

**This is our new country: raising cultural awareness through aspects of local history
within culturally-diverse classrooms**

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Abstract: Recently in the country's education, the request for inclusion of local historical studies in the school curriculum (Leontsinis, 1996, 23) was re-introduced. In the context of the teachers' awareness of the need to renew history teaching practices in order to stimulate pupils' interest in the historical lesson, local history with its research potential overrides the traditional practices of memorizing events, dates and important figures and suggests on-the-spot research, the development of students' skills and their conversion into small historians (Leontsinis, 1999, 40). This paper includes creative activities aimed at a) encouraging experiential learning and group co-operation in not only mono-cultural classes but for classes that are characterized with students of immigration profile, since the social interaction of both Greek and non-Greek students is an important priority of teachers (Haritos, 2009, 28- 40); and (b) the development of students' skills such as "empathy" through targeted activities (Kokkinos, 2007, 395).

Keywords: cultural awareness, local history, game-based learning, empathy, primary education

Introduction

According to Vaina (1997, 35-40) due to the semantic wideness of the word "place", with the term "local history", it can be understood: the history of the particular homeland, the history of the region, the history of the wider region. For example, according to Munchenbach (Vaina, 1997, 35-40) "local history is the place where everyone develops a direct and personal relationship, namely the place of residence, the place where the school is located, the neighborhood" . This definition includes a small geographical area. However, in the literature, local history is defined as the space that exists: common administration, common law, common religious ties, common political and economic structure. This definition refers to a wider space and is equally acceptable (Vaina, 1997, 35-40).

With regard to education, local history is the cognitive subject, which is part of the historical sciences and has been placed in the school program. In particular, Doulas (Haritos, 2009, 11-

12, Vaina, 1997, 36) states that: "Local history is the historical material found in the neighborhood and is already known, familiar to children or may be known, mainly through the work results from the on-the-spot investigation. " In the circular of the Ministry, local history issues can be considered as events that have been linked to the school or its wider area, but local history includes all the situations that evolved in the area where the school was located and influenced the lives of the inhabitants (Haritos, 2009, 11-12, Vaina, 1997, 36). The philosophy of the curricula in Greece is based on the school textbook with common curricula for all students, and local history is left on the sidelines of the cognitive process and goes back to the sphere of optional teaching (Vlahos, 2006, 414). However, in recent decades, landscape was considered as the basic conceptual tool of historical research, and local stories were associated with the quests of New History and Micro - History (Haritos, 2009, 21, Maxiris, 2007, 133-135).

1. The connection of Local history with the General/National History

History, as a science, investigates the life of human in his long path in the past through a set of events (human actions) and situations, natural phenomena that have influenced positively or negatively his path. General/national history consists of the activities of people in different places (Haritos, 2009, 11-12).

General history and local history are two branches of the same science (Haritos, 2009, 63-64, Leontsinis, 1996, 49). Substantial distinction between general and local history cannot be valid, as the differences of their individual cognitive spaces are subtle, so it is not possible to follow different research and didactic methodology (Vlachou, 2006, 408-409). The relationship of local to general history is simply a relationship of mutual and necessary exchanges and not an employee relationship between them. With the local history of education, three basic dimensions of teaching approaches have been proposed, which share common traits with the general history:

- A) The approach, which refers to the method of school historical research and aims to foster the formulation of historical discourse and critical thinking. Students reinforce their historical thinking, working as historians through observation, research, information gathering and historical sources.
- B) The approach, which refers to the methodology of general history, which aims to sensitize and more specialise the students in the historical lesson with on-site research and study and the organization of a special learning environment. The classroom is forgotten and the field visit is the one that is being pursued.
- C) The approach, which refers to holistic and multidisciplinary aspects of the historical environment. This parameter of the research and teaching process gives students an opportunity to study the elements of human action (Leontsinis, 1996, 50-59).

