious student potential to train on the internet (TBS, 2002).

E-learning is student-centered, students are able to work on the subject as much as they can, time is unlimited, everyone is learning at their own pace, being able to connect with teachers and students on the other side of the world when they are not understood, They are isolated, have the disadvantages of being able to feel alone and their motivations to fall (Duran, Önal and Kurtuluş, 2006).

The "Globalized E-Learning Cultural Challenges", edited by Andrea Edmundson in 2007, includes the work of many researchers working on this topic. Work focuses on cultural impact on e-Learning. Nazife Şen Ersoy, who works on the content of the book, has made the relevant parts of the book. The following point is remarkable in these evaluations (Şen Ersoy, 2016);

- In the section dealing with the relationship between cultural values systems in education, it is explained how multicultural online education can contribute to the development of social capital by increasing cultural awareness and social competence. These; 1) cultural value systems and educational relevance, 2) the impact of cultural values on assessment systems, 3) the use of technology to support multicultural interaction, and 4) online education in promoting social capital development.

It is at the forefront of issues that need to be focused sensitively on cultural values systems and educational relations. Each culture determines its own educational policy over time and this takes a very long time. The emergence of technological developments in the way education can be done over the internet has attracted attention to the use of e-education as an alternative to traditional education. Especially, the widespread use of international e-education forms of this education suggests that these educational institutions have a platform that they can / can make their own promotions all over the world with the contents they offer at the same time.

International education offers distance learning opportunities for students to take advantage of the educational opportunities of the universities in different countries, and even the possibility of receiving graduate or doctoral degrees from these universities. For example, a student living in Turkey can get a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree from a university in the United States. Global communication offers students and educators living in different countries of the world the opportunity to communicate effectively with each other. For example, Open University in the UK (Malaysia, China, Japan, Turkey, etc.) in different countries can communicate with each other and their teachers by using communication technologies (İşman, 2011, p.4) Thus different cultures and values are shared, Every student can have an opinion about other societies. Moreover, these exchanges are not superficial and lacking in depth, but they are sincerely and

constantly involved in the establishment of certain educational processes. Because cultural diplomacy is to express itself to different societies through the soft power of purpose, international education becomes one of the important elements in fulfilling this aim.

While focusing on the relationship between globalization and education, it is important to understand the link between education and information and communication technologies. Today's technological developments have made it necessary to restructure new curricula in the context of pedagogy, literacy types and goals, whilst the transition from oral education to written education necessitates radical changes in the education system (Kellner, 2002, p.108).

Another point of view is this; Globalization is the biggest challenge that pushes the boundaries of the university institution. This challenge is at the forefront of three important issues. First; Universities are national characters. They are institutions that transcend national interests and patriotic thoughts, and function in the formation and dissemination of national cultures. This situation is incompatible with the globalization process. The third is the weakening of the nation-states where universities are economically and politically dependent (Scott, 1997).

3. International Distance Education as a Cultural Diplomacy Practice

Distance Learning: e-Learning Courses can be used as a cultural diplomacy practice. This practice can provide wide variety of settings and contexts of cultures around the world. Distance learning can be used as an increasingly useful tool for culture diplomacy; building cooperation both regionally and globally, and explores avenues through which this new form of diplomacy can be used as a driving force to foster good governance, the ability to understand and embrace the different values and needs of diverse cultures and societies becomes ever more important. The distance learning programs provides to be aware of the differences between cultures in their strategic decision-making process and understand the way of thinking. Students who participate in distance education programs from different cultures take lessons from different cultures within the scope of their education. Instructors describe their subjects in a virtual environment during the day and class hours reserved for them. However, the most important point for effective and efficient education activities in the virtual environment is to communicate with the students individually. It is necessary to follow the lesson materials they have read, to listen to their comments, to control individual and group assignments individually, and to return immediately. It is necessary for the students to follow and direct their personal e-mails, blogs and discussion boards to ensure that the students do not get lost and feel alienated. Students can communicate more closely with their teachers and friends, especially in their group work.

The ways in which students from different cultures make homework, how to deal with topics, and how to evaluate perspectives differ. Especially in group projects they have a better idea about each other. While discussing the issues and undertaking common tasks, they may have knowledge of each other's different approaches, perceptions, traditions, or cultural lives. In this sense, countries have the opportunity to express themselves through international education programs

that bring together students from many different cultures. Misperceptions from another country or society from the media or from different media can get out of hand. As such programs are developed as student-oriented and aim to constantly interact with the students, a more open and open environment is created. Moreover, this process is easier because the new generation wants to know others and be more open to newness.

