

## CULTURAL HERITAGE TEACHING IN UNIVERSITIES

Suzana Carmen CISMAS

Assoc. Prof. PhD., University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, Romania

*Abstract: Cultural heritage is fundamental for the specific sense of own identity in individuals and communities, constituting a non-renewable common thesaurus all members of society need to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance via mobilising people and institutions in the process, including the political, legal and administrative entities. Multiple contemporary changes in the socioeconomic and cultural contexts alter the perception, experience and transmission of cultural heritage, with new technologies and innovative attitudes calling for the public to become active participants, either in person or online. Valuing cultural heritage generates cohesion by putting people and democratic values at the centre of a cross-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and enlarged approach. Thus history, languages, and art become clear benefits of studying cultural heritage, enhancing all individuals' capacity of reflection, critical thinking and lifelong learning.*

*Keywords: cultural heritage, lifelong learning, identity, cross-disciplinary, critical thinking*

All humans share the cultural heritage as an intrinsic part of their own identity, which follows all individuals and communities wherever they may migrate. With or without objects, culture is taken to new places in the travellers' hearts and minds. This treasure can come in many forms: tangible, intangible, and natural. Tangible heritage comprises artifacts as manuscripts, books, coins, buildings, monuments, clothing, art-work, machines, historic towns, archaeological sites, shipwrecks, underwater ruins. Intangible heritage includes oral traditions and language, sports and games, rituals, performing arts, musical/audiovisual work, social practice, traditional craftsmanship. Natural heritage is seen in cultural&geological landscapes with adjacent flora/fauna.

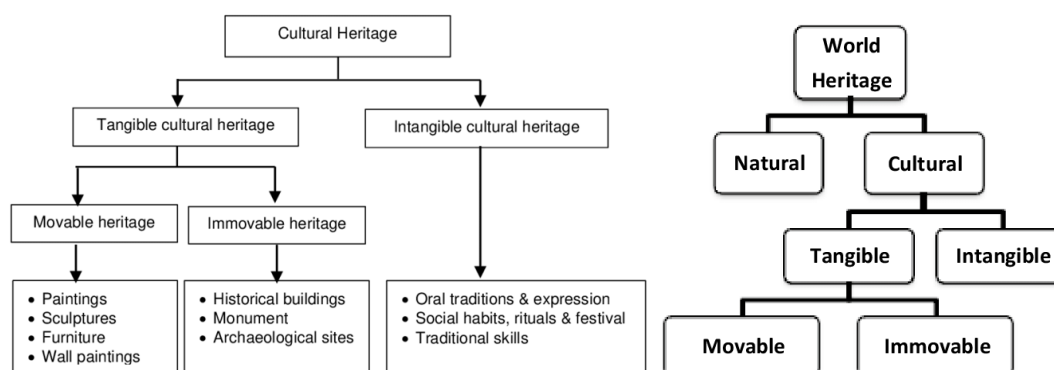


Fig 1. Cultural heritage components, cf. <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/cultural-heritage>

To these, digital resources are added, in form of design and animation, or digitalised for preservation and study purposes. Protecting cultural heritage grants chances for future generations to dynamically and responsibly re-shape their identities,

as citizens actively engaged with own environments. By comparatively reflecting on cultures, students aptly function in challenging societies that give much information with contradictory sources&messages, making identity hard to develop/define. This is why Cultural Awareness&Expression, one of the 8 Competences in Lifelong Learning has been formulated, so as to unite rather than divide people, and guide to commonly shared goals. Cultural heritage is a rich and diverse mosaic of creative expressions, an inheritance from previous generations, and a legacy for those to come, hence teaching it at academic levels scaffolds students' European Citizenship competence, cultivating their diversity and intercultural approaches in life and careers. Cultural Heritage is a topic closely linked with all school subjects (history, geography, science, art, foreign languages), as they all communicate with the common roots of human civilisation.

