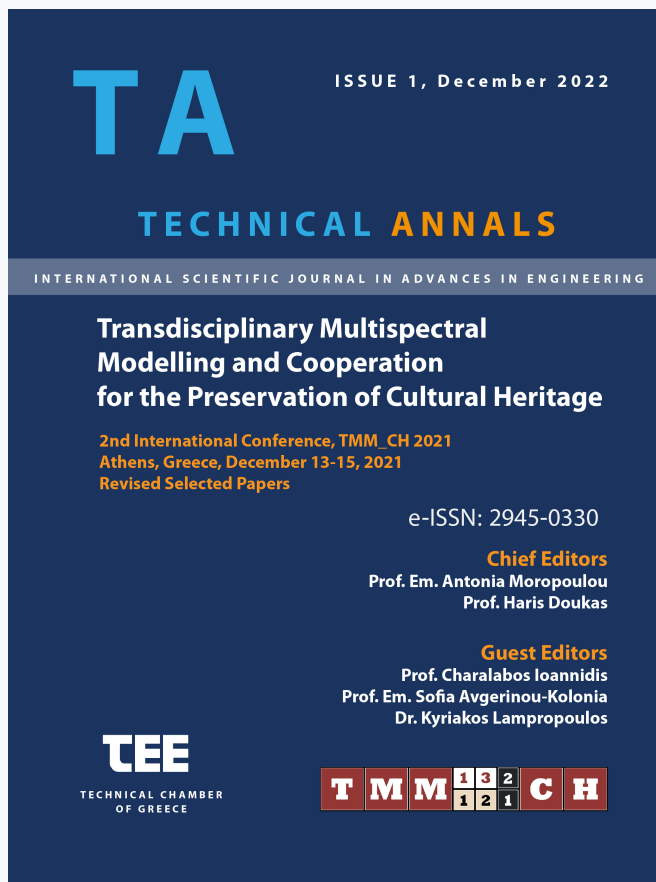


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**Exploring the Process of Educational Visits to the Primary schools as an Educational and Cultural Experience. A study based on Empirically Grounded Theory, in parallel with the Perspective of Cultural Communication**

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## **Exploring the Process of Educational Visits to the Primary schools as an Educational and Cultural Experience.**

### **A study based on Empirically Grounded Theory, in parallel with the Perspective of Cultural Communication.**

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**Abstract.** The educational visit, regardless of its multiple valuable functions and concepts, is a process of institutionalized education that takes place in places of cultural reference, according to the instructions given in the respective school curricula. It starts at school and ends at school, with an intermediate phase at the Museum. It is, therefore, typically an educational and cultural experience. However, it includes a series of activities that take place in different spaces of identity and philosophy, actions of people from two different scientific and professional fields, interactions of people who approach the process with different means and of course have different goals, needs and motivations. To the pluralism of this peculiar framework of the educational visit are added the qualitative parameters of the condition related to the person who participates and gives a special imprint to the process with his uniqueness, depending on his role. The comparative analysis of three studies on primary school students, teachers and museum professionals sought to provide an explanation from three different groups of subjects actively participating in an educational visit on the identity of the heritage-focused museum experience. The aim was to highlight the points of identification and differentiation in order to improve the effectiveness of the institution with an emphasis on the goals of cultural communication. In other words, how the educational visits as an institutionalized pillar of cultural heritage communication contribute to the formation of awareness attitudes, and the conscious participation of those involved in the whole process.

**Keywords:** Educational Visit, Experience, Education, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Communication

#### **1. Key points of the research problem.**

The process of educational visits is an experience of education and culture because it starts from the institutional framework of the school, and it is experienced in places of culture. The concepts of education and culture are inextricably linked, in other words they are in constant dialogue. This dialogue was sought to be determined in the school practice from 1995-2004, with the practices adopted during this period by the uniform policy of the Ministries of Education and Culture in Greece in the direction of documenting this principle. The expression of this change was the national program “MELINA: Education and Culture”, both in formal education and in the areas of cultural reference.