International education is a natural, spontaneous and open way for countries to be able to express their internal dynamics in their social, political and cultural dimension. This can be understood more effectively, especially given the negative criticism of cultural diplomacy. The founding document, which is at the level of international organization for UNESCO post-war cultural diplomacy, said: "We have reached consensus on the use and development of means of communication among the peoples from different countries to mutual understanding, verification and better understanding of each other's lives. The goal was to build the defense of peace in the human mind, and it was assumed that the cult would be useful solely in the realization of it. (Raj Isar, 2012, p.121) The cultural diplomacy is associated with creativity, diversity development, participation and freedom. International distance education programs provide all these elements. Particularly in the educational programs in social sciences, seminars are being held in certain periods, except for the lessons that are held in virtual environment, where all country teachers and students come together and present their presentations within the scope of certain topics. These seminars and conferences are held at each of the participating countries, especially in the long distance education programs within the EU projects. In this way, other countries have the opportunity to know more about the host country. They will be able to identify the lifestyles, value systems, traditions and beliefs of the country of origin.

Culture is a complex whole that characterizes a society or a social group with all its distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional elements. Not only does it not include art and literature, it also carries life forms, basic rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Therefore, students will be required to interact with fellow students and professors. There are also the following types of applications in international education programs in general: Video lectures which students can watch at their convenience, Reading materials relevant to the course's different modules; Online mentoring, discussion forums, and assessments; The pedagogical tool is designed to help participants learn the lessons through a self-paced study routine supported by multimedia, required and optional readings, discussion forums, assessment quizzes, and other information. Adapted specifically to full-time professionals, participants will learn by absorbing (reading), doing (exercises), interacting (online forum) and reflecting (relating to personal experiences). Obviously, the purpose of distance education programs is to provide teacher - student interaction at any moment. Every kind of technological environment is used for this purpose. In these communication environments, students have the opportunity to express themselves and find out each other by finding a comfortable and open discussion area with each other.

The report issued in November 2016, namely Cultural Diplomacy As Discipline And Practice: Concepts, Training, and Skills Final Report, presents the results of an

analysis of the present state of cultural diplomacy training and competencies and makes recommendations for improving cultural diplomacy training in the future. Report prepared under the Partnership Agreement between the University of Siena, Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Sciences, and the European Union National Institutes for Culture / EUNIC Global under the framework of Crossroads for Culture: Enhancing EU Member states transnational and international cooperation, Working Package 1 – Culture Policy Dialogue and Research.

It is based on the opinions of academics and practitioners currently working in the field, discipline and practical rapport on cultural diplomacy. Approaches to cultural diplomacy: Three main ways to understand cultural diplomacy were identified: the “public diplomacy approach,” according to which the government has a monopoly on the practice and goals of cultural diplomacy; the “strategic communications approach,” which does not necessarily entail the involvement of the government but implies its role in fostering a specific strategic interest; and the “cultural relations approach,” which looks at cultural diplomacy as a practice based on dialogue and collaboration, detached from a soft power. (Cultural diplomacy report, 2016, p.2)

Cultural diplomacy be based on dialogue, collaboration, and co-production, whose main purpose is not influence decision makers but rather to change attitudes and behaviors. Mutual dialogue, cooperation and reproduction functions take place in the international education program. In this context, international distance education programs can be thought more as an application for 'strategic communication' and cultural relations approach rather than cultural diplomacy approaches. In order to use international education as an appropriate practice for cultural diplomacy, a suitable strategy should be determined and a quality process should be followed. Here too, the tools used by the cultural diplomacy should be utilized. In other words, when the training process is planned, a formation should be made to serve these tools. What are the means of cultural diplomacy?

- Tools of cultural diplomacy: While subscribing to the idea that the cultural relations approach offers the most appropriate analytic framework, a majority of respondents still said that the core of modern cultural diplomacy is nation branding; among the tools available, strategic communication, public relations, and nation branding took precedence over cultural management and cultural relations. Cultural diplomacy is perceived as a pillar of public diplomacy, or at least a parallel activity – thus the most appropriate institutional framework to implement and coordinate cultural diplomacy activities is a country's ministry of foreign affairs, in cooperation with its ministry of culture. (Ibid, p.3) In this sense, the trainers and students in the educational programs are cultural diplomats. The international distance education program should have the skills and competencies of a cultural diplomat: A cultural diplomat is expected to possess crosscultural sensitivity, openness to diversity, an ability to listen, and intellectual curiosity.

