

Cultural Heritage: transformational and inspirational framework for future education

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the connection between cultural heritage and its pedagogical value for future generations. Research unfolds a plethora of discussions being designed to demonstrate the close connection between cultural heritage and its significance in contemporary life. The attempts to connect the past with the present underline the need for contextualized meanings. Concurrently, it unfolds the challenges associated with the adaptation of cultural heritage to the progressive spread of globalization and advancement in technology. The demands for contextualized adaptability in the framework of universality create what this study refers to as a pathway of cultural progress with a misplaced focus. Further, it argues that the misplaced cultural focus engenders a state of cognitive dissonance that does not provide an ongoing pathway of creative and future oriented framework for education. In response, it provides an alternative solution named the pathway of cohesive cultural continuity. It shows that the role of cultural heritage needs to align with the broader vision of a holistic approach to cultural heritage and its role in education. Finally, the paper concludes by showing, how the emphasis on the transformational spirit of human ingenuity generates a unifying link with the symbolism of the past and provides a vision-oriented inspiration for the future.

1 INTRODUCTION: IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGE

As understood, “cultural heritage is a defining feature of humanity” (Australian ICOMOS, 1998) with foundations deeply entrenched in the heart of human expressive creativity. Pearce (2000, 59) defines cultural heritage as cognitively constructed “external expression of identity.” It emerges from complex interactive processes individuals experience at various levels of social organization. In that respect, cultural heritage “becomes a representation of beliefs about self and community.” These find expressions in “languages, rites, beliefs, historic places and monuments, literature and works of art” (Lenzerini, 2011).

However, due to the articulated challenges cultural heritage is often reduced to cognitive assessment of conceptual thoughts assigned to the creative expressions of the past. The need for contextualized relevance directs attention to the physical manifestations rather than to the holistic nature of cultural heritage. Pearce (Ibid.) notes,

“No social idea can exist without its physical manifestation – whether it be land, objects, food, body use or performance space; correspondingly, no manifestation lacks its ideological information.”

In consequence, the transcribed meanings derive from the value individuals or groups attach to them and the role tangible and intangible objects may have in the life of the community (Arizpe, 2000). More so, the meanings may stem from political, social and personal sentiments detached from the thoughts of the original creators. The named detachment unfolds two

distinctive features of the cultural heritage and its functional role, namely a *creatively expressive* and an *adaptively evaluative* feature.

No doubt, the retrospective and adaptively evaluative glance at cultural heritage projects significant and pedagogically relevant lessons, such as, how people or organizations interact with each other at a local, regional and global level (Aplin, 2007). Further, it provides a wealth of informative educational knowledge for the respect and enjoyment of cultural heritage and its application to contemporary life. In other words, the legacy of the past keeps the cultural heritage alive. Although this approach generates valuable but cognitively didactical viewpoints enclosed in text, books and planning policies, it fails to explore its role and function in future education. The educational role is only recognized in terms of a passive acknowledgment of its potential value in terms of the legacy transmitted for future generations. Jensen (2000, p.40) challenges this line of thinking by suggesting "cultural heritage means something broader than a curriculum, than canonized texts or pieces of art as precondition for learning and thus for human flourishing." His evaluation drives the role of cultural heritage, away from static forms of philosophically conceptual boundaries to the heart of its creative locum, a space of learning stimulated on a pathway of transformational life experience.

Considering the ethos of cultural heritage, Lenzerini (2011) argues; "culture cannot be abridged to its tangible products for it is continuously living and evolving." He continues to point out that such living culture constitutes the unique and distinctive framework of its intrinsic identity, which in turn ignites an ongoing passion of creative expressiveness. In other words, it lives to create. According to Lenzerini (p.102), "the culture of people is composed by the totality of elements representing the heart of its distinctive idiosyncrasy." In the named milieu, a sense of identity projects variety of creative expressions representing human self-understanding. It appears that such an innate view of cultural heritage coined with constant evaluation, adaptation and appropriation of the contextualized meanings should provide quintessential ingredients to shape a trajectory, not only for secure stability in the present, but also a visionary point of reference for the future.

However, the resulting loss of connectivity from the thoughts of its original creators generates the named *misplaced focus* and loss of inspirational vitality for future generations. In the context of the named loss of connectivity, this paper aims to explore the transformational and inspirational nature of cultural heritage in education, not only as an agent for contextualized meanings, but more so as a vision-shaping, transformational creation for future generations.

