

# Educating students by means of cross media (Case study of the protection of cultural-historic monuments)

Alexi Danchev

Fatih University, BuyukCekmece, Istanbul, Turkey

adanchev@fatih.edu.tr

**Abstract.** *This discussion puts on the agenda one very important and principal problem for the educators in social sciences – how “social” is our social sciences education. Formulating in details it means “Do we really use the advance of approaches and methodologies in the modern social sciences to train students in better understanding of our complicated world, or we prefer the easy-to-present standard models, which create abstract schemes in the students’ minds very far from the problems they are to face after the graduation”. Obviously both are needed. In this sense the workshop is only part of a more general discussion about the need to increase the “human” elements in our social sciences teaching. Among the other things it means that students, which receive high education diploma have to be aware also of such fundamental problems as the role of moral, ethics and culture in socio-economic growth and development. The cultural-historic monuments protection is only a small part of this process.*

**Keywords:** Educational curricula, Cultural-historic monuments, Culture, Visualization.

## 1. Introduction

Taking into account the present state and advancement in the education methodology the necessity of a workshop devoted to cultural issues is obvious. The discussion of the protection of cultural-historic monuments is only part of it. There is a need of more systematic knowledge of the importance of the protection of cultural-historic monuments not only because our area is very rich with them, but as there is an increasing understanding in society of the role of culture for further progress in development.

The workshop on applying modern technologies in education illustrated by the protection of cultural-historic monuments is aimed at initiating a general discussion going beyond the conservation and restoration works and spreading to the inclusion of the cultural issues in the educational curricula. Many studies

have already unambiguously indicated the strong positive role of culture in socio-economic development interpreted in a very broad sense [1], [2]. The protection of cultural-historic monuments is only one illustration of the problem. There is a need of creating of system of knowledge providing understanding in the students about the role of such factors as trust, moral, ethics, culture and other “forgotten” elements of the classical education, which play very important role on micro and macro levels of decision-making process.

In this sense the discussions are envisaged to shed light on teaching students in broader than at present “human” factors of the modern development. This is postulate, which refers not only to the students in social sciences; the other students despite their professional orientation also need clearer vision about the world they live in. It puts to the fore another educational problem: introducing social knowledge in “non-social” sciences.

Indicative in this sense were the archeological works on the discovering of the remains of the long Anastasian wall in the area of Istanbul [3]. Gradually the team involved in this work extended their study trying to analyze the wall in the context of the socio-economic setting of that time and to outline the complex of factors enforcing the Emperor Anastasias to build the wall. The students thus received a broader vision on the origin and functions of the wall, which allowed them to make a bridge with the present. This seems to be the basic educational contribution from the protection of the cultural-historic heritage in our area, which is one of the richest in the world.

## 2. Methodological background of the study

Any educational study at the present stage unavoidably includes the problem of the media involved in it. This is due to the fact that a big progress has been made during the last decade in creating software allowing easy access and

processing of information which earlier was admittance only to the specially trained staff. The inclusion of these technologies into the educational process is not a question of a fashion. It makes sense to include them only if they contribute to increase the educational effect of the materials the students are to grasp with.

By educational effect (EE) we mean the efforts for good understanding of the taught material when media is involved to the same efforts without the media. The criteria for selection of the media for further teaching is  $EE > 1$ . In case EE is equal or close to one we are indifferent to the application of media, in case  $EE < 1$  there is no sense to apply the media.

Intuitively one can expect that the application of media should always have high educational effect especially for students for which English is not a mother language due to purely natural conditions. Visual perception is the most efficient than all other insights. There are many connotations in this process. Hunt [4] indicates “the uniquely decisive influence” of media, Robinson [5] recommends expanding values in professional presentations and calls for the development of critical standards in the media.

On the other hand we have to underline the increasing need of “socialization” of education born by the present crisis of values in the modern societies. It increases the need of including into curricula problems as moral and ethics and their role in development, the role of culture, etc. or to introduce special course devoted on these issues.