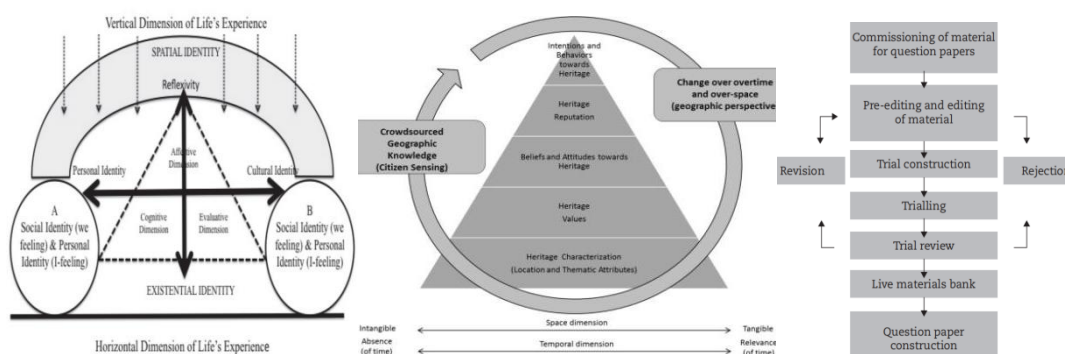


Fig 2. The process of transposing cultural heritage components into textbooks cf. [www.unesco.org/services/documentation/archives/](http://www.unesco.org/services/documentation/archives/)

Creatively debating cultural heritage issues is flexible and adaptable to special requests, depending on the subject taught, or on the participants' level, irrespective of public or private educational institutions. A strategic balance should be kept between formal/non-formal education, indoor/outdoor activities, and international mobility that triggers intercultural learning developed by (study) trips and facilitating interactions with locals. Connecting students to local professors&students enhances cooperation, innovation and networking in projects, in an educational environment that prompt the participants to act at a local scale, but to learn and share at a global scale. Education, cultural heritage, training, and literacy are intertwined, and universities become open cultural spaces where students can be actors of their education using culture&heritage products, services, or activities. It strengthens key competencies and multidisciplinary teaching methods in local environments. It also gives equal access to cultural heritage.

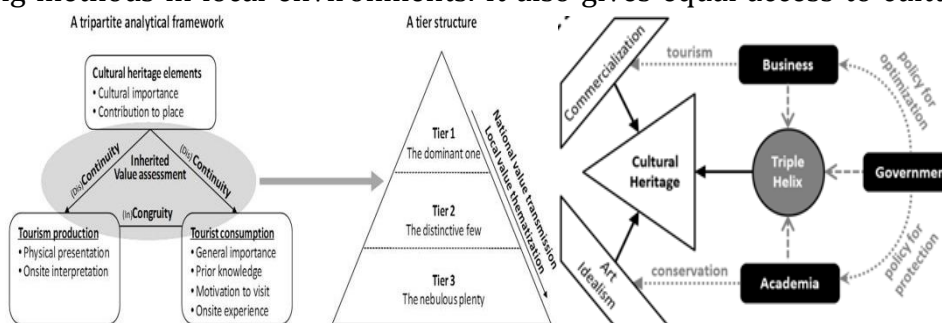


Fig 3. Cultural heritage preservation, a holistic view on touristic site components, cf. [www.unesco.org/culture/ich](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich)

Learning is a cultural act shaped by education and the surrounding cultural-heritage context. Integrative learning-centred teaching links all items in the treasure of cognitive, social and moral teachings. By stimulating art expression when studying such aspects, and by action-centred learning, students are motivated to acquire and display creative interactions to use in their future careers when actively involved in communities. Thus they capitalise on culture as a network of accumulated knowledge, customs, values, beliefs and behaviour patterns able to facilitate sustainable business development in that particular area. Nothing is culture-free, but people are more than reflections of culture, they are a qualitative sum of their interactions within a common framework of thoughts that enriches their lifestyle, opinions or emotions.

