



Development of Policies for the Socialization of Cultural Heritage through University Education- Best Practices of the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

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Abstract

The State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT) is among the first academic institutions in Bulgaria to create conditions for interdisciplinary research and training in the field of Cultural Heritage.

The main goal of this paper is to present important aspects of the University's educational policy for the development of learning models for the socialization of cultural heritage, especially in regards to the Balkan and Black Sea region. The report focuses on two priority areas: first, to present interdisciplinary approaches for combining theoretical and empirical training: so-called Summer University (e.g. Bulgarian-Turkish Summer University "Strandja Mountain : transmission of civilizations East – West") and annual students Summer Practices; second, to increase scientific and institutional capacity and international and inter-university cooperation and collaboration.

An important focus has been placed on SULSIT's learning models, which achieve the cycle of interaction between education, research, cultural and natural environment, archaeological sites, museums, information environment, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, international cooperation and exchange.

1. Introduction

This paper is part of the research project "Policies for Cultural Heritage Management - Communication and Socialization through Education", implemented by the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT), funded by the Scientific Research Fund with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Hallmarks of the 21st C. are the globalization, information society and the increasing development of Information and Communication Technologies. Culture and cultural heritage are increasingly seen as a powerful tool for communication and a factor for developing spiritual integration and preservation of cultural diversity. A leading role in the dynamically developing policies in the field of cultural heritage has UNESCO.

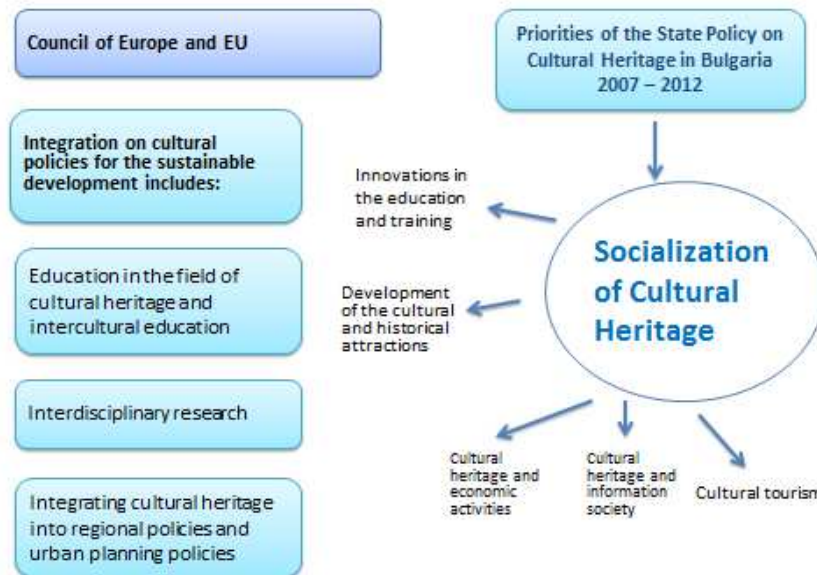
The major mechanisms of UNESCO policies and their impact are focused on the following:

- Creating an international strategic, methodology and legislative framework [1]. Expansion of the concept of cultural heritage, its thematic range and social functions;
- Realization and promotion of global projects and initiatives;
- Systems of organization and management of cultural and educational policies are built upon communication links and partnership between central and local authorities, cultural and educational institutions, civil associations and the private sector – with the respective shared responsibilities, rights and duties.
- Educational integration is a significant priority in UNESCO policies. It is directed towards stimulating communication links between research activity, theoretical and practical forms of instruction, consistent building of scientific and information infrastructure and stimulating the integration between different spheres of activity in the field of cultural heritage, cultural tourism and cultural industries [2].

Since 2004, cultural heritage has been in the focus of EU policy and lifted as a priority in the process of developing European integration.



Fig.1. The figure shows a comparative image of the most important priorities for sustained development of the Council of Europe and the EU and the State Policy of Bulgaria in the period 2007 – 2012.



In European and worldwide perspective there are two contemporary approaches that can be outlined in the way cultural heritage is present in the university BA and MA programs.

The first approach is connected with the holistic concept of heritage. It was adopted by ICOMOS in 1993 and suggests a wholesome presentation of the wide range of types and categories of cultural heritage. Another fundamental aspect concerns the issues and methods related to the protection and preservation. This approach aims at achieving common informing and expanding theoretical knowledge of cultural heritage, as well as awareness of the diverse range of modern technical devices for its identification, classification, conservation and restoration. One of the less developed aspects of this approach has been the presentation of cultural heritage capacity to serve as an economic resource and the specific mechanisms and means of its utilization for the development of cultural industries and cultural tourism to increase employment and improving trade conditions.

