

**Minutes of the panel discussion „Intergration of Cultural Heritage in the School Curriculum
Yarmouk University, Irbid, 23.04.06
(by D. Afanasyeva)**

Participants: Prof. Dr. Ziad Al-Saad (Yarmouk University), Dr. Safwan Al-Tell (University of Jordan), Her Highness Nofa bint Nasir, Prof. Michael Schmidt (BTU Cottbus), Prof. Dr. Moawiyah Ibrahim (Al-Isra University), Prof. Dr. Khalaf Al-Makzoumi (Yarmouk University), Dr. Hani Hayajneh (Yarmouk University), Prof. Dr. Inken Baller (BTU Cottbus), Dr. Zeidan Kafafi (Yarmouk University), Mrs. Marielle Richon (World Heritage Centre, Paris)

Prof. Dr. Ziad Al-Saad welcomed the participants and declared the panel discussion open. He introduced the moderator of the panel – Mrs. Marielle Richon.

Mrs. Marielle Richon thanked the participants and expressed the hope that the discussion would contribute to solving the very important issue of how to successfully implement cultural heritage education on the school level.

Floor was given to Prof. Dr. Moawiyah Ibrahim of the Al-Isra University.

Prof. Ibrahim introduced himself and gave the participants the overview of his past activities at Yarmouk University, which were connected to the various aspects of humanities and social sciences. He stressed the importance of the discussed issues and mentioned that in aspects like heritage and culture, the key point lies in the ability to look at the world from different perspectives, and not only from the viewpoint of one's own cultural background. Prof. Ibrahim noted that he is very pleased to see that the tendency for such understanding is becoming more and more widespread across the world and that therefore, speaking of development of new courses and programmes nowadays, one must always follow the global approach.

Prof. Ibrahim stressed the necessity for the panel participant to come to the consensus on the discussed questions, pointing that if a sustainable strategy is to be worked out, it has to stem on overall agreement between the speakers in terms of organizing a programme that will introduce cultural heritage education components to school.

Mrs. Richon gave the floor to Prof. Dr. Khalaf Al-Makzoumi.

Prof. Al-Makzoumi welcomed the participants and confirmed his affiliation to the aims of the discussion, stressing its controversial nature that lied in the focal issue of whether cultural heritage education should be embedded in current school curriculum, or rather act as a new, separate component of the education. Embedding the cultural heritage-related

aspects in this case means that they should become an integral part of all the offered disciplines, which will require adjusting course books to suit this task as well as upgrading the qualification of school teachers in order for them to be able to introduce new aspects into the context of their lessons.

Introducing heritage education as a separate course, on the other hand, will generate the need in teachers with the new profile of knowledge in heritage, who will be able to offer pupils a clearly-defined new subject that will act independently, and not as a contextual support for other regular disciplines.

Prof. Al-Makzoumi emphasized that in the latter case, heritage education can be taught at a higher level and in much greater detail than in case of simple incorporation. Important as well will be that no changes in the existing course books need to be made.

The perfect option in, Prof. Al-Makzoumi' opinion, would be therefore to find a meeting point between the integrated and independent approaches and combine both methods by using the advantages of each of them. The focal issues to keep in mind here are the following: 1. a teacher should educate, and not dictate his or her own priorities; the aim is to develop curiosity, not to impose opinions; 2. introduction of cultural heritage into school curricula foresees cultururation and not acculturation.

The floor was given to Dr. Hani Hayajdeh of Yarmouk University.

Dr. Hayajdeh highlighted the importance of strengthening the knowledge of culture and history among school children and stressed the fact that though education in the field of cultural heritage first of all requires the awareness about material culture, intangible heritage must be an indispensable part of the module as well.

Dr. Hayajdeh pointed to the need to introduce into the new curriculum the oral and written cultural traditions. This will help the children to understand their (a well as others') culture in a deep way and greatly contribute to the understanding of the history of the Middle East in general and of Jordan in particular.

For example, he mentioned, school curriculum must include the study of ancient texts. This aspect will effectively contribute to the strengthening of the pupils' national identity and awareness of their rich remote history.

Students must be encouraged to investigate history.

The floor was given to Prof. Dr. Michael Schmidt of the BTU Cottbus.