In conclusion, it is worth focusing on Beeck's phrase: "*A lesson of history without a local view, without local reference, does not exist and cannot be understood*" (Vaina, 1997, 59).

2. Typologies of themes and sources of local history

There are no restrictions in the thematic areas of local history, nor are they leaky. Each field can be connected to another, complementary, meaningful and meaningful through its association with another field of local history. A key factor in selecting a thematic field is the interest of school class members (students, educators) who can encourage and persuade members of the group to participate. Below are indicative typologies of local history issues:

Thematic issues with the history of the landscape (the historical landscape, all the changes that it has suffered over time and all the human interventions), such as: The local historical area, the geographical and morphological components, Changes in water, springs, lakes, rivers. Archaeological sites etc.

Thematic issues with a focus on everyday human activities (everyday life, occupations, school, residence, religion): Food, clothing, communication, the market, the neighborhood of the area. The mortality in relation to the health conditions of the place etc.

Thematic issues of the local community (demographic, social, economic): Toponyms, Local economy (activities, business, commerce), Relations between the economy and the social and cultural environment, etc. (Leontsinis, 1999, 35-40, 63-64, Leontsinis, 1996, 84-89).

With reference to the sources, these are the traces left by human societies on their way over time and are historical testimonies of the human past. Students’ work with historical sources can be the subject of learning on the basis of three axes: (a) searching for sources, (b) processing, and (c) interpreting them. The following typology of sources aims to highlight the broad horizon of sources of local history:

- Written: *Published (eg memoirs, calendars, travel impressions) or unpublished (archives and records kept in private or public spaces).*
- Oral: *Testimonials that can fill the gaps left by other sources, mainly reflecting on the way they recall the past in the memory of a group.*
- Photographic: *visual documents that provide valuable information about changes in historical landscape and human societies over time.*
- Materials: *From objects of art and everyday life (saved in museums or private collections) to the landscape itself, they present a continuity, a succession of scripts in which traces of human activities in the past are sought, etc. (Leontsinis, 1996, 43-61).*

3. The Proposed Module

3.1. Rationale & Implementation Procedures

The proposed activities that follow are aimed at raising cultural awareness of students of multilingual and multicultural classes, as regards aspects of local history. Local history and intercultural education have common places: choosing a theme of local history gives the opportu-

nity to cultivate a sense of love for the place, both in Greek-speaking and in students from different cultural environments (Androusos, 2000, 18-19).

The themes of the proposed modules center on the “Professions” and the “Museum” while it is proposed to be carried out through four game-based activities which have been proved to be effective tools when being used in educational projects with culture being the core (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2016; Griva & Papadopoulos, 2017). In particular,

Title of the activity: “See it and say”

Brief Description

In the first activity, images from professions (e.g. barbers) will be displayed through PowerPoint. The pictures will be presented slowly and the students will describe what they see by identifying tools of the respective profession, discussing whether or not the profession is being practiced nowadays and the difficulties of the profession.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- develop their occupational classification
- improve their argumentation skills
- raise their empathy towards the others

Title of the activity: “Let’s create something...”

Brief Description

In the second activity, students will be given material (cardboard, glues) to make a conceptual map of groups of five. Screenshots of tools (e.g. hairdressing scissors) will be displayed in PowerPoint, and students will, after deciding which profession they will place, begin the construction of the conceptual map.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- stimulate their imagination and creativity
- develop problem-solving skills as regards to the selection of appropriate materials and constructing their craft

Title of the activity: “Write a story to tell me”

Brief Description



During the third activity, students will be divided into groups of five and each team will receive an A4 paper. In this, there will be professions and teachers will have to write a dialogue, highlighting the elements discussed while dramatization will follow.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- improve their creative expressions on culture-based topics
- improve productive language skills in Greek language
- foster their empathy towards the other

Title of the activity: “Let’s pantomime...”