2 CULTURAL HERITAGE: REFLECTIVE OVERVIEW

The rapid pace of global changes impact people's lives at ground level of day-to-day experience, exerting a demand for a sense of security with a well-defined point of reference. Pearce (2000) refers to the growing phenomena of "increasing cultural mix within which people everywhere wish to define themselves self-consciously, in term of what they see as their own cultural style." While globalization and advancement in technology provide an opportunity for a new and creative approach to cultural understanding, it seems, as argued by Bhola, (Ibid., p.6) globalization "brought about its dialectical opposite," – a retreat to the beliefs and values, traditions and lifestyles entrenched in the past. Such reversal should not be viewed from a critically negative stance for as defined by ICOMOS, the process of understanding the heart of cultural heritage roots provides "windows into the past." Evaluative reflections, in turn, enrich lives by "helping us to make sense of the present."

In this context, cultural heritage is seen as a life-enriching element. However, the depth of its educational value remains at the plateau of informatively explanatory level. In other words, it explicates and illuminates minds to evaluate and compare the challenges confronting the flow of everyday life with alternative options relating to the challenges confronting contemporary life. However, this process tends to enhance an adaptively reflective approach to the preservation of cultural heritage through protective strategies enmeshed in the values and meanings assigned to them through the lenses of contemporary culture. Acknowledging this challenge Jensen (2000, page 40) calls for a deeper understanding "heritage plays in human learning and development" and what elements within cultural heritage construct, promote and ensure human flourishing.

Naturally, preservation of cultural heritage involves much more than admiration of the past. As noted, it engages individuals in the act of "continual creation" Lowenthal (2000, 22). He points out, in that sense "heritage is ever revitalized; our legacy is not simply original but includes our forebears' alterations and additions." In consequence, the flow of the progressive change contributes to the loss of connectivity with the spirit of cultural distinctiveness of its original creators. More so, the usurped focus on the external expressions of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, initiates a reversed view of cultural formation. Lenznerini argues correctly that for the original creators, the "intimate identity" coined with spirit of ingenuity and creativity "outweighs its 'external perceivable' value." The external visible creation is simply an expression of an inner compulsion stemming from the specific understanding of one's self-understanding in the context of life's experience.

The named reversal opens a pathway of cultural heritage with the named *misplaced focus*. Separated by time and pressured by the need of contextualized relevance, the manifestations of creative expressions become the sole objects of investigative scrutiny and protection. In this context, the essence of the cultural heritage changes its locum, from the dynamic spirit of human ingenuity to objectified entities. While the dynamics of this reversal build an overarching bridge between the past and the present, it also engenders a state of *cognitive dissonance* between the two distinct, separated by time, cultural identities. Figure 1 illustrates the complexity shaped by the *misplaced focus*.

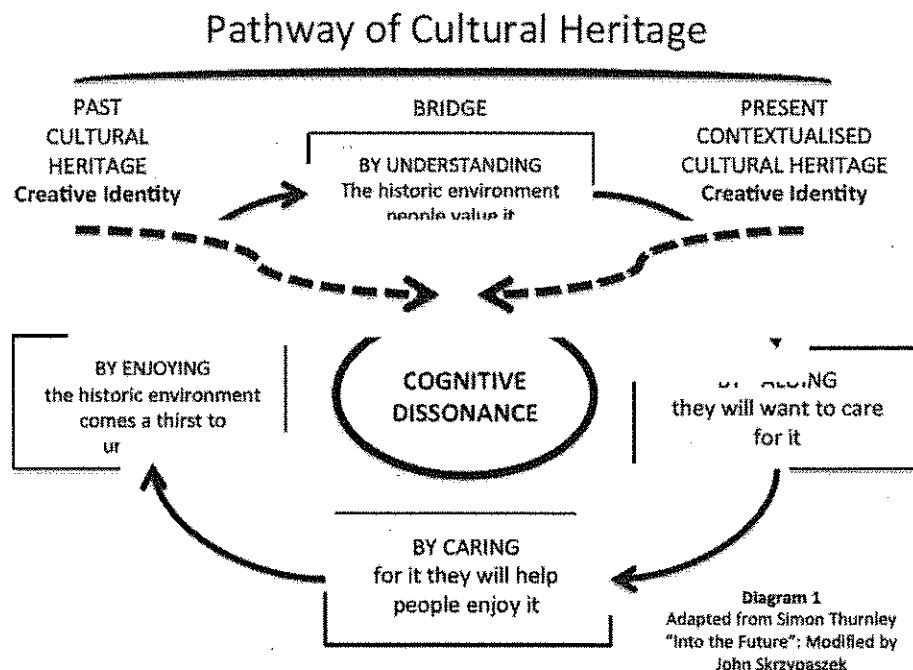


Figure 1. Diagram 1.