-The second aspect is the multidisciplinary one. It comprises three basic aspects.

Providing opportunities for the cultural heritage to be linked to economic disciplines offering knowledge, competences and skills for strategic planning, administrative management, marketing and general management.

-At the same time this approach enables the necessary balance between theoretical and practical forms of instruction. This suggests the advent of new forms of instruction such as international summer universities and practical work, establishing institutes for scientific research, organization and management of cultural heritage, creating learning materials in electronic format and therefore the expansion of inter-university and institutional cooperation, mobility of tutors and students.

-In the third place, conditions are created for the widening the scope of instruction process and coming out of the traditional academic framework concerning students, MAs and PhD candidates.

The application of these new educational approaches suggests flexible political mechanisms, based on the principle of decentralized partnership with the participation of municipalities and local cultural institutions.

2. What is the current situation in Bulgaria?

The cultural and educational sectors in Bulgaria have undergone major changes in the decade between 2001-2011 as they are in dynamic development currently [3]. Concerning the national cultural and educational policy after Bulgaria's accession to the EU, i.e. since 2007, the organization and



management of cultural processes has more and more been linked to the financial mechanisms of the EU in the face of Structural Funds, Regional and Operative programs.

Cultural heritage has been outlined as a priority in the National Strategy for Regional Development, District and municipal Strategies for development, the National Strategy for Tourism Development [4]. In July 2011 the National Strategy for Development of Scientific Research till 2020 was adopted. It aims to justify the need for the development of modern scientific infrastructure as a connecting link between scientific research, the process of teaching and instruction and the transfer of knowledge and practical skills to the economic sphere. Among the priorities of this strategy are the Cultural Heritage and Information and Communication Technologies. Universities are committed to social responsibility and expansion of the educational process as they include possibly the widest range of social groups. Economically and socially in Bulgaria, in conditions of developing decentralization, culture and cultural heritage have become an intersection of many interests. For instance, local authorities try to draw the attention with more investments, respectively creating more employment prospects for more international contacts and culture tourism development; the tourist sector – for the implementation and organization of culture tourism.

The growing economic interest towards culture and cultural heritage, however, is accompanied by negative tendencies stemming from the accelerated character of reforms being carried out in this field. Yet nationally, the dominant positions belong to the specific, practical approaches to preservation and access to cultural values. The interest is towards typical examples of successful and unsuccessful practices for the socialization of archaeological and architectural sights and central city spaces. Each case draws the attention by emotional events and experiences, where the main players are in most of the cases are different institutions and their managers, leading experts in the respective fields of cultural heritage, private companies, owners, foreign partners, civil associations and social organizations. Changes are adopted faster by the managerial, administrative, academic and scientific circles, which is not the case with local people and local communities. It is the culture of the local communities that is the natural filter whereby the people accept global changes. One of the biggest problems that our national cultural policy is faced with is that the local people who live with cultural heritage are not well-informed and convinced of the economic advantages of heritage. An important commitment of the state educational and cultural policy and the municipal and cultural institutions locally would be to find the specific approaches complying with the typical features and needs of each area that would be able to eventually convince the local population of its significance and power as a resource for sustained development of tourism, of economic and social integration, of raising the standard of living. In the last few years, for example, aspects like digitalization, socialization, PR strategies, sustained development of cultural heritage, cultural tourism are increasingly becoming objects of scientific research and development. The practical application of these topics in cultural institutions locally: museums, archives, art galleries and local cultural community centers – is still carried out by means of single projects or initiatives. A matter of serious issue in Bulgaria is the staff potential in the field of cultural heritage. Local areas do not have the people who are well-educated and theoretically or practically qualified and experienced.

3. SULSIT's educational policy

In this regard, the paper tries to present in detail innovative approaches and highlights of the modern educational policy of the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (SULSIT), Sofia, Bulgaria.

SULSIT is among the first academic institutions in Bulgaria that started as early as 2003 departments and specialities in BA and MA programs in the field of cultural heritage, cultural tourism and Information and Communication Technologies applications as a means of information and communication. Within the structure of the University there is an Institute for Research on Cultural and Historical Heritage – (IRCHH). Its activity includes the organization of Summer University and Schools for practical instruction in the field of cultural heritage, interdisciplinary research, making partnerships with research, educational and other organizations in the country and abroad.