The last goal is very broad and includes many objectives. The problems of culture are very closely related to the problems of moral and ethics and often it is impossible to decouple them. As Fischer [6] indicates “the challenge of cultural analysis is to develop translation and mediation tools for helping make visible the differences of interests, access, power, needs, desires, and philosophical perspective”. This makes education of culture tremendously difficult and responsible activity. To rich maximum effect the education of culture needs various approaches depending on the future specialization of students. Teaching culture to social science and engineering students is not the same, but there are many common elements we try to reveal next. It is well illustrated on the case of cultural-historic monuments.

### **3. Technological problems of applying cross media in education**

At the preset stage there is a huge advance in media technology than some 10 even 5 years ago. Adobe CS5 complex, Autodesk new 2011 suites, Avid 5 advancements, etc. are only few examples. The progress in this area goes far before the evolution of the educational thinking which is traditionally conservative. The reduction of this gap is very difficult as the visualization of education is a question of personal choice of the educator. Besides it requires mobilization of additional investment in education for the creating of the necessary material base and training of educators how to apply the new media instruments. The solution of the second problem is more difficult as it requires new culture of teaching which is related to the changes in the professional status of the educators.

The observations of the applied media in the educational process show increasing application of PowerPoint's presentations. At present this becomes almost international standard for various presentations. This has very big advantages for both students and teachers as it allows exposing the plan of the discussion supported by diagrams, schemes, etc. visual materials.

Much more modest is the application of the cross media and namely the video illustrations although it is intuitively expected to have much higher educational effect in comparison with the other media devices. First this is completely new area of educational technology and there is not yet sufficient experience and second this is principally new technology which requires essentially innovative approach. When we add to it the much higher expenditure and time involved to prepare good quality video illustrations it becomes clear that this is really a difficult task. As this is a pioneering work at the present stage it needs not only good funding but enthusiasm and motivation to introduce it.

The observations of the applied teaching materials show that most of the educators are using them as some substitution of what they explain during the lessons. Most of these materials are just recording the lessons which allow students to see them outside the classrooms. Often they are accessible by Internet. Despite the interest in applying this type of teaching, it definitely has low educational

effect. Most of students regard it rather as a boring device and in many cases prefer to obtain their knowledge from such a classical source as the textbook.

This comes for the wrong understanding of the role of media in education – it has not substitution but complement effect. Its aim is not to replace the teacher for a given moment but to visualize some of his ideas or by means of images to make the materials more understandable for students. Teacher and media are part of the same process – teaching. From purely visual reasons the appearance of the teacher in the video materials may be more than redundant – rather the illustration should show examples or metaphors making the complexity of the discussed problems closer to the students' minds.

#### **4. The results of empirical studies**

During the last decade serious experimentation works have been done to apply cross media in various lessons with students for most of which English was not a mother language. They have been interviewing about the educational effect of this media during their mid-term exam (the questionnaire was attached to the exam papers explicitly indicating the voluntary character of the interviewing) and the results have been processing by SPSS software.

The following media has been experimented:

- PowerPoint slides. This is already a standard in the educational process as if properly organized since the very beginning it has very high educational effect. These slides are used for the overall presentation of the lecture and this is already established practice in many educational institutions.

- Records of presentations of high professional experts on the issues of discussion. Simple recording however is not sufficient if the video-materials are not edited with inclusion of suitable illustrations.

As a whole the attitude to such type of teaching is positive. More than 90% of students approve the applying of PowerPoint presentation provided the slides are prepared professionally. Negative attitude is expressed when the slides are overcrowded with information, when they are white/black and they repeat the words the teacher is speaking during the demonstration.

The inclusion of video illustrations into the teaching process significantly changes the

situation. Initially it increases very much the interest in the lessons as something new and unusual. This is very responsible moment to attract the interest in students and motivating them to profound knowledge. The aim is to move education from informative to creative process in which ideas are generated. The well-prepared video- materials increase this motivation especially when students are involved into its preparation. It means not so much direct participation into the script or editing process but some short discussion of the quality of illustration and the critics to it.

Related to the teaching of the protection of cultural-historic monuments there was a problem in which courses it can be included. Initially it was a part of Environmental Economics classes within the cost-benefit analysis discussion, while gradually a specialized elective course of Economics of Culture curricula has been elaborated and proposed to the students' attention.

Understanding the location of our study all students support the idea of protection of cultural-historic heritage. Very high is also the level of approval that this would have positive effect on the regional development. The global benefits of this protection also have positive values.

