

MUSEUM EDUCATION AS AN IMPORTANT VECTOR IN DEVELOPING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS

EDUCAȚIA MUZEALĂ CA VECTOR IMPORTANT ÎN FORMAREA IDENTITĂȚII CULTURALE A STUDENȚILOR-ARHITECȚI

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Rezumat. Articolul reflectă un studiu teoretico-practic centrat pe educația muzeală ca dimensiune importantă în procesul de formare profesională și culturală a studenților-arhitecți, contribuind la dezvoltarea conștiinței estetice și a sensibilității artistice, premise definitorii pentru afirmarea și cultivarea identității culturale. În contextul actual al educației bazate pe experiență și interdisciplinaritate, muzeul se afirmă ca mediu propice de învățare, menit să favorizeze receptarea și înțelegerea operelor artistice, istorice și arhitecturale prin interacțiunea directă dintre știință, artă și patrimoniu. Studiul urmărește elucidarea importanței educației muzeale în formarea identității culturale a studenților-arhitecți prin dezvoltarea conștiinței estetice și a sensibilității artistice. Metodologia aplicată a inclus analiza teoretică a literaturii de specialitate, studii de caz realizate în cadrul activităților formale și nonformale, observația participativă, fotofixări și interviuri semistructurate cu studenți și cadre didactice. Rezultatele obținute au demonstrat sporirea competențelor la nivel de cunoaștere, aplicare și integrare a studenților-arhitecți, privind realizarea educației muzeale care asigură fortificarea conexiunilor dintre tradiție și inovație reflectate în arhitectură, artă și patrimoniu cultural, contribuind astfel la formarea unor profesioniști creativi, flexibili și conștienți de responsabilitatea lor față de trecut, prezent și viitor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educație muzeală, identitate culturală, studenți-arhitecți.*

Abstract. The article presents a theoretical and practical study focused on museum education as a key dimension in the professional and cultural formation of architecture students, contributing to the development of aesthetic awareness and artistic sensitivity—fundamental premises for the affirmation and cultivation of cultural identity. In the current context of experience-based and

interdisciplinary education, the museum emerges as a favorable learning environment that facilitates the perception and understanding of artistic, historical, and architectural works through the direct interaction between science, art, and heritage. The study aims to elucidate the importance of museum education in shaping the cultural identity of architecture students by fostering aesthetic consciousness and artistic sensitivity. The applied methodology included theoretical analysis of the specialized literature, case studies carried out within formal and non-formal activities, participatory observation, photographic documentation, and semi-structured interviews with students and academic staff. The results obtained demonstrated an increase in the students' knowledge, application, and integration competencies regarding museum education, which strengthens the connection between tradition and innovation as reflected in architecture, art, and cultural heritage. Consequently, this process contributes to the formation of creative, adaptable professionals who are aware of their responsibility toward the past, present, and future.

Keywords: *museum education, cultural identity, architecture students.*

Introduction. In recent decades, paradigm shifts in education have led to a reassessment of alternative sources and resources for training, particularly those involving cultural and artistic dimensions, and university education in this field is placing increasing emphasis on the harmonious development of students, focusing both on professional training and on the promotion of cultural heritage, which is the main vector of national identity. In a globalized society marked by rapid socio-cultural and economic changes, the integration of cultural heritage into the educational process is becoming a major necessity for the promotion of national identity. This objective is also set out in the *European Union Council Recommendation* on key competences for lifelong learning (2018) [15], which recognises cultural awareness and expression as a key competence.

Similarly, the importance of this educational dimension is also supported by *Law No. 262/2017 of the Republic of Moldova on museums* [16], which stipulates those museums are not only cultural institutions focused on research, conservation, and preservation of museum heritage, but are also identified as essential in the education of the younger generation.

According to the same law, museums have multiple functions: *scientific, educational, cultural, social*, etc., through which they actively contribute to the formation/development of a society's cultural identity. The *educational function* of the museum can be achieved by organizing thematic exhibitions, creative workshops, cultural mediation activities, and collaboration programs with educational institutions. Thus, the museum becomes a privileged space for non-formal and experiential learning, which supports and complements formal and informal education, stimulating the mechanisms of knowledge and understanding of national and universal cultural heritage.

From a broader perspective, the *Report on the Cultural Policy of the Republic of Moldova* (UNESCO & EU, 2021) [17] emphasizes that in order to integrate culture and creativity at all levels of the education system, it is necessary to establish and maintain equitable partnerships between schools, universities, and cultural institutions to support the development of young people's cultural, artistic, and civic skills. The same idea is presented in the *Cultural Development Strategy of the Republic of Moldova, Culture 2020* [18], which identifies free access to cultural heritage and its use as an authentic source of education and training for future specialists as one of its key priorities. At the same time, *Culture 2020* emphasizes the role of culture in the sustainable development of society by stimulating creativity, forming/developing awareness, moral and civic behavior, and capitalizing on museum heritage as part of cultural identity.

