

## **THE PEDAGOGICAL USE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN EDUCATING REFUGEE STUDENTS**

Vasiliki Chatziefthymiou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Faculty of Philosophy, School of Philosophy and Education,  
University Campus, 54124 Thessaloniki, Greece

### **Abstract**

*The paper in question presents the role of cultural heritage as an educational tool for teaching refugee students. The study is a bibliographical research and presents the pedagogical approaches of cultural heritage in education and the links with schools in Greece and Europe. The aim is to enhance the understanding of all students for the important role of cultural heritage in interpreting the diversity of the "other" through a holistic approach. A second issue under question is whether public schools in European countries can, or should, foster dialogue between groups in multi-religious societies through different pedagogical approaches. The diversity of our students is the starting point for creating common cultural values in order to promote a peaceful common life and this diversity posed a challenge for this research.*

**Key words:** *Cultural heritage, refugee students, education, pedagogical approach*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Historical knowledge is considered a "source for the present" and includes information on literature, painting, religion, music and other sectors. Thus, learning about history is considered an experience, a meeting with the culture and knowledge can be achieved through an appropriate teaching approach, which should explore: a. whether the historical knowledge is related to the student's present, b. whether this is linked to the pupil's future, c. what is its specific structure, d. if it can be an example of a matter of universal interest, and e. through which facts and situations of daily life students can experientially approach the content of teaching (Klafki, 2000: 85-107).

Cultural heritage manifests itself in many shapes and forms (tangible, intangible, natural and digital) and has a universal value for us, as individuals, communities and societies. As our heritage has a significant role to play in shaping the future of Europe, it is important to preserve it and to pass it on to the next generations (UNESCO, 2011). Most cultural events and festivals are historically related to religion and, often, to religious conflict. Cultural heritage art forms, whether architectural or musical, movable or intangible traverse national borders. A secular understanding of Cultural heritage can contribute to the forging of the European social identity as well as the strengthening of inter-cultural tolerance and it can encourage us to understand our own place in history (Future for Religious Heritage, 2014).

According to General Secretariat of the Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, from an early age, both culture and education promote the development of creative skills and critical thinking (General Secretariat of the Council. (2018). Digitalisation shapes new models of access to culture, personal reinterpretation and self-expression, arousing keen interest among young people and engaging them as active audiences.

As the European Commission reported, migrants can have positive economic results in European economies once they are successfully integrated in education firstly. Indeed, "Education and training are among the most powerful tools for integration" (European Commission, 2016). Especially, childhood education and schools need to play a stronger role for the integration of migrants in European societies, the comprehension of multiculturalism, the implantation of the fundamental European values and the prevention of radicalisation.

The report of Work Plan (General Secretariat of the Council, 2018) also refers that, there is a growing need to have a more strategic approach related to young people's participation in culture, in order to foster their creativity and develop skills that are important for their future employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.

The diverse cultural environment in Greece and other countries in Europe, paints a positive and self-evident picture of the peaceful coexistence of people with different cultural identities. Cultural heritage, related to important stages of human history, has ecumenical value and constitutes part of humanity's common heritage. The use of cultural heritage as an educational tool can help to deal with societal issues in order to bring people living in Europe closer together and promote multiculturalism dialogue.

The pedagogical value of heritage is of the utmost importance and can instigate, maintain and enhance the process of dialogue necessary for the process of enculturation, which involves and implies cultural diversity (Carlo-Stella, 2003:107-112). Participation in culture promotes active citizenship, openness, curiosity and critical thinking and thereby leads to a strengthening of democracy (General Secretariat of the Council, 2018).

## **2. THE ROLE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN EDUCATION OF REFUGEE STUDENTS**

Bolten refers that culture, society and personality are used to develop a framework for intercultural and multicultural communication. Knowledge of that helps in the process that is necessary to achieve collaborations, as well as on cultural diversification, or in other words, "to think globally while being able to become focused" (Bolten, 1993:339-348). Moreover, the culture theorist, Susan Pearce said that the objects of cultural material act as symbols in a communication system (Pearce, Susan, 2002).

In the context of the development of cultural awareness and historical knowledge of refugee pupils, each school unit should combine a multitude of pedagogical and didactic activities, which will give a more democratic role to the school unit, thus giving students the opportunity to express themselves and coexist. The cultivation of intercultural consciousness is essentially the cultivation of an "interactive relationship, a process of recognition and co-operation between people of different ethnic/immigrant groups" (Georgogiannis, 1999).

