



## The Importance of Cultural Heritage Education in Early Ages

Özge Islamoglu

*Karadeniz Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Interior Architecture,  
61080, Trabzon, Turkey  
E-mail: ozgesever@hotmail.com*

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**ABSTRACT** Cultural heritage is the accumulation of knowledge that a society and its individual members process during their lifespan. For this reason, it is important to develop educational policies for conservation awareness and conservation culture concerning the promotion and protection of cultural heritage. It is clear that the implementation of conservation awareness, especially at younger ages, will contribute more effectively to conservation efforts. In this context, subjects related to culture and heritage are included within the social studies programme primary education curriculum of Turkey Ministry of Education. In addition, conservation awareness activities towards children are being carried out by various institutions and organizations. The aim of this study is to examine the social studies curriculum and educational activities of the institutions for the conservation of cultural heritage.

### INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is regarded as an assemblage of data in which human beings follow in the course of their lives and help accumulate, develop and enrich it with new syntheses and sustain its continuity by transferring to next generations. In a sense, it represents the human condition in the face of life, providing proof for its existence (Çankaya 2006). Cultural heritage reflects the characteristics of a historical document with its representation of values, witnessed through several eras, which have survived from past to present. The importance and the necessity to conserve this heritage is emphasized through various studies; in providing the historical continuity of culture. The conservation of cultural heritage is both a demonstration of civilization and a means which strengthens the inter-societal relationships among individuals, influencing respect for the environment of habitation. A society is only civilized to the degree that it protects the products of previous civilizations of the land it inhabits and provides these products with conditions to re-live (Tapan 2014). Preservation of cultural heritage allows us to

demonstrate how we evolved into what we are now by recognizing the past in its entirety and helps us in the assessment of current conditions by shedding light into the formation of cultural syntheses. The aims such as the strive for precision and improvement, the insurance of the cultural continuity and instilling a sense of kinship and ownership for the individuals in respect to the environment they inhabit, makes cultural conservation mandatory (Tapan 2014).

Starting with the Ottoman period, various steps have been taken in Turkey to conserve cultural heritage. Madran (2002) states that the most important institutionalization for cultural asset conservation in Ottoman society was the foundations. Works on conservation along with the westernization process began with the Land Code of 1958, followed by Ebniye Nizamname-leri (Building Regulations) in 1848 and 1864. The first legal regulation on preservation is the Asar-i Atika Nizamnamesi, issued in 1869. This regulation was updated in 1874 where the definition and classification of antiques were made and the provision which states antiquities belong to the state was developed for the first time. On the other hand, museum studies started in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. After Muhafaza-i Asar-i Encümeni was founded in 1917, High Council for the Historical Real Estate and Monuments (GEE-AYK) was founded with the Law No. 5805 in 1951 during the republican period. This Council has undertaken decision making tasks such as

*Address for correspondence:*

Özge Islamoglu  
Karadeniz Technical University,  
Faculty of Architecture, Interior Architecture,  
61080, Trabzon, Turkey  
Phone: 05302751252  
E-mail: ozgesever@hotmail.com

surveying, restoration and restitution projects. In 1973, Law No. 1710 on Antiquities was issued. Around the same time period, Turkey also signed on international conventions on conservation. Attending It has attended events such as 1964 Venice Convention, 1965 European Council and Barcelona Symposium. In addition, it became a member of ICOMOS established by UNESCO in 1965 and abided by the internationally recognized resolutions (Tapan 2014).

It is observed that despite the important steps taken in Turkey since the republican period and the implementation of laws and regulations, a healthy understanding of conservation could not be developed. The cultural assets are still not protected in a satisfactory manner and many of our cultural assets are already lost. Various studies have been conducted on the reasons why effective conservation cannot be achieved at the desired level. For example, Tapan (2014) links it with the distortions in social and economic areas, faulty decisions on urban planning, lack of public awareness in this particular subject, and a lack of inspection alongside faulty decisions regarding implementation. Tunçer (2017) argues that our values are being ruined due to reasons such as underdeveloped social awareness for the preservation of the historical and cultural environment, acceleration of urbanization, inflation of land value, faulty zoning planning, economic inadequacy, lack of resources to protect and restore the environment, lack of education and misuse of selected areas for tourism purposes. The most common point emphasized through all the studies is the importance of education in matters of cultural heritage conservation.