The proposed cycle of understanding, valuing, care and enjoyment of cultural heritage (Thurnley, 2005) highlights an important course of action for protective sustainability of cultural heritage and promotion of its value. In the light of the progressive growth of global challenges for many minds heritage does not provide solace for future challenges. Lowenthal (page 18) suggest, "Many discount past wisdom as irrelevant and dismiss heritage as an extravagant, regressive frill." No doubt the outlined cycle aimed at "making the past part of our future" provides a space for a better "understanding of the historic environment" and a wealth of

informative knowledge to stimulate respect, enjoyment and appreciation of cultural heritage. However, it tends to retain its functional life and momentum within the confines of sustainability. The future oriented perspective "making the past part of our future" confines the "thirst to understand" to boundaries of protection and care of the historical entities and hence focus on the physical manifestations of the cultural heritage. While the cyclic process builds a connecting bridge between the past and the present, the named cognitive dissonance, brought about by the variant focus of the two distinctive cultural identities, adds to its progressively increasing cultural gap. Further, the cultural gap provides a space for a major shift from a creatively expressive formative process of culture in making to adaptively evaluative experience of contextualized adaptation (See Fig. 2).

3 COGNITIVE DISSONANCE: UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS AND IMPLICATIONS

The described feature flows from the interactive process of defining the meaning and relevance of cultural heritage in a changing world. Its evolution is both progressive and creative in its own right. As illustrated in Diagram 2, part A (Fig. 2), illustrates the dynamic interaction of the culture in making with life's journey in the places where the rubber meets the road. The creatively formative process shapes the holistic ethos of cultural identity. It is in a state of continual flux and adjustment to the world it confronts.

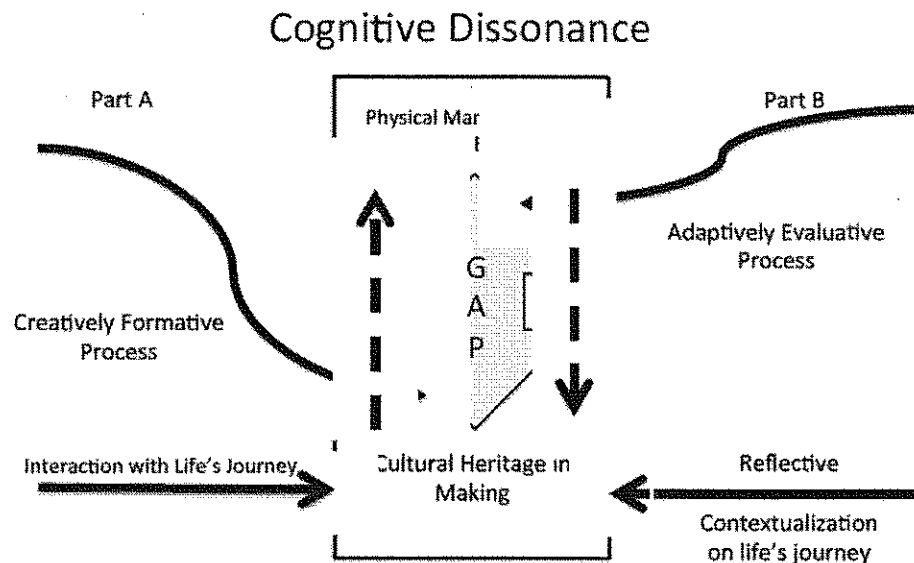


Figure 2. Diagram 2.

According to Lowenthal (2000, p.23), on this journey legacy is refashioned and "heritage is never merely conserved or protected; it is modified – both enhanced and degraded – by each new generation." At the heart of the named cultural heritage in the making is the creative genius of human ingenuity – the driving force of cultural expression in all its forms. The physical expressions stem from the aesthetic depth of human uniqueness. As suggested by the upward pointing arrow, the projected physical expressions project a visual picture of a deeper experience flowing from the minds and thoughts of original creators. In this framework, the spirit of human ingenuity paved into life's journey the visible vestiges, both tangible and

intangible, reminders not only of life once lived but also of human attempts to cope with its realities and challenges.