This program for the first time proposed a systemic model of didactic content for the “experiential-educational visit”. The process of educational visits is a communicative experience that starts in the classroom, culminates in cultural spaces, and ends in the school with multidimensional influences as well as perspectives for the participating students, teachers, museum professionals, which frequently refer to the pedagogical relationship- communication, and the principles of cultural communication.

Schools and Museums, in the context of the continuous redefining of their role and mission on the occasion of the condition of educational visits, produce and offer pedagogical and cultural experiences that can be performed as a narrative and the creation of meaning, either in the classroom or in a selected cultural space, or both. The institutional framework of educational visits, while clearly defined by law in terms of procedural parameters (number of visits per school year, participating students, trans-

portation, approval minutes) at the same time remains vague and undefined in terms of the critical stages of planning, planning, implementation and of its assessment within the schools, and is left to the teachers' choices, i.e. their personal interests and internal motivations.

We have to point out that what we call as experience plays a leading role in both educational sciences and cultural studies as a key concept for the all-round development of the individual and as crucial for his relationship with the historical, social, and cultural environment. Nevertheless, the experience has been studied through the prism of various scientific fields, but never as a holistic communicative approach to the process of an educational visit through the perspective of cultural communication, which includes the politics of communication, the interpretation, the reception, and the production of high aesthetics quality of cultural good, awareness, participation, awareness by recipients of the dynamic value of every aspect of culture.

Today, however, different approaches are adopted between the school and the museum in terms of utilizing the pedagogical potential of an educational visit, as well as the emphasis given to the intake of cultural goods. Teachers perceive museums as places for the realization of cognitive goals in an experiential way, while museum professionals as places for the dynamic development of experiences through the interpretation of the objects of the collections, but also as tools to strengthen communication through participation.

In an attempt to scientifically decipher communication, two main Schools of analysis were created according<sup>106</sup>. The School of Process (Linear) and the School of Semiotics. The models developed, in the first School, focus on the message and include in the dialogue the concepts (epigrammatically) medium, channel, transmitter, receiver, noise, feedback, access and thus are related to the process of its transmission. On the contrary, Semiotics emphasizes the meaning that is transmitted, introduces us to concepts such as sign, signification, image, signifier and signified, while at the same time it emphasizes the codes and the culture in which they exist<sup>107</sup>.

The most common short definition of Semiotics is the study of signs or the theory of signs. It is more fully defined as “the study of signs, signification, and signification systems. It includes the study not only of what we call signs in everyday language, but also of anything that represents something else. For semiotics, signs include words, images, sounds, gestures and objects<sup>108</sup>.”

Thus, semiotics affects archaeology, museology, visual arts and any expressive code that uses images, sounds, gestures, objects and differs from words. Fiske, underlines that: “Semiotics focuses on the analysis of a structured set of relationships that allows the message to mean something”<sup>109</sup>.

The representations of cultural objects (museological-cultural representation) constitute a complex code of cultural communication and highlight as important the familiarity with the production process of exhibitions in museums and art spaces<sup>110</sup>.

Educational visits, therefore, take place in communicative contexts related to literacy practices. The process is part of an organized teaching condition in a meaningful context of action, with the aim of maximizing students' potential, resulting in them using semiotic resources for meaningful purposes. This presupposes, however, a familiarity, if not specialization, of adult animators (educational and museum professionals) with the “reading” of different cultural works.