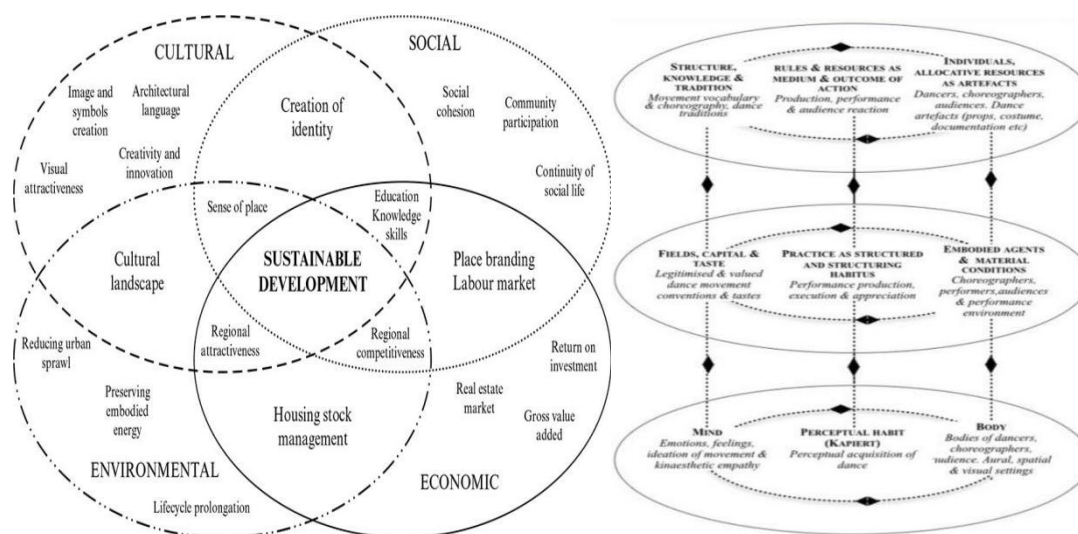


Fig 4. Modelling living cultural heritage in context, cf. Lo Iacono and Brown, p. 101

When implementing cultural heritage for sustainable business development in the local area, students communicate with it both diachronically and synchronically, using problem solving competencies, creative thinking, and vertical transfer skills. In this context, Heritage Education is a process of raising awareness in order to connect individuals with the environment using heritage as a resource for citizenship training and for identity building from both self & collective perspectives. As educational field, it focuses on acquiring knowledge, valuing, preserving and disseminating culture, to foster identity&social belonging. It unfolds as a pedagogical process where students learn about such resources as a key part of the citizenship curriculum: they thus understand how the past heritage has developed & transformed alongside history, and how the present brings up the past. This subject disseminates heritage in both formal and informal educational contexts. Establishing links with culture features of a given society, via objects, traditions, languages, architecture, art, is capitalised in sustainable business enhancing the national/regional specificity and attracting consumers. Still, it is not only about resources, but also about learning, and about life experiences to be provided to the audiences/customers, relating past to present by experiential learning, study visits, and simulations. Hence cultural heritage in action means:

- implementing values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions alongside with learning how they operate and get transformed.
- understanding cultural identity and cultural community, how they are shaped and how they impact social interactions.
- developing skills in communication, collaboration, presentation, problem solving, negotiation, alongside with critical and creative thinking competences.☐
- using creative ideas and practical resources for successful and dynamic integration of cultural heritage in education.
- improving foreign language fluency.
- promoting intercultural awareness.☐
- sharing best practice in integrating cultural heritage from different organizations in order to help each each participant become more effective in work.
- providing insights into different education systems.

Professors must be prepared to acknowledge, respect and understand students with substantially different cultural histories and diverse backgrounds: place of origin, traditions they hold dear, preferences in music, art, food, clothing, national patterns and customs of communities. In point of diversity, students differ inside & outside of their cultural groups (even if they were born and raised within a single cultural norm): individual and family spiritual beliefs, gender, physical/mental abilities and political positions. Many students immigrate from all over the world and they need support to overcome language barriers or fit in socially. Professors must find ways to not only acknowledge but also celebrate their students' cultural heritages. Teaching others about traditions, explaining the history&geography of countries/regions, and sharing cultural experiences are some ways to let students know they are valued and welcome. In addition to educators teaching and respecting students from other cultures, it is key for learners to develop a sense of respect and acceptance of each other. The traditions and heritage students bring with them contribute to the unique tone and atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers must help all students explore all cultures represented, and recognize how cultural differences make the world more interesting, not more divided.