Based on the above, universities in this field are encouraged to initiate and strengthen collaboration with museums and cultural institutions, turning them into active and dedicated partners in the process of professionalizing future specialists. Our research conducted over several years [4; 5; 6; 7; 9, etc.] has convinced us that such initiatives can significantly contribute to revitalizing the educational process and stimulating learning based on the interconnection of science, technology, and art, and that collaboration between the social and educational institutions involved can be successfully achieved by applying the following principles:

- the principle of respecting diversity of opinion;
- the principle of ensuring equal and fair access to all educational activities;
- the principle of achieving harmonious interactions that are accepted by all partners;
- the principle of promoting effective and transparent communication between participants;
- the principle of clearly defining the roles of each participant in joint actions;
- the principle of coordinating cooperation between partners so that their interaction is balanced, fair, and productive.

By implementing these principles, collaboration becomes a dynamic and structured process that not only facilitates the active participation of all actors involved, but also supports the formation of an educational climate oriented towards knowledge, understanding and promotion of museum heritage, designed to ensure compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* [19] and to respond to the social, economic and cultural challenges of the 21st century.

Shaping the cultural identity of architecture students by capitalizing on museum heritage in the context of creative practice: some pedagogical principles and strategies

A comparative analysis of several definitions and theoretical interpretations [1; 2; 3; 10; 11; 12; 13, etc.] of the concepts of *cultural identity*, *museum*, and *museum heritage* has allowed us to identify relevant meanings in which cultural identity can be understood as an expression of an individual's or group's belonging to a system of values, traditions, and symbols that reflect a common cultural heritage and determine how reality is perceived and interpreted, and the museum is defined as a cultural institution serving the community, with the mission of acquiring, preserving, researching, and promoting tangible and intangible heritage for the purpose of education and the cultural and aesthetic development of society. Museum heritage comprises all cultural, tangible, and intangible assets of historical, artistic, and documentary importance, resulting from human creative activity, which preserve evidence of the evolution of human civilization. Similarly, after studying the relevant literature [2; 3; 11, etc.], we have established that museum education integrates specific content, applicable at various levels of the educational system, which contributes to the moral, intellectual, aesthetic, technological, and psychological development of the individual and is configured as one of the desiderata of new education.

Therefore, we find that the relationship between cultural identity, museum heritage, and museum education is one of continuous interdependence: museum heritage provides the content of identity, the museum provides the context for conservation and cultural interaction, and museum education becomes the tool through which cultural values are internalized, reinterpreted, and transmitted to new generations.

In this regard, it should be noted that the importance of the educational function within the museum was recognized as early as the 18th century, with the establishment of the first museum audience, and in the 19th century, the first educational practices took shape, such as guided lessons, explanatory tours, and consultations, focused on the valorization of museum objects and collections, which became classic and have remained relevant to this day, according to museologist E. Ploșniță [13].

The evolution of these forms of education led to the crystallization of the modern concept of museum education, representing one of the essential directions of contemporary education, oriented towards the harmonious development of the human personality through the formation of reflective abilities, critical thinking, aesthetic sensitivity and cultural awareness.

In the context of capitalizing on the cultural heritage preserved in museums, museum education becomes a form of experiential learning, and the museum facilitates direct contact with the heritage object, transforming the process of knowledge into an active experience of discovery, assimilation, adaptation, updating, and promotion of cultural heritage. Educational activities carried out in museums, such as guided tours, thematic workshops, conferences, round tables, and interdisciplinary programs, contribute to shaping the personality of student

architects, providing them with the value, aesthetic, and conceptual benchmarks necessary for designing contemporary architecture in which culture, memory, and innovation coexist in a complementary balance, while also stimulating their interest in research, creation, and the preservation of cultural identity.

In this context, the vision of Russian researcher B. A. Stoliarov [14] is relevant, who argues that museum education for students should be oriented towards the development of a creative personality, capable of relating to cultural heritage in terms of values, based on the following humanistic principles, intended to guide the educational process carried out in museums and to ensure coherence between the cognitive, aesthetic, and axiological dimensions of the cultural formation of the subjects involved:

- *the principle of personal orientation*, which emphasizes the importance of knowing the individual profile of each educational actor: their values, interests, behavior, and aptitudes in order to adapt learning methods and content to the needs and potential of each individual;

- *the principle of differentiation according to individual characteristics and age*, which involves organizing and conducting museum educational activities in accordance with the specific characteristics of the target group, age, interests, and motivations of the participants;

- *the principle of developing an active personality*, which aims to stimulate the active involvement of students in museum education activities, transforming them from mere recipients of information into active participants in the process of knowledge and creation;

- *the principle of cooperation between the actors in the museum education process*, which involves a mutual and balanced relationship between the museum educator, the heritage object, and the visiting public, with a view to achieving and accumulating quality educational experiences.

In accordance with the researcher's findings and based on the age characteristics of the students, we propose a set of principles for museum education that are relevant to the formation of the cultural identity of architecture students through the promotion of museum heritage:

1. *The principle of integrating cultural values into the educational process* involves including museum content in the university curriculum so that cultural heritage becomes an active resource for developing professional skills and shaping the identity awareness of future architects.