## 2. Purpose and objectives of the research.

Educational visits are an issue of concern to the community internationally. They appeal to a generation that has been nurtured with mass media and polyliteracies. Learning about the pedagogy of multi-literacies is a dynamic and multifaceted process, an act of meeting students and teachers with other sources of understanding the world, apart from language, such as audio or visual sources, images, music, gestures, the works of art. That is why the teaching material is drawn from everyday speech, print and electronic media, art forms, literature, theater, photographs, films, paintings, magazines, documen-

<sup>106</sup> Fiske, A.P. The four elementary forms of sociality: framework for a unified theory of social relations. *Psychological Review* 99(4), 689-723 (1992)

<sup>107</sup> Russell, A. M., & Fiske, S. T. Power and social perception. In: Guinote, A., Vescio, T. K. (eds.) *THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF POWER*, pp. 231–250. Guilford Press, New York (2010).

<sup>108</sup> Νίτσου, Π Μουσειολογική θεωρία και η ιδεολογική της χρήση σε αφηγήματα μουσείων: εφαρμογή σε τρία παραδείγματα (Διδακτορική Διατριβή). Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Θεσσαλονίκη (2011)

<sup>109</sup> Russell, A. M., & Fiske, S. T., o.p.

<sup>110</sup> Νίτσου, Π., o.p.

taries, etc.<sup>111</sup>.

According to the modern understanding of culture<sup>112</sup> as expressed in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), namely that everything constitutes culture, "the totality of the human creation of a society and an era", the culture of "everyday life" and the participation of all in culture is particularly emphasized. After all, the right to culture is recognized as a human right in article 27 par. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, General Assembly, Paris, 11/12/1948) as follows: "Everyone has the right to participate freely in cultural community life, to enjoy the arts and to participate in scientific progress and its benefits"<sup>113</sup>.

Childhood is recognized as decisive in shaping a person's personality. Based on this position, Strasburger et al. (2013)<sup>114</sup> point out through the findings of their long-term research the necessity of audiovisual literacy (Audiovisual or Media Literacy) through the provision of audiovisual literacy by the school, in order to achieve the cultivation of conscious receivers with increasingly higher quality requirements). The reflection that develops in the area of cultural studies has clearly been influenced by the approaches that analyze the question of the effects of the media, but it is equally closely connected with the perspective of literary analysis<sup>115</sup>.

Theories in general of content reception<sup>116</sup> have been developed in recent decades after the emergence of modernist texts with ambiguity and polysemy. Based on a psychological and research orientation, the theory of reception connected the horizon of experiences and expectations of the reader with the communicative structure of the text. They emphasized how a literary text acquires meaning (meaning production) for the reader and the act of reading as a process, and the effect it has on the reader<sup>117</sup>.

Museum exhibitions do not constitute a neutral presentation of the objects but constitute an interpretive presentation-narrative of them by the curator. However, they also leave room for personal interpretation of the objects by posing questions to the visitor that lead him to research and form his opinion. As the theory of content reception may also apply to cultural organizations, it is worth mentioning that, in this sense, the structure of education shaped by/in the media today – which has moved to the stage of the passive recipient or slightly informed citizen at the stage of the active citizen (performer), who now participates as an intelligent interlocutor (player) in the process of communication<sup>118</sup> – also gains interest as a structure of education that can be shaped by/in museums. One of the most persistent questions today regarding this theory is whether uptake differs from response, affect. Both terms have to do with the work's influence on someone, and it is not clear that they can be completely separated. "There are, however, several important features that separate reading response criticism from reception theory" (Holub 2004)<sup>119</sup>.

From this perspective, the influence of an educational process at a young age, which involves the targeting of a systematic exercise of a reflective-critical approach to a multimodal narrative that combines in turn different semiotic codes in the classroom and in the museum, is interesting to investigate if affects adult uptake/response. Our study attempts to lead to a change in the way of approaching cultural goods as a carrier of messages with another perspective that emerges and supports the field of cultural communication.

<sup>111</sup> From the exhibition narrative of the third periodical exhibition of the Museum of School Life of the Municipality of Chania, "Learning Resources" March 2014, curated by M. Drakaki

<sup>112</sup> Καραμπέτσου Α. Πολιτιστική Αναπαράσταση και Διαχείριση της Πολιτιστικής Κληρονομιάς. Το Μουσείο της Ακρόπολης (Πτυχιακή Εργασία). Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών, Πάτρα (2019).