According to the report, practitioners, see cultural diplomacy as subject to the effects of national foreign policy, and academics, who tend to perceive it as an

independent flow shaped by structural forces beyond the control of any single actor. Because of this difference in perspective, the two groups tend to prioritize different variables and factors: academics tend to emphasize structural factors and long-term processes, such as mutual understanding and crosscultural fertilization, while practitioners emphasize the role of actors. Decentralization in cultural diplomacy policy-making is recommended. Cultural diplomacy is most effective when it is shaped in the field, changing with the context. To achieve this, cultural diplomacy must internalize diversity and flexibility.

Other features according to the Final Report, November 2016 are: (Ibid, pp.5-6)

- **Authenticity.** For cultural diplomacy to be credible, it has to reflect an authentic artistic culture; otherwise there is a risk that branding efforts will be too superficial to be effective.
- **Partnership.** On a related note, an increasingly important element of cultural diplomacy is partnership building. The most effective and dynamic approach to cultural diplomacy is one in which cultural partnerships are built as a strategic asset for the future, as it is often more productive to focus on issues of mutual concern (e.g. migration, integration, radicalization, security, climate change, etc.). There is a need to work on credit sharing, the partner goalsetting process, the ability to identify common projects, and the ability to work with people from other cultures. Partnership and team-building skills should be – according to our respondents – highly valued.
- **Cosmopolitanism.** Cultural cooperation is strictly linked to the idea of cosmopolitan constructivism, as suggested by one of the sources interviewed. This theoretical approach –first developed by Cesar Villanueva Rivas (2010) – can be defined as the recognition that governments must improve their cultural and public diplomacy capacities to cooperate through a common understanding of their own cultures, diversities, and differences. This study also shows the need for the more systematic development of theoretical and empirical research in the field of cultural diplomacy. (Ibid, p.6) According to these features we can see the distance education programs include and serve the same characteristics of cultural diplomacy.

The following recommendations emerge from the report:

- **Working group on training and development:** Cultural diplomacy is a field in which more “pracademics” activities are needed. To achieve this, it would be useful to set up a working group on training and development that brings together stakeholders, practitioners, and academics to design a comparative training framework for both formal academic training and the in-house training of practitioners. (ibid, p 6) Accordingly, while the distance education programs are being prepared, a study group for the same kind of learning and development should be established. In some distance education programs, practitioners, academics and company owners come together to find solutions for original problems in their working groups or in discussion groups.

- Cultural Forum: To create opportunities to foster dialogue between stakeholders, practitioners, and academics, a cultural relations forum should be planned as a platform to launch new policy ideas and reflect upon past experiences. (Ibid, p.6) In this sense, international distance education programs are also the process of forming the cultural forum areas mentioned.
- Summer school: To foster growing attention and sensitivity to cultural diplomacy in academic curricula, a summer school should be launched to allow students, practitioners, and academics to interact in an open and informal way. (Ibid, p.6) The international distance education program is another educational area that offers the opportunities provided by the summer school.

“The “strategic communications” approach is currently a firmly established view of cultural diplomacy. According to this approach, cultural diplomacy is basically international and strategic communication. In this view, cultural diplomacy is closely related to nation branding practices and to national image cultivation meant to achieve policy goals. This approach shares the idea that state actors are important. However, it sees states as only one of the players in the field, as a consequence of the growing democratization of global communications”. (Ibid, p.11) In this context, international distance education programs can be structured to develop policy on specific issues. Thus, a cultural diplomacy appropriate to the strategic communication approach is applied.

The communication approach to culture diplomacy is sensitive to the role of social media; As a cultural diplomat. In that case, since international distance education practices are based on one-to-one interaction, both students and trainers participating in this training actually act as cultural diplomats.

We see cultural relations as another approach to cultural diplomacy. "According to the cultural relations "conception, nation branding is an outdated practice. This approach laments the fact that many scholars still think about cultural diplomacy in terms of soft power, nation branding, and public relations. This is a classic soft power framework that reflects an institutional will to influence and power. (Ibid, pp.11-12) "This approach stresses that in designing effective cultural diplomacy policies, culture should come first and diplomacy second. In the words of Milton C. Cummings, "Cultural diplomacy is the exchange of arts, ideas, information, and other aspects of culture in order to foster a mutual understanding. (Ibid, p.12) As can be understood from this, international distance education is the sharing of knowledge, thoughts and other cultural aspects. Also the purpose here is to create mutual understanding. This goal must also be fulfilled in order for training to be efficient and effective. In this context, international distance education programs should be developed especially in developing countries. It should be acted upon with the awareness that such a form of education is a cultural diplomacy instrument and should determine what it contains and how it should be done in accordance with the quality standards.