Brief Description

In the fourth activity, a student from each team will get out of his/her position and randomly select a paper from a sachet/box with a profession that will be in front of him/her. When he reads the profession, he must imitate it in front of the rest of the classmates "pantomime". Thus, the members of each group will build clay with a tool of the paper listed on the paper, which they had chosen at the beginning of the fourth activity.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- empower their non-verbal communication
- enhance their imagination and creativity
- foster their empathy towards the other
- link the thematic area with the visual arts

The second proposed module is related to the “Doll Museum in Larissa, Greece”. It recommended that it be carried out through the implementation of 8 educational activities.

Title of the activity: “Let me introduce you to my doll...”

Brief Description

The teacher keeps a doll in his hands. The doll spoke to him about the doll museum in Larissa. The teacher recommends the doll to the children and says what she said to him by incorporating questions.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- raise their awareness of the museum and its exhibits in general
- acquire knowledge about the doll museum

Title of the activity: “How it all started...”

Brief Description

The teacher using PowerPoint shows Mrs. Sofia Foutzopoulou (museum manager), as well as pictures from the exterior and interior of the dolls museum and the collection 300 dolls of beloved fairy tales and the students express themselves on it.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- come into contact with the museum before their visit there
- know about the history of this museum
- develop their productive language skills

Title of the activity: “Here is the doll we talked about...”

Brief Description

The students observe the doll and touch it. The teacher asks them to make a description of it, to tell him what it is made of and how it is made.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- be able to observe and express themselves correctly, describing an object and its features
- use their imagination, guessing how to construct something.

Title of the activity: “Visiting the doll museum...”

Brief Description

The students visit the doll museum and after touring the site they find dolls of favorite fairy tales. Then, they are divided into groups and they make their own doll using several materials

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- meet the doll museum (experiential learning).
- express themselves artistically by making their own doll.
- raise their empathy towards the others (through the dolls).

Title of the activity: “Tell me a story to feel the doll...”

Brief Description

The teacher reads a fairy tale to students using one of the museum's dolls. They talk about the fairy tale, see the pictures, judge the behavior of the characters of the fairy tale, discuss their feelings, and imagine the heroes moving by doing the same moves.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- produce spoken discourse and understand what they hear (oral comprehension).
- be capable of judging the others and empathize them.

Title of the activity: “Memory doll game”

Brief Description

The teacher has pictures printed on tabs of 10 dolls (5 pairs). On the one hand, he has written numbers 1-10 and on the other hand he has the figure of the dolls, 10 in total but 5 pairs of shuffled ones. He uncovers the dolls to the students for a while and then turns the tabs on the side of the numbers. Students try to match the same dolls and describe them.

Particular Aims

Through the students’ participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- practice memory strategies related to cultural elements
- recycle their learning items
- produce spoken discourse

Title of the activity: “Find a tale for the class”

Brief Description

The teacher encourages students to find a photo of a doll that relates to a fairy tale, to print it and to present the fairy tale in a few words. In the end, a collage will be created with children's dolls. We should keep in mind that fairy tales and dolls come from those of the museum, so the teacher could assign a fairy tale and puppet to a student.

Particular Aims

Through the students' participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- be able to collect information and present it in the classroom.
- develop their reading and writing skills
- produce spoken and written discourse

Title of the activity: “Let's the shape the profile of a doll”

Brief Description

The students with the teacher make the profile of each doll and discuss each of them. For example, one doll is shy, so they discuss when we're ashamed, what we feel and what we say and how we express our shyness with our bodies. Each doll has its own profile (sensitive, rigorous, moody, etc.).

Particular Aims

Through the students' participation in this activity, they are expected to:

- be able to express verbally and kinesthetically.
- discuss matters of everyday life with regard to emotions.
- be placed in the position of someone who has a feeling.