<sup>113</sup> Πρόκου, Ε. Εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων και δια βίου μάθηση στην Ευρώπη και στην Ελλάδα. Εκδόσεις Διόνικος, Αθήνα (2009).

<sup>114</sup> Strasburger, V. C., Wilson, B. J., & Jordan, A. B. Children Adolescents and the Media. Sage Publications, New York (2013).

<sup>115</sup> Κωνσταντινίδου, Χ, Τα Μέσα Μαζικής Επικοινωνίας και η Παραγωγή Νοήματος, Θεωρητικές Προσεγγίσεις και Προοπτικές. Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών, 108-109, 139-188 (2002)

<sup>116</sup> Chemama, R. Ταυτότητα, απόλαυση και οι δημοκρατικές δυνατότητες του λαϊκισμού. In Hoffmann, Ch., & Birman, J. (επιμ.) ΜΙΑ ΚΑΙΝΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΛΑΙΚΙΣΜΟΥ. ΨΥΧΑΝΑΛΥΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ (μτφρ. Κ.Γούλα), pp. 79-115. Εκδόσεις Πλέθρον, Αθήνα (2020). Iser, W., The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore – London (1974). Iser, W., The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London (1978). Jauss, H. R., Η θεωρία της Πρόσληψης: Τρία Μελετήματα (μτφρ, Μ. Πεχλιβάνιος). Βιβλιοπωλείο της Εστίας, Αθήνα (1995).

<sup>117</sup> Holub, C. R. Θεωρία της Πρόσληψης. Μια κριτική εισαγωγή (επιμ. & μτφρ. Κ. Τσακοπούλου, & Α. Τζούμα). Εκδόσεις Μεταίχμιο, Αθήνα (2004)

<sup>118</sup> Κωνσταντινίδου, Χ., ο.π.

<sup>119</sup> Holub, C. R., ο.π.

Educational visits are detected as a meaning-making process by the participating students, teachers, and museum professionals, with the character of an original intellectual challenge that requires synthesis for the balanced effectiveness of the goals set by each organization. Educational visits are not limited to museum environments, but take place in every space of cultural reference, and the palpation of their process attempts to approach exhibition narratives that follow the practice of representation in museological design, and to inspire, respectively, both the initiation and the completion of any process that takes place in the classroom, with an emphasis on other economic codes apart from the linguistic one.

The process of the educational visit is investigated as a functional interactive multi-meaningful and open to interpretations communicative field from the phase of choosing the place of visit until the return to the school environment with active persons the three groups of research subjects.

This article briefly presents important points of the writer's thesis, with the researcher specifically seeking to detect the process of educational visits to the Primary School, so that:

- To perceive all this as a field of critical consideration of a variety of works that utilize different semiotic systems.
- To make use of the multiple communication possibilities of the institutional framework of educational visits as a field for safeguarding cultural democracy.
- To map skills of all participants for the communication of meanings, but also for the codification of the ideas and social discourses that intervene and invest the process of educational visits.
- To highlight necessary changes in the field of educational and cultural policy related to the central authority and affecting the process of educational visits.
- To propose communication policies to cultural organizations that take advantage of the relationship between formal education and the family in order to improve the quality of entertainment and free time.
- To highlight the need to empower each age group of participants, through the familiarization with multiliteracies and contemporary art.
- To contribute to the investigation of how participating teachers, students, and museum professionals make sense of and decode visual representations (cultural representations).
- To trace the process of developing critical literacy skills and analysis of visual representations and cultural representations in all participants.
- To highlight the necessity of emphasizing the implementation of this institution in the Primary School, and in particular with regard to the targeting of the process with the friction of students in codes, from a wide range of media, as well as an equally wide network of contemporary cultural sources world.
- To detect whether the process of educational visits plays a significant role in the cultural and social meaning of contemporary artistic works, as well as cultural heritage evidence.