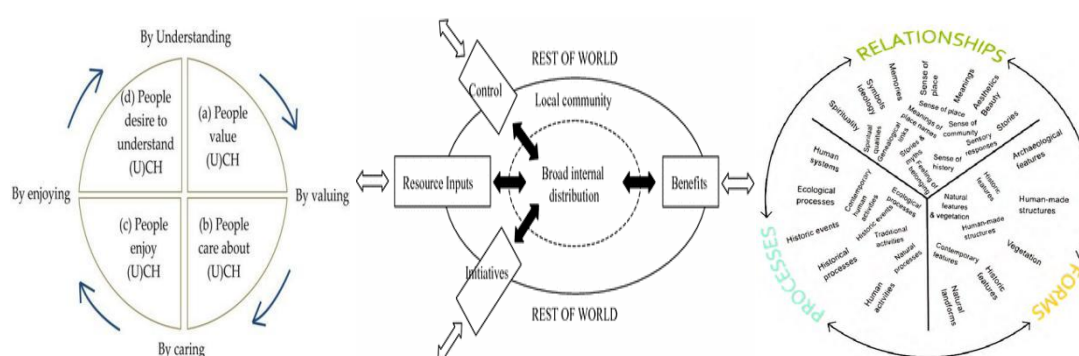


Fig 5. Forms, processes, relationships in multicultural and diverse academic environments, cf. [www.unesdoc.unesco.org/images/](http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org/images/)

Students may come from the same cultural background but with diverse opinions, positions and perspectives on certain topics and it is vital that they share

viewpoints even if their cultures seem to clash. In point of diversity, the basic didactic goals are to promote understanding and respect. In order to show appreciation for diversity, professors must acknowledge how their own cultural norms prompt their behavior and define their ideas. They should examine own biases & stereotypes, engage in cultural conversations, talk openly and commit to educating themselves so as to become more inclusive. Listening is often key in developing cultural competency. When people are aware of their shared identity, they feel more connected with others, which can lead to greater levels of self-esteem, and psychological well-being. Heritage education can be taught at any stage in life, but it is more effective when it starts as early as possible. UNESCO supports this idea, suggesting incorporation of heritage education into other academic courses, as it has been found that teaching cultural heritage alongside with related subjects makes it interesting, engaging, and effective.

Forms of heritage education include:

- Storytelling, done through oral history methods
- Participation in traditions and customs
- Learning native heritage languages
- Learning national history
- Studying art forms (visual arts, dance, music, crafts)
- Learning historical figures and events
- Reading books about one's heritage or culture
- Constructing architecture based on traditions and customs
- Visiting historical landmarks
- Having community celebrations, festivals, and parades
- Participating in heritage sports
- Witnessing elders performing arts and telling folktales.

Heritage education is best done when it encourages students to think critically while learning about their own culture. Thus, students develop a sense of identity they take pride in, triggering positive self-esteem & self-identification. Moreover, it encourages higher levels of multiculturalism among diverse groups of people who do not usually come in contact with one another. However, it should be noted that there is significant difference between heritage education and assimilation into another culture. The act of teaching cultural heritage is fundamental for preserving, understanding, and sharing parts of community identity. It encourages mutual respect among people of different backgrounds, while also fostering a more tolerant world.

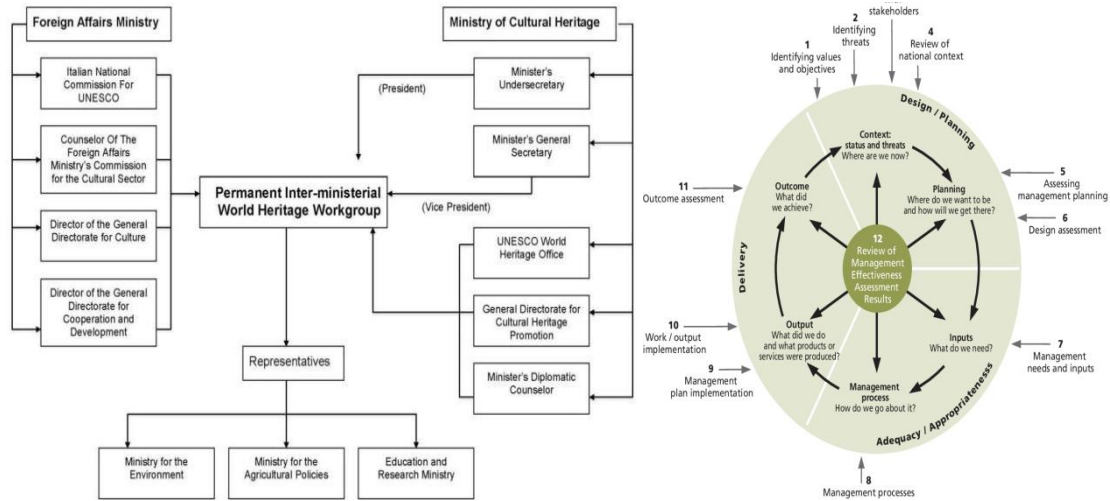


Fig 6. UNESCO bodies involved in cultural heritage management, cf. [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