Viewing cultural heritage from a retrospective angle (Part B), or, as suggested by Alivisatou (2011, p.39), "in terms of preservation and disappearance" limits the cultural heritage "to express the complexities of contemporary identities" in the framework of the "deeper anxieties". Comparatively, in the context of the contemporary, the thoughts of original creators "emerge as a set of fragile premodern traditions and practices." The perceived lack of relevance evokes a reactionary war cry for measures of protective care of the artifacts and contextualization of the past. At the ground level, cultural heritage in making confronts the currents of contextualized heritage in shaping. At this point of contact, its value is assessed through the lenses of evaluative adaptability of meanings derived from the visible entities of the past, both tangible and intangible (proposed by the downward point arrow). This process tends to assume the form of interpretative gymnastics rather than "engagement in the hurly-burly of everyday life" and "familiarity with all the processes that make and shape us" (Lowenthal, p.23). In this context, the cognitive dissonance may be defined in terms of the tension between the two approaches taken to understand the application of cultural heritage in life's journey. This study names them as *experientially formative* and *cognitively normative* patterns. Further, it suggests that the existing tension generates a holding pattern of disengagement, a realm of retreat, in which "people are more concerned about traditions" and "meanings they once held" (Arizpe, 33). In this space, the vibrancy and creativity of the culture in making strains under the pressure of cognitively tainted, evaluative contextualization generated by meanings detached from the passions and thoughts of the original creators. Due to named dissonance, the cultural heritage loses its future oriented bearing and fails to provide an ongoing pathway of creative vision. In the light of this dilemma, one needs to explore how to liberate the cultural heritage to its full potential, not only for life's journey in the present, but also as a vision-shaping, transformational and inspirational creation.

4 CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE INSPIRATIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE EDUCATION

The changing nature of globalism and multiculturalism builds a thrust of an ongoing search for new meanings, a breaking through the barriers generating disengagement with the reality of day-to-day life; freedom from fears in the "age of anxiety" (Salzman and Matathia, 2006, p.9). The suggested "cultural eclipse" exerts a strain on the "collective consciousness." It is the product of "the troubles of everyday life with even bigger things on our mind like cataclysmic natural disasters, terrorism, disease pandemic, and war." In addition to the previously identified holding pattern of disengagement, the syndrome of strained spirit of the "collective consciousness" gives birth to cultural skepticism, cynicism and often a state of defeatism.

The call for a deeper understanding the cultural heritage plays in human learning and education germinates from people's longing for an escape pathway towards a secure, transcendent, future oriented, creatively crafted expression of cultural hope. Here, the concept of creative reviving moves beyond the realm of physical manifestation of human expressiveness that eventually transforms into physical vestiges as a reminder of life once lived. No doubt, and as expressed by Pearce, (Ibid.,59) there is an "intrinsic relationship between those who went before us and those who come after." Indeed, historical heritage is "worthy of respect." More so, the notion of respect falls under the umbrella of academic scrutiny. Exploring the relationship between knowledge as part of the "dynamic part of social processes" and "systematically institutionalized within schools and universities" Bhola (2002, p.3) suggests the purpose of refocusing on "our rich and cultural past" is to impress upon the younger generation, and it may be added, the future generations, "their inherent creativity."

The concept of inherent creativity moves beyond the surface level of human reactive responsiveness to life's issues. Rather, it draws into the discussion, the intrinsic value of human life in its totality, namely, its uniqueness and potential - the core of identity. Miller (2000, p.9) defines this realm as a place generating "vital energy that gives meaning and direction to our lives." At this point, the creative role of cultural heritage in education, in all its phases, needs to go beyond the notion of innovative pedagogical methodologies. Innovative methodologies of

today fade into irrelevant devices of tomorrow. The role of cultural heritage needs to align with "a broader vision of education that includes a focus on the whole person" (Ibid., 4). As illustrated in Figure 3 (Diagram 3), the sacred space of human ingenuity, value and potential is the focal point of "animating energy" and "deepest feelings and longings" (Ibid., 24,26).