The Summer University "Strandja Mountain - transmission of civilizations East: West" is annual and is held in geographic area Strandja: in Bulgaria and Turkey. It was set up 10 years ago by the initiative of Prof. Alexander Fol. Since 2009 it has been organized by SULSIT in partnership with Malko Tarnovo municipality in Bulgaria and Karkareli municipality in Turkey. The mission of the Summer University is to popularize Thracian Cultural Heritage and the development of tourist cultural routes to the Thracian Monuments, as well as to focus the attention on the common historical and cultural past of the peoples



that used to inhabit the Balkan Peninsula. The concept and program of the Summer University include cultural routes with educational purposes and tours of archaeological, historical and cultural sights in Strandja area, as well as field lectures. Priority sights in the program of the Summer University are objects of the Thracian Cultural Heritage, Neolith settlements, Christian temples, museums. The summer university is a good example of students' and tutors' mobility. Manager of the Summer University is Prof. Valeria Fol.

The Institute for Research on Cultural and Historical Heritage: (IRCHH) organizes Summer students' practices connected with archaeological research, field tours and excavations. They take place in partnership with historical museums locally, as well as the municipalities there [5]. The methodological, theoretical and practical instruction takes place by a developed program for museum, tour guide and archaeological practice work and includes: field work, tour guide activity, museum collections work, cultural and educational routes and field tours. The program contains interesting practical activities like tour guide talks presented by students, working in studios for conservation and restoration, field work on archaeological sites, acquaintance with museum collections and ways of their selection and storage. The programs of Summer practices aim to comprise more types and categories of cultural heritage, to place the stress on problematic areas and the unification of efforts of diverse institutions to overcome these problems. In the course of practical activities, students do field research of the current situation of sites, prepare presentations demonstrating the achievements and issues of the exposure, protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

The aim of these modern educational approaches is to achieve improvement in the quality of education and instruction, building of partnerships between scientific and research institutions and the local authorities. Sustained relations are made between the theoretical and practical instruction, long-lasting interest is instilled, initiative spirit and positive motivation in students and the partner-institutions on the issues of organization, management and socialization of cultural heritage.

An important part of the modern educational policy of SULTSIT is the research activity on different projects in the field of cultural heritage. The project "Policies for Cultural Heritage Management: Communication and Socialization through Education", for example, aims to create a conditions for setting up a sustainable relationship between scientific research: university education: management practices in the field of cultural heritage; to offering models for innovative policies in the management of cultural heritage and new practices of socialization through education. The specific objectives are: Developing the educational models for combining theoretical and practical training in the field of cultural heritage and for expanding the scientific and educational infrastructure; Increasing best practices awareness about leading international organizations in accomplishing communication and educational policies in the field of cultural heritage. The stress is on topics that look at contemporary cultural policies, the ever growing structure of types of cultural heritage, sustained development, problems of socialization, harmonization of the legislative framework. Printed research materials, analyses, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the research that has been carried out, may be used as a methodological and practical basis for: creation of advanced strategies and models of policy development in the field of cultural heritage at national, regional and local level; adopting scientific and educational policies that include forms of decentralized partnership between universities, municipalities, local cultural institutions, NGOs; applicability for updating curricula and syllabus in SULTSIT majors; Applicability in developing training programs to improve the institutional capacity in the field of culture; as well as awareness and training programs to increase the capacity of local communities in the fields of Cultural and historical heritage and cultural tourism, which are to be implemented with the active participation of local cultural institutions: community centres, museums, art galleries and libraries.

New approaches in the educational and information policy of SULTSIT in the field of cultural heritage are found in the active publishing activity of the University, as well as in organizing national scientific forums and exhibitions.

4. Conclusion

The highlights in the modern educational policy in the field of cultural heritage: Summer universities, Summer schools and students' practical seminars are very popular with the European and world university environment especially in their international versions and their interdisciplinary character. The implementation of activities and projects in this field is a good opportunity for Bulgarian universities to enlarge their contacts with other international educational and cultural institutions responsible for the preservation and socialization of cultural heritage.



The European integration under way and the active international cooperation do not reduce but rather enhance the role of the national educational and cultural policy towards socialization of cultural heritage and its becoming a powerful means for spiritual closeness and preservation of cultural diversity.



Fig.2. Innovations in education. An illustration of the software product of a “virtual museum” with the educational demonstration collection “Golden Century” at ULSIT developed under the project “A Model for Creating Information Environment for Stimulating Scientific Research in the Sphere of Cultural Heritage”.

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