Cultural heritage acquisition is facilitated by language learning in multilingual environments, by distance and blended learning approaches or projects. In the process, it addresses issues of migrant & minority learners, trying to contribute to their social insertion in an age of increased people mobility. There is a clear necessity to adopt an integrated approach to migrant inclusion, combining linguistic and academic support, parental & community involvement, and intercultural education. Here are the subtasks:

- creating a supportive environment for personalised and individualised online tuition;
- combining foreign language learning with a EU cultural context;
- offering didactic support with up-to-date resources, tools and reference materials.

Online (distance, blended, self-directed) education is an option which, with the opportunities it creates for individualisation & personalisation of the didactic process, is well suited to the needs of learners coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and/or learners in need of additional tuition.

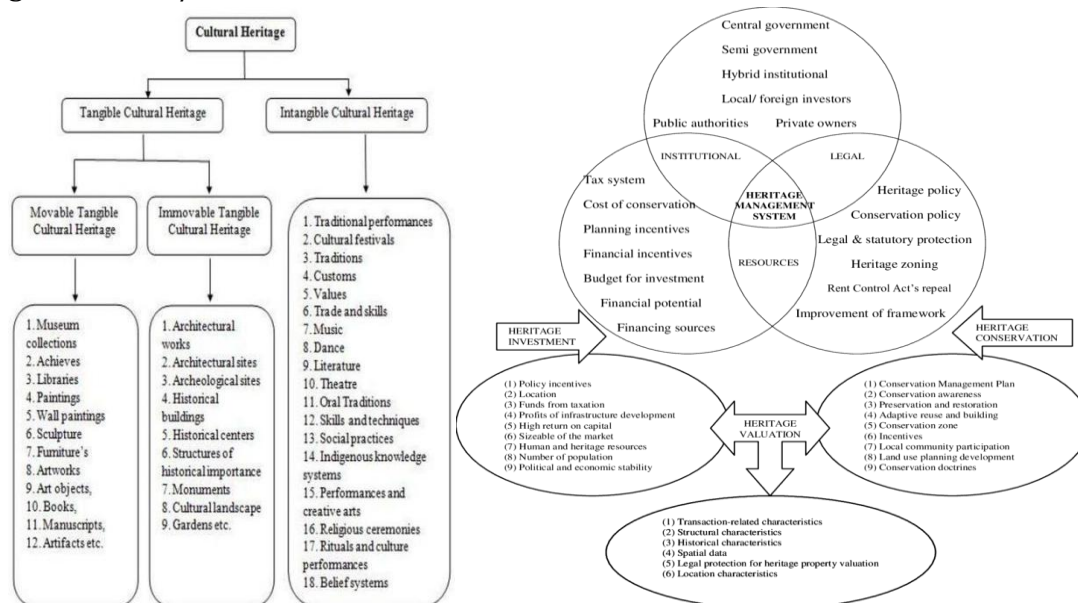


Fig 7. Types of cultural heritage with the corresponding management system, cf. [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

Cultural heritage didactics uses active learning methodologies stemming from group dynamics, combining self-reflection and observation of the other in context, so as to create a common action. It uses patrimonial objects as procedure of acquisition of competences and relevant learning. It can be applied in a specific discipline, or in any subject areas through the use of inheritances, memories, identity, know-how and techniques in local context. This methodology is applied in groups. Each time, it is necessary that each learner should find its relevance, get the opportunity to express own viewpoint, in order to develop group action. All members practise listening and participation to develop self-awareness&awareness of others (identity&citizenship) in the context of cultural diversity; to apply social and cognitive skills (reading, writing, aesthetics) in solving problems; to enhance community partnerships. Universities will strive for a new quality of learning and teaching, corresponding to a new culture in step with the current society which 'is saturated with information, overflowed with science and technology, open to the world, a society determined more by the diversity of individual situations than the volume of large societal groups, a society yearning for permanently renewing competences, in brief, a society one can also call a society of education or training' (Lesourne, 1993, p. 177). The education system is bound to gradually transform in accordance with the values of contemporary culture. School in general should not forget that its 'future lies in its capacity to transfer knowledge effectively, to navigate it reliably, to develop a capacity for cognition accurately, and to form meaning intelligently.' (Lesourne, 1993, p. 202).