Several recent researches reinforce the view that learning is going on continuously, comes from many sources and occurs in many ways (Anderson, 1999; European Commission, 2015:81-101; Medved, 1998; Luke, Dierking, Cohen, Wadman, 2002). Based on the above considerations, through the knowledge of civilization, students can discover their personal identity as a unique expression of culture heritage. Young people and their beliefs are influenced by the religious and cultural tradition of their family and environment, and therefore their perceptions are under negotiation (Jackson, R. (2004:64). Thus, education is characterized as a factor of cultural enhancement.

Based on the German Socio-Economic Panel and the joint migration survey, German sociologists sought to find out to what extent children with migrant background, children with refugee background and children without migrant background make use of extracurricular programmes inside and outside of school (Spieß, Westermaier, Marcus, 2016). The results showed that refugee children participate in extracurricular school activities just as frequently as or even more frequently than other children. However, at both the primary and secondary school age, children of refugees participate less often in activities outside of school (Spieß, Westermaier, Marcus, 2016). These findings show that the importance of schools as an integration tool goes beyond the regular school curriculum.

As the education systems become increasingly complex due to globalisation, decentralisation and digitalisation, cultural heritage in relation to extracurricular activities can become a tool for better connectivity between all relevant education and community stakeholders within and between different levels of the system in order to achieve better results, more defined educational goals and greater efficiency and quality. It is very important when school has inclusive practices in place for welcoming new students, for assisting them in becoming part of the school and for ensuring that their personal

background is affirmed in the environment and teachers can encourage the use of cultural heritage as an educational tool (European Parliament, 2015).

### **3. PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

As a tool in education, cultural heritage is concerned as an essential component in preserving cultural heritage. With the increasing diversity in the field of what we call formal education, it is no longer clear what ought to be included and excluded under formal education (Rogers, Hansman, 2004: 17-28). In such a multiculturalism environment, young people are facing problems concerning the choice of identity of partner due to cultural or religious differences.

In a school context, a number of non-formal learning activities in collaboration with community stakeholders, like simulation debates, excursions, lectures, film screenings, photography exhibitions, volunteering, etc. can support the building of identity and cultural identification. This framework may be outside the traditional curricula, offering unique opportunities to realize the spiritual link between science and other fields, such as art. The role of the teacher is to help young people develop skills to understand these new data but also to allow and to promote empathy and solidarity between transnational students and the European Union. Furthermore, such extracurricular activities with cultural dimension help to develop new methods of engaging within the changing educational landscape and diverse student population, as well as take into account the full scope of learning, which is particularly important for refugee children who may have more difficulties opening up themselves and demonstrating their potential within formal school structures (European Commission, 2015).

School-community partnership aiming to improve learning environment for refugee students can prepare to build a culture of welcome for all people seeking sanctuary. Moreover, partnerships can provide general pedagogical tools for teachers and other professionals or educational materials accessible in several languages online and intercultural projects for the whole school. The aim is to enhance the understanding of students from all cultural backgrounds for the important role these students play in interpreting the diversity of the "other" through a holistic approach. Research, promotion and study of personal experiences, needs and desires of the students themselves during partnerships help establish transnational identities.

The knowledge of the cultural background of refugee students (together with all students) is a very important factor for their smoother integration into school and their harmonious coexistence (Gropas, & Triandafyllidou, 2007). It is also important factor for cultivation of "empathy", the ability to see through the eyes of another person according to Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2006: 227-232). It is also a feature of the interpersonal intelligence and leads students to understand the position of other people through their own perspective, to feel solidarity and avoid prejudice and stereotypes (Essinger, 1991).

Furthermore the aim of using the cultural heritage as a pedagogical tool in education is to: a) to promote intercultural dialogue, tolerance and respect for diversity b) to cultivate European consciousness and identity through the active participation of pupils on an online platform through partnerships or projects or online cultural resources and the empowerment of European values c) the acquaintance with the religious, cultural and geographical diversity of Europe and the contact of students with its arts and culture, so that Europe can take a more meaningful approach, especially in the difficult times we are experiencing with fanaticism, nationalism and homogenization d) to learn about the past of the people of Europe and to connect the past with, associate the students' knowledge and skills (according to the educational objectives of the curriculum of the subjects of Geography, Geology, History etc) with the students' general interests, both in and outside school e) at the same time, there is an attempt is to exploit the pre-existing knowledge of children.

During projects related with cultural heritage of host country students develop personal interests concerning religious heritage and identity issues, linking what they process to their personal experiences, understanding the historical, economic and social context of other countries and linking cultural-religious findings to the present day. They also critically read about the monuments,

understand the cultural and humanitarian aspect of religions and they detect and justify religious, theological and political motives behind the inspiration of art creators. Through these activities, students not only develop their different skills, but also of other students' cultural and religious background and heritage.