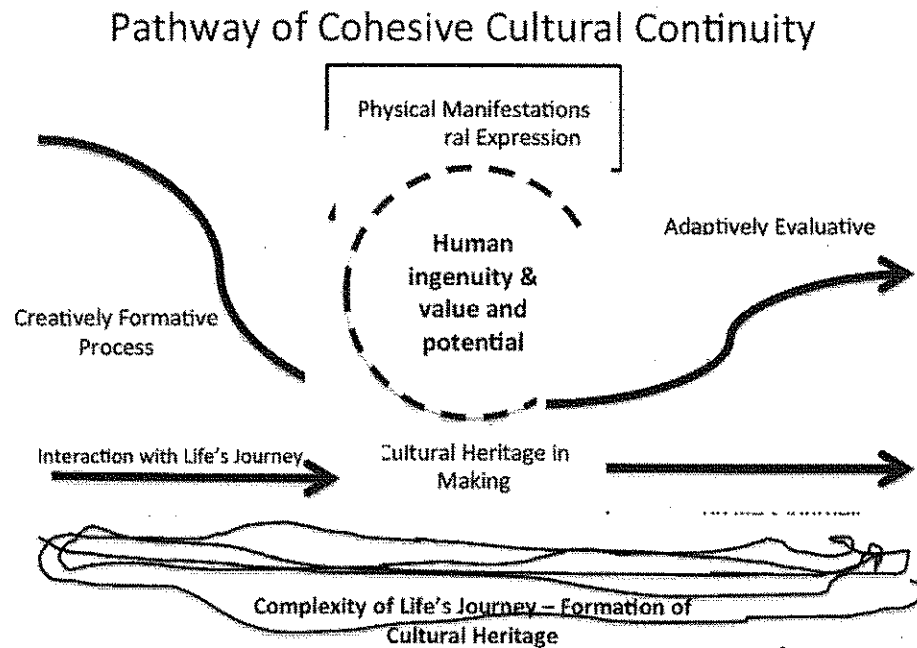


Figure 3. Diagram 3.

In this context, the ongoing motion of experientially formative creativity and cognitively normative adaptability manifests itself in objects with particular meaning to its time and place. These creative expressions represent much more than static images or artifacts molded into the framework of time as objects of visual admiration of fanciful stimulation of emotions. As pointed by Jensen, (Ibid., 42) "They give us individuals an understanding, of ourselves as belonging to something, or being part of something beyond our own actual existence." The suggested pathway of cohesive cultural continuity calls attention to the idea of "global cultural commons" (Arizpe, p.33). In contrast to the objectified meaning of the term, this paper modifies it to "global cultural common" - singular. It then connects it with the process of the living culture – the conventional story emerging from human search for meaning. Its flow creates a bond of commonality, not only between the past and the present, but also connects it with the anticipated future (represented in Figure 3 by the winding arrow).

More so importantly, behind each story, one finds the deeper meaning connected with the living and pulsating consciousness of human identity. The proposed emphasis replaces the previously identified misplaced focus, based on the loss of connectivity with thoughts of the original creators, with the unifying component of the spirit of ingenuity, inspirational, motivational and transformational part of human identity. Finally, it suggests, that the named characteristic of the cultural heritage in making disperses the tension brought about by the cognitive dissonance through ongoing reflective contextualization of the story of life's journey. Here, one finds nexus between cultural heritage and education at its best, the field, shaping symbolisms that are "no longer imprisoned in the past" (Arizpe, p.35) but creative and visionary expression shaping a visionary hope for the good of humanity. This fulcrum paves the way for an all inclusive global cross-cultural tolerance and respect for others and as noted by Aplin,

(Ibid.,375) it can "provide a way into an increased acceptance of many of the values that seem necessary for a peaceful and civilized world."

5 CONCLUSION

This paper explored the connection between cultural heritage and its pedagogical value for future generations. In the context of the progressive spread of globalization and advancements in technology, cultural heritage confronts an array of challenges regarding its role and functions in the contemporary day and age. Firstly, the study argued that the need for contextualized meaning tends to reduce the cultural heritage to the cognitive assessment of conceptual thoughts assigned to the creative expressions of the past. Hence, the resulting loss of connectivity from the thoughts of the original creators generates a misplaced focus and loss of inspirational vitality for future generations. Focus on the external expressions of cultural heritage, caused by the need for contextualized meanings initiate a reversed view of cultural formation. In consequence, manifestations of the creative expressions become the sole objects of investigative scrutiny and protection. Secondly, the study demonstrated, that the reversal from a creatively expressive formative process to adaptively evaluative experience of contextualized adaptation, engenders a state of cognitive dissonance between the two distinct, separated by a time, cultural identities. Further, it suggested that the resulting tension generates a holding pattern of disengagement, a realm in which concern about tradition, protection and sustainability becomes the sole objective. In this context cultural heritage loses its distinctive feature of vision-oriented vitality.

In response to the named challenge, this paper called for a deeper understanding cultural heritage plays in human learning and education. Firstly, it replaced the misplaced focus with the concept of 'inherent creativity' found in the intrinsic value of human life in its totality. Secondly, it suggested, the role of cultural heritage must align with a broader vision of education that includes the view of the whole person. In this domain, the uniqueness of human life generates a vital energy that gives meaning and direction to the complexities and challenge of the contemporary life. Thirdly, it demonstrated that the suggested pathway of cohesive cultural continuity creates a bond of commonality not only with the past and the present but in the named context, cultural heritage also provides an ongoing transformational vision-oriented and transformational framework for future education.

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