Prof Schmidt emphasized the importance of an integrated approach. He stressed the need to enhance pupils' feeling of identity, at the same time bringing the attention of the participants to the fact that identity itself is a very complex issue, especially in cities with large number of foreigners. Keeping this in mind, mentioned Prof. Schmidt, teachers should explain

their pupils that it is more crucial for people of different nationalities to look for the common background than focus on their own affiliations only.

Prof. Schmidt noted as well that in an undertaking like the one that is being discussed, the quality of teaching is one of the most significant factors and must therefore be given immediate attention.

The moderator announced Dr. Safwan Al-Tell as the next speaker.

Dr. Al-Tell emphasized the broadness of the issues of discussion and agreed with the other speakers that the introduction of cultural heritage aspects to school curriculum will demand significant corrections in the existing system and bring about the need for a new generation of highly qualified teachers, who will be able to competently educate their students in the questions of national identity and historic legacy.

Dr. Al-Tell suggested that scientific courses should be separated from cultural heritage courses. The latter can potentially give students a general overview of heritage issues, but never cover them extensively enough. He offered that cultural heritage courses should be presented in the form of intensive 1-month programmes.

The floor was given to Dr. Zeidan Kafafi of Yarmouk University.

Dr. Kafafi returned to the problem of defining and developing the issue of identity. We have to clearly understand, he said, what kind of identity is meant (political, cultural, or other). Also important to know is whether major attention should be placed on national heritage or on the more global one.

Dr. Kafafi stressed that when it comes to defining objectiveness in the issues of heritage and history, there inevitably arises a question of interpretation of the past, which in its nature is highly personalized, and this must be taken into account in the discussion.

Mrs. Richon introduced Prof. Ziad Al-Saad of Yarmouk University as the next speaker.

Prof. Al-Saad expressed the opinion that, in his mind, the preference between integration of cultural heritage into the school curriculum and introduction of this component as an independent educational unit, should be given to the latter. This solution, he mentioned, is much easier to put into practice.

The second level to be considered is the distinct framework of the module, namely what to teach and how to train qualified teachers by enhancing their cultural skills. Very important as well is to take into consideration the peculiarities of students' thinking at different age. The main task to be performed in this case by teachers at the primary school level, stressed Prof. Al-Saad, is to encourage pupils' private identity, while the framework of secondary education foresees a more sophisticated level of understanding, where the emphasis should be placed on educating students about the ways of how historical analysis can offer context for currently existing situation.

The only effective way of teaching heritage is therefore introducing it step by step from nursery to higher education.

Prof. Al-Saad suggested that the participants put together a plan for educating teachers about how to follow the above-mentioned step-by-step strategy in the most effective way.

The floor was given to Her Highness Nofa bint Nasir.

Her Highness started by pinpointing the necessity to define exactly what aspects of tangible and intangible heritage should be introduced at school, and at what age. Crucial is to identify, whether the focus should be placed on a more theoretical, or rather on practical components of heritage. Important as well is that it is impossible to protect heritage without understanding and knowing it.

The speech was followed by an input from Mrs. Richon, who summarized the discussed issues. Heritage is first of all a human value, she noted. Conservation for the sake of conservation itself would otherwise be useless.

UNESCO believes, she continued, that World Heritage is a tool for better understanding between people, and that it is important for every member of the society to be aware of, and accept, other people's values.

Critical as well is to not only educate children about heritage, but also inform them about the current risks it faces and about how fragile our environment is.

Tourism nowadays, she noted, is of course inseparably connected to management and promotion. Nevertheless, in UNESCO's opinion, education in the field of heritage must start not with economy, but with culture. It is also better not to discriminate between tangible and intangible heritage.

We have to remember, Mrs. Richon stressed, that educating children is at the same time educating parents and teachers. This is particularly true in case of an integration approach, which UNESCO strongly advocates (e.g. by its initiative "World Heritage in Young Hands"), although its implementation is often hindered by the disciplinary approach of many governments.

Introducing heritage education as a separate module, on the other hand, carries with it the potential risk that without being reinforced within other courses, the heritage course will quickly be forgotten by the pupils.