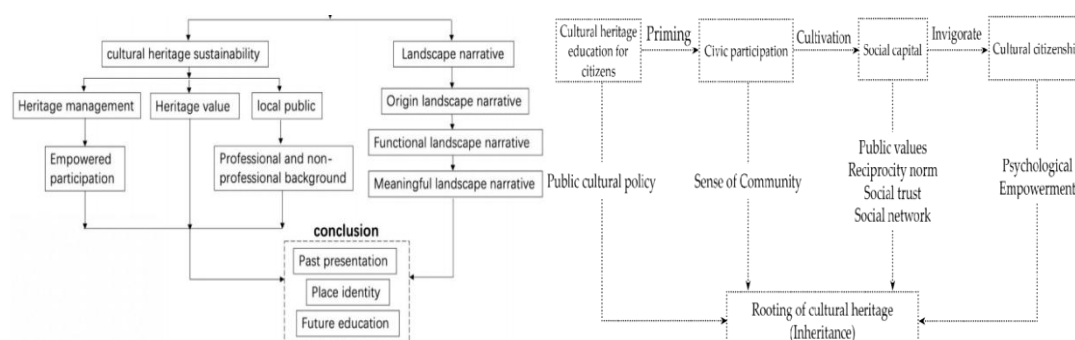


Fig 8. Cultural heritage sustainability, cf. [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

Contemporary culture heritage education should consider the impact of mass media, which, by numerical and pictorial language, simultaneously act as complement and competition to traditions, expanding knowledge & providing behavioural models. However, information offered by such media focuses on individual events. It is unsystematic knowledge that emphasises the extraordinary, and it is given without historical, geographical, cultural & ethnic characteristics. Hence professors must help students to position, decode and interpret such data. The media widely open doors to culture, but do not provide a platform for young people to build their own personality.

In line with the new developmental psychology of learning as active process, teachers and students should cooperate in shaping identities. The clash of schools with the cultural heritage forms the basis for developing knowledge and imagination, as well

as life experience. But the new media extensively used by youth may take the form of a 'second hand' reality, governed by the media, which does not enable 'hands on' life experience (the simulation is better than reality). So 'what are the possibilities for an active relation with such *artificial cultural reality*' (Terhart, 2001, p. 181). Not gaining actual, authentic experience in school can diminish the quality of learning that aspires to connect cognitive, social & moral learning. The academic cultural-heritage context is thus perceived as an important resource for lively&dynamic upbringing activities, and education is seen as a process of internalising inherited historical values.

Such a perspective treats students not only as consumers of cultural values, but also as creators of culture and its future values; it approaches the university not only as a place where one is prepared for cultural living, but also as a source of civilisation and culture, as well as a promoter of a cultural and civilised way of life. It is, therefore, necessary to change the character of learning & teaching and provide a framework for experiences that surpass intellectual learning and encourage a more comprehensive developmental process in students. The integrative approach to learning advocates the students' learning and acting in life by changing & enhancing it, fitting into its trends, not merely as its part, but as its creator and cultivator.

By teaching cultural heritage the teacher learns too; permanent and transparent communication between the professor & students is enabled during the entire process. Such teamwork is a key starting point for the successful professional development of teachers, establishing an active connection with reality; problems are successfully solved, efficient communication is acquired, manners, language and thoughts are cultivated, and listening followed by adequate verbal expression are mastered. It is a 'learn to live by living' approach that promotes understanding heritage values in their environment, triggering learning through dialogue and modelling. Didactic behaviour serves as role model for students' decent&cooperant cultural behaviour, incorporating self-organisation and self-responsibility.

