Sustainable Heritage Education: Multiperspectivity as a Bridge

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Abstract

Our research project 'Many-voiced Heritage. Multiperspectivity in Heritage Education. (2016-2018)' aims to stimulate a sustainable cooperation between formal education and institutions of heritage education. The following research question was our starting-point: How can we use cultural heritage as a bridge to facilitate multiperspectivity in (secondary) teacher education and in heritage organizations? Multiperspectivity as a concept expressing the willingness to take someone else's viewpoint is used as the connecting element between history education and heritage education. Cultural heritage is a powerful instrument for multiperspectivity as different perspectives can play a role. Even the perspectives of forgotten social or ethnic-cultural groups can be discussed and so superdiversity gets accounted for. In this case multiperspectivity points to a threefold approach. Heritage education can become many-voiced in sources (multiperspectivity in terms of content). The project stimulates sustainable cooperation between formal secondary education and secondary teacher education and institutions of heritage education (organizational multiperspectivity). By using a mix of qualitative and quantative research methods we're deploying a third way of multiperspectivity (methodological multiperspectivity).

So far we have designed a theoretical frame for multiperspectivity in heritage education with a focus on ethnic-cultural diversity. We have been searching for existing sets for heritage education both in Flanders and abroad. These sets have been analyzed and valued through the lens of the theoretical framework. Subsequently we have been designing three new sets for heritage education that match the conditions of the theoretical frame (multiperspectivity in terms of content). Three independent design teams with representatives from different domains (teachers from secondary schools, students and teacher educators from secondary teacher education, heritage educators, representatives of ethnic-cultural minority groups) are responsible for the lay-out (organizational multiperspectivity). The sets will be designed in different iterations according to the principles of Universal Design for Learning and Design-based Research (methodological multiperspectivity). The sets for heritage education will be tested in several groups, for valorization. The main concern is that the notions of multiperspecitivity and heritage education that will stem from this project will actually be adopted in the daily practice of institutions of heritage education and formal education.

Key words: art education, experience based

1. Introduction

History is not easy to teach. It is the only school subject of which the object of study is a no longer existing reality. Studying history is a scientific activity that focuses on retrieving a representation of the past based on historical sources. The scientific research of history is what historians call 'historical thinking'. [1] It's also the main objective of history education. L.P. Hartley states in the first pages of his The Go-Between (1953): '*The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there*'. Studying the past requires great empathy. This is a challenge for all school-going youngsters, but even more for pupils from ethnic minority groups who go to school in Western countries. They often experience history literally as a 'foreign country'. [2] Pupils from ethnic-cultural minority groups appear to have more difficulties in that regard since the image of the past that is dealt with in history lessons is strongly influenced by the dominant ethnic-cultural group. [3] For pupils with different perceptions and a different cultural framework, it is hard to find links in that predominantly Western-oriented story. [4]

The increasing diversity also affects heritage institutions such as museums, especially those in an urban environment. Museums in general and city museums in particular are challenged to connect their representations of traditional culture with the different cultures of their target audience. [5] Museums should incorporate the urban superdiversity, as well as in the composition of the collections as in the attraction of diverse groups of visitors. Traditionally most museums just tell one story from a dominant perspective. [6] Usually it's the perspective of an old monoculture. The nostalgic objects that

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have been collected in that case, tend to arouse little interest and engagement by people with a different ethnic-cultural background. [7] Museums that already are concerned about diversity, usually do it in an implicit way rather than with an explicit and coherent strategy. [8]

When visiting a museum recognition is an important factor for success. People with a different ethnic-cultural background are more likely to visit a museum when they feel connected with or recognize themselves in the presentation of the museum. [9] As well as collecting new items as presenting the collection in an different way is necessary. [10] One option is adding extra objects to the existing collection in order to implement ethnic-cultural diversity. This is not an easy way to go because often it's hard to find these objects of different ethnic-cultural origin. This also could stigmatize and stereotype certain groups. In a superdiverse urban environment with its huge mix of permanently changing cultural groups, it's almost impossible to represent all different perspectives in the museum collection. A second option is reinterpreting the existing collection. Collection representation could be done through transversal themes that attract different communities in their own way. This could be done by somewhat classical themes referring to human necessities (food, clothing, living, working, leisure), by different social domains (political, socioeconomic, cultural, ideological) but also by provocative or controversial points of view such as: justice and injustice, the impact of racism, gender roles, dictatorial regimes, war, colonialism and economic relations, the impact of media, migration and refugees, …This option of transversal themes enlarges recognition for all visitors. Moreover the stress on knowledge for knowledge itself moves to the use of knowledge with the intention to educate well-informed and critical-thinking citizens. [11] A well thought-out redesign of museological public relations is necessary. The concept of multiperspectivity seems to be very useful for that purpose.