Taking into consideration all the above-mentioned factors, it is clear that there exists an extremely strong need for a long-term plan.

Mrs. Richon fully agreed with Her Highness's concern about how to adequately present the notion of heritage to very young children, who have no notion of identity and heritage.

A "World Heritage in Young Hands" kit, she noted, is a tool for teachers elaborated by teachers. It has been translated in a wide variety of languages, including Arabic, and proved

to be highly effective worldwide. Therefore, the findings included in the kit by all means need to be taken into account while designing a module for cultural heritage in Jordanian schools.

Her Highness mentioned that there is another example of good practice in the field: in Jordan itself, "Friends of Archaeology" have founded archaeology club for school children.

Dr. Al-Tell added that in order to make heritage education step by step effective, there needs to be a clear link between primary and secondary school education, and higher education.

School curriculum, he said, should be a shadow of what is to come at the university level.

Prof. Al-Makzoumi noted that there are ideas about culture that even the smallest children can understand. It can therefore be very practical to implement the module grade by grade, making topics more and more sophisticated.

When it comes to the question which heritage to focus on, national or global, the answer is - both. Even starting from the 1st grade, children should be explained that there is Jordanian heritage in particular, Islamic heritage in general, and world heritage at the global scale. National heritage should be introduced as an indispensable part of the global one.

Prof. Al-Saad and Dr. Kafafi expressed their full consent to this approach.

Mrs. Richon mentioned that properties inscribed on the World Heritage List are first of all national properties, but possessing an outstanding universal value, they belong not only to one nation, but to the whole humanity. The main idea behind the List is the development of international solidarity.

Prof. Ibrahim suggested that cultural heritage should be taught at three levels:

- regional,
- national,
- and international.

Every nation, he noted, is on the one hand unique, but on the other hand, represents a part of a more global context.

The main question is: How can the curriculum be implemented without preparing teachers? Such education will not be worthwhile.

Therefore, it is imperative that a university degree in cultural heritage education is introduced.

Prof. Al-Makzoumi added that in the case of Yarmouk University, such degree can be offered to Cultural Resource Management Bachelor alumni.

Dr. Al-Tell agreed and added that in such case a good idea might be to agree on a unified curriculum between universities.

Her Highness suggested that offering not a full university degree, but a condensed summer training course for Master students in related programmes, is a good option as well.

Mrs. Richon expressed her support and commented that a multiplying effect is strongly needed in this field, i.e. professionals educated in cultural heritage should be encouraged to educate other professionals, who, in their turn, will implement their knowledge in various heritage-related areas.

Prof. Al-Saad suggested that education of teachers and implementation of a module for cultural heritage at schools can be carried out simultaneously as two parallel processes.

All graduates of culture-related courses can undergo specific education in teaching methods.

It is crucial, he added, that the content of heritage education covers both practical and scientific issues. Heritage is a living phenomenon, which you cannot understand by simply memorizing facts. Education can only be successful, if it reflects both theory and practice.

Dr. Hayajneh proposed that at the level of primary schools, stress should be placed on practical aspects, leaving theory to later stages of education.

Prof. Al-Saad objected, saying that comprehensive knowledge of cultural heritage can only be achieved, if both components are taught simultaneously, which is completely possible suggested the age-appropriate approach.

Prof. Ibrahim added that it would be of great use, if researchers (e.g. from sites, or museums) offer classes at schools.

Dr. Kafafi asked the participants, if in their opinion it is possible that universities could induce researchers to go and teach children.

Mrs. Richon replied that a directive can be issued for researchers, which will allow them to carry out excavations in certain areas only under the condition that they offer classes in local schools.

Prof. Al-Saad extended his gratitude to the participants of the panel discussion. He suggested that in order to extend the scope of the dialogue, all of them who wish so can at any time contact him via email and share further ideas and findings.

In his concluding word, Prof. Al-Saad expressed full satisfaction with the results of the discussion, as well as the whole workshop in general, particularly stressing the importance of participation of His Excellency Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in this event and his clear commitment to the idea of integration of cultural heritage into school curriculum. He stressed that the Ministry of Education would by all means be informed in detail about the development of this initiative and expressed the hope that existing partnership between the Ministry of Education and Yarmouk University will be even more strengthened in the future.