4. A sample project

Erasmus + supported project "e-profman" is an online training program that follows an applied curriculum on "Innovative Management, Leadership and Strategic Communication". (www.e-profman.eu). Outside of us, Macedonia's "School of Journalism and Public Relations" and Slovenia's "Faculty of Business and Applied Studies" are partners in the program. The program is a three-year program.

4.1. Background of the project

The virtual aspects of alternate and complementary higher education learning environments respond to the needs of the knowledge-based economy for continuous acquisition of new competences and skills to maintain high quality of productivity and efficiency. Teacher-directed learning is shifting to student-directed lifelong learning, whereby learning is undertaken anytime and anywhere. Lifelong learning encompasses professional learners who need to improve existing qualifications for current developments in their respective fields and those who wish to find new interests and add to their portfolio of skills. The dominant "problem-solved" approach in self-directed learning enables learners to articulate their own challenges, design their problem-solving strategies within a particular time frame, explore and synthesize resources for solving problems and provide solutions through discussion of the implications. The most suitable vehicle for acquiring knowledge and skills throughout life is online learning. Online learning includes Internet and computer-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration, and provides learners with a flexible and personalized way to learn and use a broad range of resources.

In their efforts to enhance the quality of online learning, higher education institutions (HEIs), especially from different countries, establish partnerships by creating virtual campuses. This way, online learning facilitates the international dimension of educational programs, and promotes transnational cooperation and sharing of expertise and human resources. Curricula jointly developed on virtual campuses are based on online and/or blended learning that offer interactive, multilingual and cost-efficient education by utilizing cutting-edge information-communication technologies (ICT). ICT supported learning environments provide virtual mobility that includes cross-border cooperation among learners from different backgrounds, and various cultures learning and working together. Virtual mobility also offers possibilities for learning schemes in foreign countries, international experience and intercultural understanding for lifelong learners, particularly for those who have significant professional, social or economic constraints.

4.2. Description of the Project

The project established a virtual campus of three HEIs from Macedonia, Slovenia and Turkey that will develop and implement a joint online program for professional development in innovative management, leadership and strategic communication. Within the one-year programme, young working practitioners and bachelor students with no previous professional work experience will master

leadership, business and communication skills for management positions in a competitive transnational business environment.

The European Communication Monitor 2014 survey (www.communicationmonitor.eu) reports that one of the most significant challenges for communication management within the next 3 years will be the merging of communication and business strategies in order to become a valuable part of the decision-making process and strategic management of an organization. Interviewed professionals stated that top priorities for strategic communication will be coping with the digital evolution and the social web, building and maintaining trust, and dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility. Mobile communication will see the strongest rise in the near future. Online communication, face-to-face communication and media relations addressing online media will be close behind.

One of the overriding findings from the ECM 2014 survey is that communication professionals in Europe enjoy a stimulating job. Interviewees said that the 3 most important factors for career development and obtaining their current work position are further education on or off the job and networking among peers and colleagues. For young employees, the most significant factor was having work experience or an internship prior to employment, as well as proper mentoring. On the other hand, only 1/3 of the interviewees see valuable opportunities in their personal career.

The need to enable adults to life-long learning is emphasized in the renewed 2011 European agenda for adult learning that is directly linked to priorities established in the Europe 2020 strategy. Additionally, according to the Adult Education Survey coordinated by the EUROSTAT, 61.3% of the adults who have completed tertiary education participate in lifelong learning. Employees are much more likely to participate in education and training than the unemployed or the economically inactive. Furthermore, people with occupations regarded as 'higher skills occupations' are much more likely to participate in education and training. Recent national policies in Macedonia, Slovenia and Turkey follow this tendency and include lifelong learning as one of the chief priorities. Moreover, policy documents and employment strategies, particularly those focused on young people, maintain that the absence of higher education often leads to unemployment issues.

"Opening up Education" (2013) stimulates HEIs to more open learning environments and innovative ways of teaching and learning through new technologies and digital content. The initiative proposes developing new business and educational models of curriculum development and OER in different languages.

This process is entirely applicable to professions like Management and Communication, which reflect the importance of globalization, entrepreneurship, and ICT in today's business environment. Young people should have a competitive edge in a rapidly changing transnational market. This encouraged the project's partner HEIs to offer a joint programme that would promote progressive pedagogical approaches, virtual mobility, intercultural cooperation and internationally recognized competences. The project will provide dissemination of

teaching and learning innovations in three European countries; open and broad access to OER; and transnational networking through mutual recognition of knowledge and skills, fully in line with the Bologna credit-transfer system.