2. Multiperspectivity as a bridge

Diversity means variety. Diversity encompasses all the possible differences that may exist among people who live in our society. Traditionally, the term is associated with three domains: ethnic-cultural background, gender and social class. Besides the diversity concept, the term multiperspectivity has often been used in the discourse on history teaching since the 1990s. [3] Stradling used the concept in these years to permeate the biased perspective in history lessons in former communist countries in Eastern Europe. In the meantime multiperspectivity has become a counterweight for eurocentric (history) education which is not familiar to newcomers in the Western world with a different cultural background.

Multiperspectivity is a generic concept and is strong connected with a kind of attitude. It aims an active stance and expresses the willingness to be in someone else's shoes in order to (re)consider ones own point of view. In this case agreement with that perspective is not expected, but understanding the arguments that go with that point of view and with an attitude of mutual respect. So multiperspectivity encourages the development of critical sense, respect for others and a democratic position. Multiperspectivity requires a willingness to look at facts, contexts, persons or developments from different perspectives of actors in the past and interpretations of the past in the present. [12] In history education multiperspectivity is closely connected to the cognitive activity of historical thinking. Historical events are looked at from different angles or alternative stories are viewed on the basis of a selection of sources, geographical levels, historical actors, narrative plots or types of history writing.The historian weighs the views of various and conflicting (social) groups. Different angles stand side by side and are connected to each other. Even though it seems that multiperspectivity is simply the application of the historical research method, the promoters of this concept suggest broadening the field of vision to 'forgotten' social groups such as immigrants, linguistic, ethnic-cultural and/or religious minorities. So the etnocentric (and eurocentric) perspective gets challenged.

3. Sustainable Heritage Education

Cultural heritage as historical source is a powerful instrument for multiperspectivity because different perspectives can play a role. Our main research question is how we can use that cultural heritage as a bridge to facilitate multiperspectivity in (secondary) teacher education and in heritage organizations. In this case multiperspectivity points to a approach in terms of content. This project also wants to stimulate sustainable cooperation between formal education (secondary schools and (secondary) teacher education) and institutions of heritage education. How can they learn from each other? What added value do they offer each other? We bring museums and schools around the table to work together in heritage education. This is what's called organizational multiperspectivity. Different partners are involved in the project: University of Antwerp (Antwerp School of Education), University college PXL Education Hasselt, Erfgenoten (Province of Limburg), Flemish interface centre for cultural heritage (FARO). So far very few fundamental connections have been established in Flanders

between heritage and formal education, especially at secondary level.That's why this project pins on teacher education (as proposed by the report on Heritage Education (2007)) [13], with a special focus on the didactics of history related to cross-circular goals. Finally this project aims to realize multiperspectivity by using a mix of research methods (both qualitative and quantative), e.g. Design-based Research and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). [14] So we're deploying a third different way of multiperspectivity: methodological multiperspectivity.

A sustainable cooperation between schools and heritage institutions starts with a shared theoretical framework for multiperspecitvity in heritage education. Our Heritage Education Multiperspectivity Matrix is based on the one hand on the general objectives of history education, in particular historical thinking, [15] and on the other hand on 'Culture in the Mirror' [16] an application of the theory of culture of Barend Van Heusden (RUGroningen, the Netherlands) to the Flemish context.This frame functions as a guideline and acid test for specific heritage education projects. Meanwhile we have been searching for existing sets for heritage education both in Flanders as abroad. These sets have been analyzed and valued through the lens of the Heritage Education Multiperspectivity Matrix.

Subsequently we are designing three new sets for heritage education that match with the conditions of het theoretical frame (multiperspectivity in terms of content). Three independent design teams with representatives from different domains (teachers from secondary schools, students and teacher educators from secondary teacher education, heritage educators and representatives of ethnic-cultural minority groups) are responsible for the lay-out (organizational multiperspectivity). The sets will be designed in different iterations according to the principles of Designed-based Research (methodological multiperspectivity). Quality is guaranteed by the critical-friends approach. The sets for heritage education will be tested in several groups, in order to valorization. Research data will be collected through Design-based Research and impact analysis of the learning outcomes, learning experiences and the willingness and ability of students to recognize, to voice and to contextualize different points of view from the past and present, which is the heart of multiperspecivity. A specific research tool for measuring the above mentioned learning outcomes and eperiences is in development.

Dissemination of the results is planned in a publication (articles/book), an international conference and a train-the-trainer-workshop on multiperspectivity in heritage education.The main concern is sustainable implementation of the received approaches, methods and results on multiperspectivity in the daily practice and educational approach of institutions of heritage education and in school curricula.

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