The discussion of the protection of cultural-historic monuments is included as part of costs-benefits discussions with illustration of the whole complexity of such assessment. Due to this discussion students receive practical understanding of such important theoretical categories as compounding and discounting, shadow pricing, various forms of values, etc.

Important is also the systemic character of the presentation of regional stock of cultural-historic monuments, their state and the needs of conservation/restoration works. Although this is not new information for most of the students such systematization allows more precisely addressing the problem of priorities in funding the protective works.

There is also another aspect of the problem. As a rule the students groups consist of representatives of various cultures and cultural differences are often substantial barrier for good communication. The discussing of issues as the protection of our common heritages helps to reduce strongly the restrictive effect of cultural differences and to reach more homogenous effect on the perception of the problems without losing the individuality of the views.

As a whole the educational effect of the introducing of cross media in education is high although it is expensive and time consuming work – it makes sense to introduce it providing all other conditions for good teaching are available – suitable classrooms, light, atmosphere, etc. Even when ready cross media is used it requires serious training. The instructors which expect to reach high effect in the beginning are to be disappointed – it takes considerable time of individual training to be able to cope with the techniques without having troubles with the lessons.

The teaching of the protection of cultural-historic monuments in particular is not an easy process also for many other reasons: there are not yet sufficient teaching materials; the place where to include this topic into various curricula is also debatable. The optimal solution seems to be the introduction of Economics of Culture elective course oriented to broad audience supposed to include students with various interests and specialization. This seems at least the easiest solution in the beginning. As however Jernigan [7] underlines “the problem of not teaching culture has more to do with lack of training in teaching culture”.

In conclusion it seems now is just the time to initiate discussion of the introduction of cross media in education due to many reasons. The educational process has reached sufficient maturity, in the era of Internet we need to look for more adequate forms of education for the young generation oversaturated with visual information. Using our white chalk and black board technique is obviously not sufficient to motivate students toward a high professional level knowledge.

The protection of cultural-historic monuments is one very good illustration of this problem. This intra-educational issue allows minimizing the cost of vitalization by preparing a cross-media course suitable for many faculties and departments. It requires however as a background a good theory of culture, which “must reflect the fluidity and complexity of the psychological states that underlie the cultural process” [8].

Finally we would like to underline that no technology can replace the vivid presentation and discussions of the problems and first of all we need to be good instructors and then good technologists. The cross media can give us many advantages in education.

## 5. Acknowledgments

**I owe a lot for the preparation of this paper to the project “Managing human capital for the aims of sustainable development (case study of some Balkan countries)” supported by the Scientific Research Fund of Fatih University under the project number P51010901\_1.** Although not directly oriented to the topic it allowed collecting valuable information for the theoretical explanation of the endogenous motivations for the WTP for cultural monuments generalizing the effect of the human capital accumulation. We express our thanks for the ability to use this support. Many thanks to all colleagues which gave constructive critics to the paper.

## 6. References

- [1] Simon D, Development Reconsidered; New Directions in Development Thinking Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography; In: Current Development Thinking; 1997; 79(4):183-201.
- [2] Tomasello M., The Human Adaptation for Culture. Annual Review of Anthropology 1999; 28: 509-529.
- [3] Crow J. The Anastasian Wall Project 1999. Bulletin of British Byzantine Studies 2000; 26: 33-34.
- [4] Hunt A., 'Moral Panic' and Moral Language in the Media. The British Journal of Sociology 1997; 48(4): 629-648.
- [5] Robinson B. The Management of Quality in Open and Distance Learning. In: Indira Gandhi National Open University, Structure and Management of Open Learning Systems. Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities, New Delhi, February 20-22, 1995; 1: 95-109.
- [6] Fischer M. J. Culture and Cultural Analysis as Experimental Systems. Cultural Anthropology 2007; 22(1): 1-65.
- [7] Jernigan Ch. G. Teaching Culture: A Study in the Portuguese Classroom Implications for the National Standards. Hispania 1997; 80(4): 837.
- [8] Hollan D., Constructivist Models of Mind, Contemporary Psychoanalysis, and the Development of Culture Theory. American Anthropologist, New Series 2000; 102(3): 538-550.