Mentoring by older students coming from native or different cultural background is also an often-used tool to promote social inclusion of vulnerable children, help children learn to set goals, plan their future or simply connect with people outside their usual environment. Mentoring can have different forms based on the concept of school arrangements, therefore, mentors also might be different individuals, including successful entrepreneurs, older volunteer or peer having more experience. In a project at school or a successful mentoring project includes at least once every two weeks, the mentors had an appointment with 'their' student and the student's learning needs are guiding the mentoring trajectory.

In order to utilize the cultural heritage of Greece and Europe for the inclusion of refugee and immigrant students, some remarkable websites which present cultural resources for school education are the following:

- The project 'Youth4Greece' aims to promote Greece through the view of children and adolescents, allowing them to create purely original videos in relation to their landmarks - historical, cultural, natural beauty - local events and local recipes, in this way inviting other teenagers and all the visitors of the platform to get to know our country.
- The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUoA) and the E-learning Program of its Life Long Education Center address the international public through the universal language of culture. Perceived as an inherent part of their mission, they have set out an extrovert effort to introduce fascinating facets of Greece to the world. And this, by deploying the distinguishable and longstanding features of its cultural heritage, coupled with its contemporary identity shaped in the fields of Research and Education.
- UNESCO is the only United Nations organization that has a system of National Committees in 195 Member States and 9 Associate Members. National Committees of UNESCO are national bodies which are set up by member states to disseminate the Agency's programs and priorities, as well as the interconnection of governmental and non-governmental organizations with its work.
- Europeana is a multimedia library, museum and archive into one digital website combined with Web 2.0 features. It offers direct access to digitised books, audio and film material, photos, paintings, maps, manuscripts, newspapers and archival documents that are Europe's cultural heritage. Visitors to site can search and explore different collections in Europe's cultural institutions in their own language in virtual form, without having to visit multiple sites or countries. Europeana was launched by the European Commission and the EU's culture ministers in Brussels on 20 November 2008 (IP/08/1747).

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The educational system is an establishment that supports the processes of pupils' social and cultural integration. This is why it plays an important role in creating the conditions for admission and recognition of pluralism and diversity. The integration of extracurricular activities promotes the integration of foreign and refugee pupils or pupils with little knowledge of Europe.

At the same time, extracurricular activities give the possibility to students from different backgrounds to express their culture and identities. In a transnational cultural project, the students' experiences function as a cornerstone in the learning process. The use of the educational activities develops skills and attitudes to students that would be very difficult to come to the surface with the classical way of teaching while it activates the students and increases the understanding and the life span of knowledge.

By creating intercultural connections through cultural projects, teachers provide new impulses, and the projects encourage and develop good relationship between the majority of the local society and minority groups. In this way the school functions as an intermediate, as a "workshop of values", in which the students become researchers, learn to respect diversity, religious and cultural heritage and embrace the importance of its protection and emergence. The cultural heritage invites students and teachers to reflect on current problems, deal with them as active citizens and at the same time it creates opportunities for social interaction between young people by fostering dialogue among students from different countries in order to develop a mutual understanding. In this way, students play an active role in the learning process. The activities improve the communication of the team, mitigate conflicts and involve both educators and learners, helping them to overcome temporal/local constraints and raise the school's/local community's awareness (Stanton, Foreman & Wilson, 1996).

In order to acquire democratic values it is crucial to get acquainted with alternative values, mentalities and other differentiated attitudes. For this reason, we need projects and partnerships to head for intercultural connections and identify actions and develop policy recommendations to respond collaboratively to the needs of refugee students in education context. Through student active contributions, democratic values can come to life, paving the way for the overcoming of oldest practices.

European effort to strengthen the capacity of all the implied parts, authorities, NGOs, administration, educators, families guarantee that these interventions are cost-effective and sustainable, exchanging best practices and learning from the most successful experiences that have been carried out in the different countries at European level.