### METHODOLOGY

The studies for the cultural heritage education at an early age in Turkey are discussed in this study. In this direction, literature search method is used to reach laws, regulations, articles, books and journals related to cultural heritage education. The information obtained from the literature is summarized in the generated tables.

### OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

#### Cultural Heritage Conservation and Education

Cultural heritage education involves the preservation, appreciation and learning of all aspects

of a community's history including architecture, museums and historical cities, cultural landscapes and street views, martyrdoms, traditions, photographs, newspapers, documents, court records, family documents, memorabilia, handicrafts and objects. The first and most important characteristic of cultural heritage education is to increase a child's understanding and knowledge about the history and value of the natural and built environment he or she occupies. Other purposes of cultural heritage education include; helping students to discover their historical and cultural heritage, enabling them to gain knowledge and experience through the discovery of cultural heritage, helping them to understand the difference between local and global culture by going back and forth between them, helping students who are often lacking in resources to protect themselves for the future, training the tomorrow's citizens by teaching about the past; to contribute in the upbringing of genuine, true and reliable citizens (Dönmez and Yesilbursa 2014).

It is universally accepted that formal and non-formal education is important in providing a healthy conservation. The healthiest policy is that people acquire awareness and thus manage to own their cultural heritage (Tapan 2014)

Many studies exist both in Turkey and the rest of the world which stress that conservation and education are directly associated with each other. Asatekin (2004) argues that starting from childhood, it is necessary to give education with the right tools to each citizen for adopting the cultural background of the society to which they belong and for realizing the importance of all kinds of cultural and natural object on these lands that form the foundation of our contemporary identity; Tapan (2014) proposes that lack of formal and non-formal education plays a big role in the conservation of our cultural assets and it is necessary especially for primary and secondary education students to understand the importance and necessity of conservation and how cultural sustainability will increase the patriotism and therefore the loyalty; Stone (2004) believes that people who know about their heritage would understand it and therefore realize the need to protect it so this awareness must be acquired either formally or informally by everyone from cradle to grave; Lambert (1996) states that in terms of conservation, cultural heritage education programs are important for instilling

conservation ethics to children who will be responsible of historical resources in future; Uçankus (2000) emphasized the importance of raising individual's awareness concerning conservation to give information and mould public opinion at every level from primary school to higher education; Copeland (2004) advocates that cultural heritage education is necessary for not only helping students to understand the heritage areas and traditions but also for helping them understand the importance of preserving these areas; Ahunbay (2016) stresses that it is important for a society living in a cultural environment to have the willingness and awareness to pass on this environment to future without causing any harm and that in order to achieve this, it is necessary to increase the economic and educational level of people; Uçar (2014) implies, for the development of the common identity concept and its value in people, it is necessary to recognize the identity of the city they live in and adopt it as their own, starting from childhood; Bektas (1992) expresses the role of early education in preserving cultural assets and creating consciousness about it as follows:

*“Of course, it should start with school education... with toys, proper children's books with beautiful paintings, fairy tales... It should start by infusing the awareness of being a citizen of this country, being a 'countryman', an 'owner' of this city by benefiting from every kind of tools and games... If we identify a small corner with a line drawn in the garden of a primary school and put a text there saying that it is a MUSEUM and we put a few stones in that corner and explain what they are, children will start to think about it starting from that age...”*

In this context, educational activities to be carried out in this field are important for society members to adopt the act of conservation as a social duty. The healthy preservation of our cultural heritage can only be achieved if this approach becomes the norm, adopted by every segment of society. This can only be achieved through education and training programs from primary school to university education that recognize that conservation is one of the key elements which play an important role in the development of a society.

The relationship between concepts of conservation and education is also emphasized in international documents. UNESCO has adopted the strategy of working with young people, for

young people and underlines the importance of education in conservation and the necessity to begin training at an early age. In this regard, UNESCO agreed to carry out training and promotion programs on the preservation of cultural heritage within the context of the “Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.”

The most important element of conservation is to raise societal awareness. Society has the primary responsibility for the conservation and survival of cultural heritage. The answers of questions such as “What, why and how should we preserve?” should be taught to society (Tapan 2014). Likewise, Asatekin (2004) states that the cultural heritage conservation process can be possible by formal and non-formal education models in regards to what we can protect and why, starting with the identification of what is worth preserving. In this direction, great responsibilities fall to families, educators and academicians working in the field of conservation, non-governmental and governmental institutions, local administrations and professional chambers.