Formal education teachers, museum professionals, but also students are invited to respond both in the classroom and on educational visits to new study skills of multiliteracies and the hyper-image that are the protagonists both in everyday school practice in teaching and learning, as well as and in the procedures of the educational visits, where they are reinforced in a new communicative context, namely from the museological and museographic narrative to the cultural organizations. Consequently, based on all the above, the subject of the study is formulated as follows: "Exploring the process of educational visits to the Primary School as an educational and culture experience. A study based on empirically grounded theory, in parallel with the perspective of cultural communication.

Accordingly, the main research question is formulated as follows: Based on the critical changes that took place in many theoretical fields of the sciences and arts, in the modern era does the process of educational visits need changes? What is the added value in carrying out the process of educational visits with the perspective of cultural communication?

In addition, the following subqueries are formed:

1. What changes and in which fields are they necessary, so that the process is ultimately effective for all participants?
2. In what ways can the institution of educational visits contribute to the role of art in the community in modern everyday life
3. In what ways can the institution of educational visits contribute to the relationship between cultural and school organizations?

4. In what ways can the institution of educational visits contribute to cultural education in the school community?
5. In what ways can the institution of educational visits inform national policies on education and culture?
6. What is their importance for the lives of the participating adults and minors?
7. Why defend their role in formal education?

### 3. Research method

Empirically grounded theory (EGT) aims to produce a theory about the researched subject; a theory that is based on empirical data, which is collected and analyzed in a systematic way<sup>120</sup>.

The use of grounded theory was chosen because it was deemed appropriate to explain the process of communicating the museum experience in a multi-prismatic manner by each group of subjects who actively participate in the educational visit. According to a previous study<sup>121</sup> “grounded” theory provides a better explanation than a ‘off-the-shelf’ theory. It responds to the situation, it really works in practice, it shows sensitivity to the people of an environment, and it can represent all the complexities encountered in the process.

Empirically grounded theory is characterized as a systematic process with precision that quantitative researchers wish to see in an educational study. It has traits that include a self-correcting character<sup>122</sup>. Based on the analysis of one set of data the researcher ensures direction for the next set of data<sup>123</sup>. Also, in data analysis the researcher systematically creates categories from incident to incident and from incident to category. In this way, the researcher remains close to the data at every moment of the analysis.

In each working group the researcher, after defining the category “museum experience” at the focus of the educational visit, approached the data again with a re- analysis in order to identify causal conditions, intervening categories and context categories, strategies and consequences to develop them later at the stage of axial coding their interrelationship. The third set of coding procedures is selective coding, where theory is developed. This process involves the process of intercorrelating the categories into a coding pattern. It may include the process of refining the axial coding pattern and presenting it as a model or theory of the process. It may involve writing proposals that provide testable ideas for further research. This stage may also involve writing a story or narrative, which in turn involves the interrelationships between the categories<sup>124</sup>.

Based on the coding pattern in each working group, the researcher developed the emerging theory and grounded the description of the findings by highlighting a new theoretical discussion (third theory writing-propositions). The researcher in each working group, after formulating the theory, validated the process of the educational visit based on the axes of cultural communication by comparing it with existing processes mentioned in the bibliography (Conclusions – Placing the interpretations in a context of wider meanings).

### 4. Conclusions

In an attempt to capture comprehensively and synthetically the comparative analysis of the coding patterns and theoretical propositions of the three foundational theories, the results of the present study led to two critical parameters for the detected process.

- A. The holistic communicative approach to the symbolic process of the educational visits with a convergence of interpretive and pedagogical practices, with the main condition being reciprocity from the school and the museum at all stages.