The effort must combine the potential of enhancing policies and strategies at public level with a long term perspective (Macro Level - decisional and political process) and at the same time it has to be ensured that these policies and strategies receive a concrete and effective follow up in everyday practices of those working on early schools (Micro level – educational initiatives and projects). Young people and students should be encouraged to participate in transnational or cultural projects, to partner with youth-led initiatives and facilitate youth inclusion in national and local consultation processes. Following a rights-based approach entails considering students as potential agents of change and inclusion of students from all cultural backgrounds from both host and sending countries.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, D. (1999). *Understanding the impact of post-visit activities on students' knowledge construction of electricity and magnetism as a result of a visit to an interactive science centre*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology. Brisbane, Australia.
- Bolten, J. (1993). "Life-World Games: the theoretical foundation of training courses in intercultural communication." *European Journal of Education*, 28(3), pp. 339-348.
- Carlo-Stella, Cr. (2003). Religious heritage as a meeting point for dialogue. The Cathedral Workshops Experience. In H. Stovel, N. Stanley-Price, R. Killick (Ed.), *Conservation of Living Religious Heritage, Papers from the ICCROM 2003 Forum on Living Religious Heritage: conserving the sacred* (pp. 107-112). Rome: *International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property* (ICCROM).
- Ellenbogen, K. M. (2002). Museums in family life: An ethnographic case study. In *Learning conversations in museums*, G. Leinhardt, K. Crowley, and K. Knutson, eds., 81–101. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Essinger, H. (1991). «Interkulturelle Erziehung in multiethnischen Gesellschaften», in H. Marburger (HRSg). *Schule in der multikulturellen Gesellschaft Ziele, Aufgaben und Wege interkulturellen Erziehung*, Frankfurt a. M., 3-18.

- European Commission. (2015). Communication from Commission to the European Parliament, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, A European agenda for the collaborative economy COM(2016). Brussels, 2.6.2016
- European Commission. (2015). *Youth work and non-formal learning in Europe's education landscape*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015.
- European Parliament. (2015). Report of European Parliament: Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe (2014/2149(INI), Committee on Culture and Education, retrieved from [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2015-0207\\_EN.html?redirect](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2015-0207_EN.html?redirect) on 3/5/2019.
- Europeana. Available on: [www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu) . Accessed on 14/05/2019.
- Future for Religious Heritage (FRH). (2014). *Secular Europe Backs Religious Heritage. Survey report with key results*. Available on: <https://www.frh-europe.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2014-06-Secular-Europe-backs-religious-heritage-report.pdf>, retrieved on 12/3/2019.
- Gardner, H. (2006). The science of multiple intelligences theory: a response to Lynn Waterhouse, *Educational Psychologist*, 41, 227-232. Retrieved March 6, 2018 from EBSCO Host Database.
- General Secretariat of the Council. (2018). *Draft Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022*. Council of Europe.
- Georgogiannis, P. (1999). *Θέματα Διαπολιτισμικής εκπαίδευσης*. [Issues of Intercultural Education]. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Gropas, R & Triandafyllidou, A. (2007). *Greek Education Policy and the challenge of migration: An intercultural view of assimilation*, Eliamep.
- Jackson, R. (2004). *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Klafki, Wolfgang. (2000). The Significance of Classical Theories of Bildung for a Contemporary Concept of Allgemeinbildung “*Teaching as a Reflective Practice: The German Didaktik Tradition*”, eds. Ian Westbury, Stefan Hopmann & Kurt Riquarts, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 85-107.
- Luke, J., Dierking L., Cohen Jones, M., and Wadman, M. (2002). *The Children's Museum of Indianapolis Family Learning Initiative: Phase II report. Technical report*. Annapolis, MD: Institute for Learning Innovation.
- Medved, M. I. (1998). *Remembering exhibits at museums of art, science and sport. Unpublished doctoral thesis*, University of Toronto.
- Pearce, Susan M. (2002). *Μουσεία, αντικείμενα και συλλογές*, [Museums, objects and collections]. Translation: Lia Guioka. Thessaloniki: Vaniasis.
- Rogers, E. Hansman, C. (2004). Social and cultural issues in urban communities. Volume 2004, Issue 101, *Special Issue: Adult Education in an Urban Context*, Spring 2004, Pages 17-28.
- Ryan, Richard M., Deci, Edward, L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, Vol 55(1), Jan 2000, 68-78.
- Spieß K., Westermaier F., and Marcus J. (2016). Children and adolescents with refugee background less likely to participate in voluntary educational programs—with exception of extracurricular school activities, DIW Economic Bulletin No 34+35.
- Stanton, D., Wilson, P. N., & Foreman, N. P. (1996). Using virtual reality environments to aid spatial awareness in disabled children. In P. M. Sharkey (Ed.). *First European Conference On Disability, Virtual Reality and Associated Technologies* (pp. 93-101). Reading: UK: University of Reading.

UNESCO. (2011). *2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 22-29 November 2011*. Bali, Indonesia: International Convention Centre (BICC).

UNESCO. Available on: <https://unesco-hellas.org/politismos/ellinika-mnimeia/>. Accessed on 06/20/2019.

Yougoculture. Available on: <https://www.yougoculture.com/>. Accessed on 14/05/2019.

Youth4Greece. Available on: <http://www.youth4greece.gr/>. Accessed on 06/20/2019.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.