Various studies are conducted in Turkey in order to form awareness regarding the conservation of cultural heritage at an early age. In the context of this study, studies in regards to cultural heritage education at an early age in Turkey are discussed in two categories. First category is the social sciences course at national education level, while the second is awareness raising activities conducted by various organizations/institutions for the same purpose.

In Turkey, courses concerning culture and heritage can be found in the Ministry of Education social studies education curriculum. The fact that social studies course deals with people, their activities and social phenomena and also it being a combination of all social sciences, forms a basis for cultural heritage subject to be taught within social studies courses (Özbas 2012). Similarly, Özbas (2012) mentions that since promotion and conservation of global heritage is in question, social sciences course would have to provide the education regarding cultural heritage and inform the students in the best way possible.

Cultural heritage subject has an important place in social studies course. In this context, one of the seven learning fields that constitute the social studies course is the “Culture and

Heritage”. This learning field aims to form of a national consciousness that would provide protection and ensure the development of culture from the basic elements that forms the Turkish culture. Thus, students would realize that cultural elements are the characteristics that distinguish a society from other societies (URL-1). In this framework, the direct learning outcomes regarding conservation gained through the current curriculum are listed in Table 1.

It is suggested to have in-class and extra-curricular activities with field trips to help students’ grasp of intended subjects. However, studies have found out that topics and the form of education as it relates to cultural heritage and conservation awareness in the Social Studies Program are not sufficient and that cultural heritage subjects can be taught more effectively with particular arrangements and improvements on the program (Avcı and Memisoglu 2016). In this context, organizations and institutions such as ÇEKÜL, UNICEF, UNESCO, Chamber of Architects, TUBITAK, and Cultural Awareness Foundation have been carrying out various activities such as establishing special units within their organization or supporting project propos-

als, with the aim to create awareness on children and young people about the conservation of historical areas in Turkey. These institutions emphasize that it is important for the individual to gain awareness on conservation of cultural heritage starting from early ages with appropriate method and materials and aim to infuse some amount of consciousness by organizing various events. The activities, purpose and scope of these institutions/organizations are summarized in Table 2.

## CONCLUSION

This study sets out to elaborate on the notion of necessity in regards to early childhood education on issues of cultural heritage, strategic significance of its sustainability and the importance of providing said education with correct tool and methodologies in accommodating different age groups. Argument builds upon the understanding that education is the most effective and lasting method in terms of solidifying the approach regarding the importance of cultural heritage and raising awareness among youngsters or primary school students.

**Table 1: Learning fields and outcomes related to cultural heritage in social studies program**

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Unit name</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
4. <i>Grade</i>	I’m Learning My Past	Values such as sensitivity to cultural heritage and patriotism, perception of time and chronology, change and continuity. Things around the family and environment that reflect the national culture are investigated; historical places around such as a museum, mosque, tomb, bridge, madrasah, and caravanserai are explored; oral history or local history studies are conducted; traditional children games are compared to current games in terms of change and continuity.
5. <i>Grade</i>	Turkey: Step by Step World of All of Us	Anatolian and Mesopotamian civilizations are learnt based on concrete remains. Natural assets and historical places, objects and antiques around are introduced. Cultural characteristics of various places of our country are compared with the cultural characteristics of the area student lives. The role of cultural elements in people living together, historical development of cultural elements, their continuity and changes are studied.
6. <i>Grade</i>	Unit of Turks on the Silk RoadLife on Earth	The geographical, political, economic and cultural characteristics of the first Turkish states established in Central Asia, changes occurred in the political, social and cultural arenas with Turks’ acceptance of Islam. The role of historical trade road in political, cultural and economic relations of the societies is explained.
7. <i>Grade</i>	Journey in Turkish History Bridges between Countries	Geographical discoveries, Renaissance, Age of Enlightenment, Reform, French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, colonialism and the chaos and human rights violations caused by these are mentioned. Examples for Ottomans’ understanding of culture, arts and aesthetics are given. Examples of travel books of local and foreign travellers are given.