<sup>120</sup> Τσιώλης, Γ. Μέθοδοι και Τεχνικές Ανάλυσης στην Ποιοτική Κοινωνική Έρευνα. Εκδόσεις Κριτική. Αθήνα (2014).

<sup>121</sup> Creswell, J. (2015). Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. Pearson, New York

<sup>122</sup> Creswell, J., o.p.

<sup>123</sup> Charmaz, K. Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. In: Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) HANDBOOK OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH, pp. 88-163. Sage, Thousand Oaks (2000).

<sup>124</sup> Creswell, J. (2011). Η Έρευνα στην Εκπαίδευση, Σχεδιαμός, Διεξαγωγή και Αξιολόγηση της Ποσοτικής και Ποιοτικής Έρευνας (μτφρ. Ν. Κουβαράκου. Επιμ. Χ. Τσορμπατζούδης). Εκδόσεις ΙΩΝ, Αθήνα.

The theories generated by the methodology adopted in qualitative research, as it was conducted, are narrow in scope. However, the comparative study of all three working groups with the identifications and differences that emerged, lead in addition to the perspective of the process as a symbolic system, at the same time to social interaction.

The term symbolic indicates throughout the process, at all stages, the semiotic approaches needed for their management, the importance of specialization of the animators- coordinators regardless of the space (school or museum), regardless of the role of the institutional framework or the policy of the organization, whether they are educators or museum professionals. The research findings per group of subjects, but also synthetically, emphasize social interaction and cultural symbols and tools, which are necessary for man to adapt the various forms of knowledge to his daily life.

B. The systemic approach to the process with the development of the relationship at all levels, from the classroom to the school and the museum, to the community and the center, in order to achieve the intended influences directly on the participants and indirectly on the families, in the local community in the state.

The synthetic evaluation of the findings by all the participants in the process highlights the effectiveness of the systemic approach to education and is directed to its necessity with the starting point - the field of application of the educational visits. The systems linked to the process of educational visits are schools, museums, central and local authority, the family, the local community, the state. Nothing can be understood by itself, all elements are related, interact, and co-determine.

The study established in many ways the criticality of the concept of the system, not only in the process itself, but also in the participants as organized entities, and in the organizations involved in the occasion of the visit, as environments.

Mid-range theories were produced, however, the continuous and methodical critical dialogue of the findings with existing theories by working group, comparative and synthetic, built step by step and gradually the building blocks of the results of the present research that indicates trends and opens windows for new fields of study. The educational visits revealed a complex communicative, pedagogical, and cultural event that unfolds unexpected possibilities.

Such possibilities are the following:

- Convergence tool for national policies on education and culture.
- Pillar for the implementation of self-evaluation policies in cultural and educational organizations.
- Field of application of community synergies towards shaping interesting lifelong learning attitudes.
- A means of mitigating social inequalities through the mutual feedback of formal, non-formal and informal learning.
- Training sector for the utilization of cultural heritage and all forms of contemporary artistic creation in education as expression and communication, with the interdisciplinary approach of cultural and pedagogical sciences, with an emphasis on Museology, Psychology, Pedagogy, Communication.

This research marks the answers given to the research question and sub-questions, as well as the answers that echo the systemic principles to be followed. An educational visit process is a fruitful pedagogical cultural experience according to the findings of the research, when it is based on the effective exchange of messages, within a strong psychological and moral communication framework, which surrounds the participants.

The process of educational visits underlines the restructuring of an open educational system, which will give priority to persons as organized wholes, with an emphasis on functional “belonging” and “connection”, equal importance in the dynamic development of all its groups, space to welcome any change and the new, taking the difference as wealth and the mistake as a feedback opportunity to improve the functioning of each system. And all this, of course, giving constant and regular stimuli for a living connection of space and time, for the co-evolution of all the living parts of the system, with interaction in the small-medium groups and the connection with the plenary session through animating tactics, so that finally there is effective handling of complexity at all levels, and therefore each system produces itself while remaining alive.

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