4.3. The project objectives are following

1. Equipping the Programme`s participants with appropriate skills and abilities in achieving competitive advantage and effective leadership behavior in a transnational corporate environment;
2. Providing interactive and flexible opportunities for students that exceed geographical, social and financial barriers by utilizing virtual classrooms and cutting-edge ICTs;
3. Providing newfound solutions and strategies through project-based and real-client courses and mentoring that students will apply in their workplaces and during organized internship in business and public sector;
4. Developing free online resources and learning materials relevant to the specific areas;
5. Acquiring international and intercultural experience via virtual mobility and establishing interaction and networking among highly-selective peers from other European countries;
6. Sharing of know-how and expertise between lecturers in developing online learning methods and courses;
7. Building connections between HEIs and business communities in the partners countries.

The Programme is designed to be completed in one year (January 2017 - January 2018) and it offers 8 online courses:

- From a Sparkle to Flame: The Power of Creation
- Linking Business, Strategies and Communications
- How to Make Things Work: Achieving Results
- Think Like a Leader, Act Like a Leader: Leadership Reasoning
- Creative Business Instincts
- Future Trends in Corporate and Marketing Communication
- Intercultural Communication
- Using Research @ the Workplace

and 3 blended learning activities:

- Students Camp
- Job Shadowing
- Final Seminar

Students will follow 5 online courses that will find most relevant to their professional interests. Also they will attend Students Camp and Final Seminar that support and follow up on the online classes.

The curriculum is practically-oriented and visibly tied to real-world experiences. The online courses incorporate service-learning opportunities that will allow students to engage in client-focused projects. Mentoring and the problem-based approach will provide students with new skills that can be implemented in their professional work. The teaching team is consisted of 18 lecturers with a long-established experience in lecturing. They are also researchers, analysts, consultants and most importantly, practitioners.

Online learning pedagogy and technology are utilized in the delivery of the curriculum that includes Internet and computer-based learning, virtual classroom and digital collaboration. It will provide participants from Macedonia, Slovenia and Turkey, particularly for those who are not mobile due to professional, social or economic constraints, to learn and work together from their homes or workplaces, using a broad range of online resources.

5. Conclusion

According to Cummings, cultural diplomacy points to other elements of ideas, knowledge, artistry and culture among countries and their peoples, and feeds mutual understanding. According to Cull, according to the new public diplomacy policy, alliances to be established with non-state actors are thought to be attractive in order for governments to reach a. International distance education programs include mutual learning, resource pooling, technical assistance, shared reflection, discussion, research and experience. In this sense, the cultural diploma is not only a collaboration between the elites under the control of the governments but also an element that can be considered in the context of different social practices. The diploma of culture, of course, can not come alone over the negative national image, but nevertheless the nations have a very important role in explaining and promoting themselves. At this point, international distance education programs can also be seen as a means of cultural diplomacy in the context of education and information exchange.

When we look at international student mobility in higher education, we see that the countries that are mostly selected by international students are the developed countries, and the countries where international students come from are the developing countries. The most important reason for this is that they want to close the lack of high-quality work force, which is the biggest minus of developing countries. However, emerging countries have recently begun to attract international students as a result of the breakthrough they have made in this sector. Because, the contribution of international students to a country in terms of economic, cultural, scientific and country prestige is important as long as it can not be denied. China and Malaysia moved early between these countries and found themselves in the forefront. International distance education programs are also seen to be more prevalent in developed countries.

During the globalization period, universities open out and enter the competition to receive a large share from the tertiary education market. Especially in the USA, UK,

Australia and partly Canada, the branded universities and the international education sector are the antagonists of the countries that hold the largest share. Europe, such as the Netherlands, France and Germany, who see this, are also developing strategies to gain share from this market (Ibid, p.15). Given the trends in recent years, it appears that the education sector has become an industry that is expanding and providing substantial resources both in terms of economic return and knowledge production and high quality work force. It is at a time when universities and higher education institutions have the potential to offer significant opportunities in terms of international competitiveness and innovation, and are trying to stay away from the global education industry race to gain share. These trends should not be overlooked in the new structures of higher education, science and technology (Ibid, p.15).

Education plays an important role in the economic development of countries because of the externalities that it has created from the social point of view, as well as the special benefits it gives to the individuals. As the level of education of the individual increases, qualified labor stress is overcome and scientific and technological innovations gain momentum. As a result of the increased efficiency of the labor, the national income level is rapidly increasing, and the income generated is becoming more fair. The rate of return on education investments is higher than the rate of return on physical capital investments, as education in increasingly educated societies is more democratic, facilitates economic and political stability, and reduces crime rates. Educational expenditures accelerate economic development due to the increased return on investment spending in the long run. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the quality and quantity of distance education programs that are more cost-effective in developing countries.

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