**Table 2: Activities supporting early-age cultural heritage education**

<i>Organization/ Event Institution name</i>	<i>Aim/ Scope</i>	<i>Activities</i>	
ÇEKÜL	Whisper of the Past	Its aim is to introduce students to the concepts of heritage, memory and museum, also to remind that each individual is a part/transmitter of the city's identity and heritage.	Students choose an object belonging to the past and trace it back, imagining the whisper/message this object brings from the past to the present and will carry to the future. At the end of the workshop students will have prepared an exhibition with these objects. This exhibition is compared with the examples in the city museums.
	I'm Learning from the Past	Tree of Knowledge applies the fertility of nature and its cycle which enables life by using technology and scientific disciplines with an educational approach prioritizing the qualitative development of the individual. The philosophy behind the slogan of ÇEKÜL "We exist through nature and culture" is acknowledged as a method which opens up horizon towards establishment of the future.	Participants look for different colours, texture and smell in nature and explore by using five senses.
	Industrial Heritage	While social, intellectual and scientific developments of humanity are handled in different aspects, the heritage of industrial culture which forms the basis of modern city we live in today and possess historical, technological, social, architectural and scientific value is studied.	Five plays are prepared to make a connection with the structure and improvised by drama techniques. Stories and activity proposals which are prepared to help students understand easier are among the main topics of the training package.
	Cities Belong to Children	The program, which is conducted with 13-year-olds, aims to make students aware of the cultural richness of the city they live in, to acquire knowledge and sensitivity about preserving natural and cultural heritage, to develop cultural identity feeling and awareness of conservation and urbanity.	The program includes not only presentations and field trips that give information about the city's architectural, geographical, archaeological characteristics and living culture but also questioning, thought provoking applications which create an interactive educational environment to support the participation of students.
UNICEF	Museum Education Program	Ankara University The Faculty of Education Sciences, Prime Ministry Agency for Social Services and Child Protection and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism aim to reflect the child's perspective to the UN Joint Program and contribute to the overall goal together with the children. It is aimed to make the museums more functional, to turn museums into places where children will visit willingly, to raise awareness about history and cultural heritage, to support the creativity skills in children and to prepare a participatory and permanent learning environment.	Activities named architectural exploration, photo animation, clock tower and our traditions have been performed. In these activities, methods and techniques such as sightseeing, painting, collage, discussion, group work, brainstorming, project preparation, exhibition organization, information gathering and editing were used.
UNESCO	World Heritage Education	It gives young people a chance to voice their concerns and to become involved in the protection of our	Suggested student activities focus on six main actions. This includes discussions, researches, exercises, visual sessions, sightseeing, and

**Table 2: Contd...**

<i>Organization/ Event Institution name</i>	<i>Aim/ Scope</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Programme (WHE) World Heritage Youth	common cultural and natural and heritage. An opportunity for young students from different countries to come together to learn about each other's cultural heritage, discuss common concerns, and discover new roles for themselves in the preservation of heritage.	drama activities. An opportunity for young students from different countries to come together to learn about each other's cultural heritage, discuss common concerns, and discover new roles for themselves in the preservation of heritage.
TTMMOB Chamber of Architects	Owning our past and history, raising awareness about preserving values/ transferring to future generations, increasing children's creativity and exploration skills.	Owning our past and history, raising awareness about preserving values/transferring to future generations, increasing children's creativity and exploration skills. In this context, the recommended activities consist of games accompanied by drama, workshops, presentations and exhibitions.
TTUBITAK Let's Explore Our City's Cultural Assets	These projects, supported by TUBITAK, aim to raise awareness about the protection of cultural heritage and to increase the sensitivity of students to the protection of these assets.	These projects, supported by TUBITAK, aim to raise awareness about the protection of cultural heritage and to increase the sensitivity of students to the protection of these assets. The activities carried out in these projects are aimed at ensuring students learn the cultural assets by observing, experiencing, enjoying and playing on site. They include various techniques such as trips, observation, games and drama.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Inability to reach favourable levels of conservation, even with the numerous steps taken regarding the subject matter, can be explained by the insufficient methodologies and lack of an adequate education curriculum. Awareness created at an early age will undoubtedly be more effective in terms of conservation. Education institutions and educators have a great responsibility on this matter. It is important to introduce, sympathize and describe the significance of cultural and historical heritage to children, and in the process, to pay attention to the conditions under which they are taught. It is of utmost necessity to transform the social sciences courses from just being a memorization course and build associations with the topics of living experience; to plan activities within the education process and allow the students to have a learning experience by having fun and solidifying the permanency of provided knowledge with numerous technique and methodologies.

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