Teaching cultural heritage is consistent with the works of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, which contributed to experiential research and constructivist learning, thus focusing on active and participatory learning: 'We can define it as an approach to learning which uses local economic circumstances, specific history, culture, tradition and other relevant elements related to a certain community with an aim to create a more efficient connection between students, culture and the members of the local community' (Cohen & Milne 2007, p. 24). Hence learning takes place through overall interaction, not only with the professor, but with everyone involved in activity. Under certain circumstances, the process of cooperation can become equally important to the construction of a certain product. Thus social teaching is taken seriously: small groups and partnerships in activities are necessary social frameworks in action learning. This type of teaching integrates further educational concepts such as discovery learning (through research and construction by creating and verifying hypotheses), principles of exemplarity (reducing the content, to see the parts as reflections of the whole), empirical teaching (experience is pursued, up to the point of explicit understanding of the principle: outside of school, to have direct experience). Finally, such teaching

attempts to be engaged in current social relationships, projects and problems, and to initiate useful and practical change, in non-conflicting and constructive ways. In this way, students' work becomes public, which encourages their growth and motivation.

Cultural heritage deserves attention and close observation in order to remain visible and useful to all new generations. Contemplation of connections between the academia and the historical-cultural heritage is relevant from many perspectives: it illustrates the effects of cultural traditions on upbringing and education; it points to the need for the preservation and renewal of cultural traditions; it helps understanding civilisations and their place in the world; it points to the desirable core of common universal values that should be nurtured through upbringing and learning; and it emphasises student-centred development, with learners as promoters of authentic life, humanistic and cultural values.

This approach enforces cognition that supports deep understanding of previous events, in order to better cope with the present, and make better choices for solidarity in the future.

Teaching cultural heritage capitalises on ethnicity and conveys the spirit of the people who created such values, stimulating the acquisition of inter- & intra- cultural understanding. The artistic side intrinsic to heritage education is not just entertainment but a multi-cultural & transcultural approach, initiating cross-cultural communication. It instills openness towards those who are different from each other. By putting people in touch with our own and other people's emotions, culture/heritage mapping teaches empathy and mutual values acknowledgement. Making Culture and Heritage mapping part of the curriculum would be beneficial because students would learn to understand, protect and appreciate the past treasures. Besides the education system, other cultural resource centres such as museums, historical sites, documentation centres, research institutions, holy sites, pilgrimages and trekking should be used to give a proximity to and respect for the living heritage and the emblematic regions in focus.

The world cultural heritage is continuously under threat from natural disasters; in recent years, numerous regions have suffered the increasing effects of climate change. However, cultural and natural heritage are also threatened by human activity when certain society members become irreverent towards heritage and consequently stop safeguarding it, or worse, display a negligent attitude toward heritage that can lead to acts of vandalism and destruction. Such a scenario poses special challenges to the education sector, which is ultimately seen as a source for positive change and development in society.

## References

- Andrés, G., Checa, D., *Experiences of knowledge transfer on heritage using games, story-telling, and new technologies*, J. Comput. Cult. Herit. 2021,19, 1–26
- Brian, Howards, (eds.) *Heritage and Identity*, Hampshire, UK, Ashgate Publishing, 2008
- Cismaș, S.C., *Modalități de portretizare a protagonistului rural*, Analele Universității Aurel Vlaicu Arad, Fascicula Teologie, Științe Umaniste, Didactică, 2002, pp. 89-95