2. *The principle of experiential learning* aims at learning through direct contact with museum objects and collections, encouraging students to research, understand, and promote cultural heritage in their own projects.

3. *The principle of interdisciplinary dialogue* promotes interconnection between the fields of architecture, visual arts, history, museology, and pedagogy, etc.

4. ***The principle of combining tradition with innovation and technology*** seeks to strike a balance between respect for cultural heritage and the ability to creatively reinterpret it in the context of contemporary architectural projects.

5. ***The principle of aesthetic and axiological education*** refers to the cultivation of aesthetic and artistic taste, which provides the basis for the high cultural, moral, and symbolic appreciation of heritage objects.

6. ***The principle of active and reflective participation*** involves the direct involvement of students in museum activities (creative workshops, exhibitions, projects, etc.), encouraging the formation of a positive attitude towards the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

7. ***The principle of cultural contextualization*** involves relating cultural heritage to local, regional and universal identity in affirming the professional identity of future architects.

These principles can serve as substantial support in effectively linking the curricular content of the Creative Practice discipline to educational programs carried out in museums, actively involving student architects in research, conservation, revitalization, and reinterpretation of museum heritage, offering them unique opportunities in the process of discovering and rediscovering techniques and technologies used by our predecessors in creating and transmitting cultural heritage.

In the context of the productive implementation of Creative Practice, based on increasing the exploration of museum heritage, the following pedagogical strategies can be applied:

- ***The strategy of efficient planning of educational activities*** for the Creative Practice discipline, by capitalizing on national and universal museum heritage, so that curricular requirements and national educational standards are met, including international protocols and conventions on the integration of museum heritage into education and society.

- ***Strategy for applying interactive methods***, adapted to the specific context and curriculum content, designed to stimulate active learning. This gives students the opportunity to research aspects of museum heritage and transfer theoretical knowledge into practice, while developing their ability to adapt to current and future challenges in society.

- ***The strategy of organizing formal and non-formal activities*** from an inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary perspective, which would promote the integration of museum heritage into curricular disciplines such as: Study of Forms, Painting, Design, Creative Practice, etc., thus strengthening the connection between various artistic and cultural fields.

- ***The strategy of monitoring and evaluating teaching activities***, designed to ensure the relevance of the proposed objectives through the continuous optimization of activities, by capitalizing on the national and universal museum heritage.

• ***The strategy of creating a favorable educational environment***, centered on the four pillars of postmodern education: learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together with others [8] by adjusting formal educational resources to non-formal and informal ones.

• ***The strategy of developing educational partnerships with museum and cultural institutions***, aimed at establishing and maintaining effective and productive collaborations that enable research, restoration, revitalization, and integration of cultural heritage into students' creations (painting, drawing, projects, etc.).

The application of these strategies would facilitate the real and active involvement of architecture students in educational activities aimed at exploring and reinterpreting museum heritage. In this sense, museum heritage is perceived not only as an object of study or a source of inspiration, but also as a link between tradition and contemporaneity, contributing significantly to the formation and development of a set of professional skills, aptitudes, and competencies of future specialists.

In this context, and based on our pedagogical experience, we will offer some examples of good educational practices aimed at harmoniously correlating the curricular content of *Creative Practice* with museum heritage, as reflected in the work of student architects. Thus, the architecture students have successfully created a series of compositions inspired by various elements or even important and varied architectural buildings from an artistic, historical, cultural, stylistic, aesthetic, etc. perspective, Figures 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6.



Figures 1, 2: Abstract compositions, author Jitaruc Ina, ARH-231



Figures 3, 4: Abstract compositions, author Nicoloy Baxaneanu, ARH-231



Figures 5, 6: Abstract compositions, author Muștiuc Cătălina, ARH-231

As can be seen, in order to develop these creations, the students carried out extensive research and sketching, studying each building and decorative element, which allowed us to affirm that *Creative practice* focused on museum education from the perspective of shaping the cultural identity of architecture students - architects can be carried out on several essential dimensions, which reflect the complexity and interdisciplinarity of this approach:

- *The professional dimension*, which aims to develop the abilities of critical analysis, interpretation, and appreciation of works of art, related to the professional context specific to the fields of architecture, design, visual arts, art history, etc.

- *The scientific dimension*, which takes shape through the involvement of students in research activities, combining methods specific to museology with those specific to their own disciplines.

- *The humanistic dimension*, through the promotion of national and universal cultural values, tolerance, mutual respect, etc.

- *The aesthetic dimension*, which assumes the role of cultivating artistic sensitivity, taste for beauty, and understanding of the concepts of harmony, proportion, expressiveness, etc.

In conclusion, the formation of the cultural identity of architecture students through the valorization of museum heritage in the context of *Creative Practice* has proven to be effective and has been marked by continuous academic advancement reflected in their performance in both formal and informal contexts through participation in various competitions, scientific conferences, exhibitions, etc., nominated for awards and diplomas.

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