3.2. Expected contribution of this local history programs to the primary education students of mono-cultural and multicultural classes

In recent years, the contribution of local history to education has been expanded, all its approaches have been exploited and the need for organic integration in primary education curricula is highlighted. What is worth mentioning is that familiarization and occupation with local history is underlined for students coming from other countries, as through the combination of general and local history both the Greek and non-Greek students are benefitted. More precisely, through this particular project of raising cultural awareness through using local history themes, it can be mentioned that:

- (a) the teaching of local historical sources provides opportunities for sensitization and representation of the historical past, and so it solves methodological problems of general history (Haritos, 2009, 28-40).
- (b) students identify and familiarize themselves with the wide range of sources of historical information (documents, objects, buildings, songs, testimonies, etc.) and gradually begin to understand the concepts of historical space and time, demanded of the historical lesson in primary education (Haritos, 2009, 28-40).
- (c) through the field research and in combination with the sources, realization is achieved: the awareness of the changes, the perception of the time evolution of the historical space and the experience of the changes taking place in the everyday life of the people, the understanding and acceptance of the culture, religious and other social and political changes (Leontsinis, 1999, 20, Leontsinis, 1996, 29).
- (d) students are familiar with the methodology of historical research as local history promotes the discovery, collection, observation, evaluation, classification of historical sources and the extraction and presentation of individual and general conclusions and the arguments in the written and oral speech (Leontsinis, 1999, 22-33).
- (e) reconstruction skills are strengthened as far as possible in the past, developing skills such as empathy, since on the basis of their place they see over time the ideas, beliefs and practices of the people who lived before themselves in the place and thus distinguish the features of the identity of the modern world and the collective memory is cultivated (Leontsinis, 1996, 34-35, 59).
- (f) being engaged in local history helps students to know their place/or the new place and respect it, to become responsible and active citizens for the preservation and protection of cultural heritage. They develop their interest in the history of their place/new place and approach the lives of important humans through various perspectives (religious, social, political etc), thus forming personal identity, while avoiding stereotypes (Leontsinis, 1996, 34-35 , 59).

Concluding Remarks

This paper includes creative local history activities that aim at developing skills such as empathy, encouraging experiential and group collaboration, finding a link between local history and other sciences (e.g. art).

It is worth mentioning that the activities proposed in this paper are only indicative and as such they can be taken into account, as according to Kosteletzky, recipes for teaching history do not exist. They need to be adapted to the requirements of the particular environment and the interests of the particular school class. Proposals for teaching purposes only as indicative are taken into account. As far as the time is concerned, the teaching module for local history needs to be developed within the program according to its gravity and historical significance for the wider history and the history of the region (Vaina, 1997, 136-141).

Local history has been associated with stereotypes, as it was argued that it prefers the superiority of one place over another. The existence of prejudices and the necessity to overcome them, however, are related to learning. A great deal of the process of degradation of prejudices at school is given to the personality of the teacher and to the extent that he is consciously liberated by them (Vaina, 1997, 77-81) and to the awareness of teachers that experiential and group cooperative activities with their communication character, help to remove social and learning inequalities in school (Govaris, 2001, 79). Therefore, it is important to keep educators constantly informed about new forms of teaching, by designing programs of different forms such as projects, and by addressing issues of intercultural education and local history in order to be able to cultivate among students their love for the place, whether they come from mono-cultural or multicultural environments (Androsou, 2000, 16-19, Ganser, 2000).

It is our view that cultural awareness should be raised in Greek schools which are characterized with a great cultural and linguistic diversity. Indeed, a number of educational projects have been designed and implemented in Greece (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2017; Papadopoulos & Panteli, 2017; Griva & Semoglou, 2015; Papadopoulos & Theologou, 2015; Griva & Chostelidou, 2012) which have indicated the beneficial role of raising cultural and multicultural awareness of students being educated within multicultural classes. In this way, they are becoming open to the “different”, they foster their empathy towards the other, they learn to respect and co-exist with the others and thus they learn to live together peacefully in diverse world.

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