- Cismaș, S.C, *Rebreanu e Verga: paragone nuovo e prospettive meno trattate sul mondo rurale* Universitatea de Nord Baia Mare Facultatea de Litere Buletin Stiintific Limbi Moderne Fascicula Limbi Străine seria A vol.XIV 2000 pp.129-141
- Cismaș, S.C, *Viziunea monografică asupra satului in romanele realiste*, Analele Universității Aurel Vlaicu, Fascicula Teologie, Științe Umaniste, Didactică, Arad 2002, p 83-89
- Cismaș, S.C, *Changes & Challenges Posed to Engineering Education by Migrant Work Force*, Recent Advances in Engineering Education Mathematics & Computers in Science and Engineering, 2009, pp. 241-245
- Cismaș, S.C., *Destinul operei traduse*, Conferința Internațională, Timisoara, Comunicare Instituțională și Traductologie, Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara, Editura Politehnica Timișoara, 2001, pp.154-162 [http://www.cls.upt.ro/files/conferinte/sectiuni\\_2001.pdf](http://www.cls.upt.ro/files/conferinte/sectiuni_2001.pdf)
- Cismaș, S.C., *Modalități de integrare a spațiului lingvistic românesc in spațiul european*, Anul European al Limbilor, Conferința Abordări Interculturale în Teoria și Practica Limbilor, Ploiesti 2001, publicat în 2002, pp. 145-151
- Cismaș, S.C., *Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, escritor de significado universal*, UTCB, Simpozion de Utilaje pentru Construcții, 2001, Comunicări, vol. 3, Editura Impuls pp.139-142
- Cismaș, S.C, *Rural World Leaders as Depicted in World Literature*, LDMD 4 International Scientific Conference, 2016, section Literature, vol. 4, eds. Boldea, Sigmirean, Multi-cultural Representations: Literature & Discourse as Forms of Dialogue Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureș, 2016 pp. 95-104, <http://www.upm.ro/ldmd/LDMD-04/Lit/Lit%2004%2010.pdf>
- Cismaș, S.C, *The impact of culture on mondialisation*, CISL2001 Suceava, Limbaje si Comunicare VI, Part I, eds Ardeleanu, Moldoveanu, Ed Univ Suceava 2003, pp. 101-111
- Copeland, T, *Heritage education: citizenship from ground up*, *Arqueol.* 2009, 15, 9–20
- Cuenca-López, J., Estepa-Giménez, J., *Heritage, education, identity and citizenship, Teachers and textbooks in compulsory education*, *Rev. de Educ.* 2017, 375, 136–159
- Dejene, W., Bishaw, A., Dagne, A., *Pre-service teachers' approaches to learning and their teaching approach preferences*, *Cogent. Educ.* 2018, 5, 1–15
- Fontal, O, Ibáñez, A, *Educación y patrimonio. Visiones Caleidoscópicas*, Oviedo, Trea, 2015
- Gómez, J., Felices, M., Cózar, R., *Estrategias metodológicas y uso de recursos digitales para la enseñanza de la historia*, *Aula Abierta*, 2020, 49, 65–74
- Gómez, J, Rodríguez Medina, J, *Evaluación de programa de intervención en educación histórica in Nuevos Horizontes Educativos* eds García, Reche Madrid Dykinson 2019 1648-1661
- Guijarro, S, *Cultural Memory&Group Identity*, *Theology Bulletin* vol37 27, 2007,90-100
- Guillermo, M, Cárdenas, A, Hernández-Pina, F, *Enfoques de enseñanza y de aprendizaje. perspectivas teóricas promisorias*, *Cienc. Educ.* 2018, 24, 993–1012
- Halas, E, *Time&Memory: Cultural Perspective*, *TRAMES*, 2010, 14(64/59), 4, 307-322
- König, J, Ligtvoeta, R, Klemenza, S, *Effects of opportunities to learn in preparation on future teachers' general pedagogical knowledge*, *Stud. Educ. Eval.* 2017, 53, 122–133
- Kortabitarte, A, Gillate, I, Ibáñez-Etxeberria, A, *Las aplicaciones móviles como recursos de apoyo en el aula*. *ENSAYOS. Rev. Facul. de Educ. de Albacete* 2018, 33, 65–79
- Martínez, M., *Análisis comparativo de la imagen del patrimonio en la legislación dentro de la educación obligatoria*, in *Patrimonio, identidad y ciudadanía*, Molina, Escribano, Díaz, (eds.) Editorial Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, 2016, 186–199
- Miralles, P., *Investigaciones sobre evaluación*, in *Didáctica, problemas y métodos*, Lima, Pernas (eds), México, El Dragón Rojo, 2015, 99–129
- Monteagudo, J., Rodríguez, A., *Los estudiantes sobre la enseñanza de la historia con TIC y recursos digitales*. *Rev. Electrón. Interuniv. Form. Profr.* 2020, 23, 67–79
- Rodari, G., *Grammatica della fantasia*, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino, 2001
- Shweder, R., *Thinking through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1991
- Torsi, S., Ardito, C., *An interactive narrative to improve cultural heritage experience*. *J. Comput. Cult. Herit.* 2020, 22, 1–14

Van Doorselaere, J., *Connecting sustainable development and heritage education, an analysis of the curriculum reform*, Sustainability 2021, 13:1857