

Chapter 7

E-Learning Platforms in Heritage Education: A Strategy to Preserve Traditional Craftsmanship

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ABSTRACT

The content of this chapter is based on the analysis of this triad - heritage, education, and ICTs. E-learning and m-learning make it possible to motivate students in the learning and teaching process. Working with ICT tools acquires importance with regard to the possibilities they offer for disseminating heritage, promoting historical learning and raising awareness of cultural diversity and its preservation. This document describes the planning phase for the development of building trades, an online platform that incorporates learning, involvement and autonomy of those interested in applying in diverse contexts and with diverse motivations the application of manual construction techniques, typical of traditional architecture of several European countries. The e-Academy of Building Trades - E-learning Platform of Traditional Craftsmanship is a transnational project answering the great need for new, innovative approaches in the education of craftsmanship related to traditional building methods.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, the role of education is very important in the process of valuing and socialising heritage (Fontal, 2016; Merillas, 2016), as well as for heritage preservation (Lobovikov-Katz, 2015). Ott & Pozzi, (2008) explored how digital technologies may reveal useful for carrying out educational and

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awareness-raising intervention in the field of Cultural Heritage. The importance of public education for cultural and heritage preservation has also been a subject widely understood in recent decades (ICOMOS, 1993; UNESCO/UIA 2011; COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2015). In the Namur Declaration cultural heritage has considered a “key component of the European identity” (Council of Europe, 2015, 1). Nowadays, the digital domain is a very favourable context for heritage education (Piñeiro-Naval et al., 2018). The Internet is increasingly becoming a universal stage for the processes of knowledge, understanding, appreciation, awareness, and enjoyment of cultural heritage (Fontal, & Ibáñez-Etxeberria, 2015) for both young people and adults mainly after the COVID-19 crisis. In this context, it is more recognized and evident the potential of online learning to expand the opportunities for young and adult learning, further justifying the investment in this type of platform applied to the heritage sector, which may also prove to be allies not only in the transmission of knowledge but encouraging its preservation and answering the needs of contemporary conservation. According to Lobovikov-Katz (2009), heritage education is important and effective for heritage conservation. Thus, free access to intuitive and flexible e-learning platforms is considered an effective strategy for disseminating knowledge in this area, stimulating and, consequently, promoting heritage conservation.

The integration of information and communication tools (ICT) in heritage preservation has been equated with great objectivity and concrete experiences. However, heritage preservation also involves transmitting knowledge in a clear and unequivocal way, with education emerging here as a means of preserving that same heritage. The content of this chapter is based on the analysis of this triad - heritage, education, and ICT. E-learning and m-learning make it possible to motivate students in the learning and teaching process. Working with ICT tools acquires importance regarding the possibilities they offer for disseminating heritage, promoting historical learning, and raising awareness of cultural diversity and its preservation. However, there is still a need to develop more innovative tools that integrate these realities.

This chapter is based on the presentation of an e-learning platform entitled *e-Academy of Building Trades - e-learning Platform of Traditional Craftsmanship*. It is a transnational project answering the great need for new, innovative approaches in the education of craftsmanship related to traditional building methods. From a theoretical point of view, there are several approaches in the literature to the concept of heritage (Merillas, 2018) that vary between narrower views or more holistic views, in which the intangible heritage is included. According to UNESCO, traditional crafts fall within the scope of intangible cultural heritage. Since the 2003 Convention, there has been a special focus on and appreciation of the skills and knowledge involved in handicrafts, even more so than with the handicraft products, *per se*. It is recognised that the most effective and safest strategy for the preservation of handicraft objects is to safeguard the knowledge held by the current artisans. The most sustainable way to continue producing handicrafts is to create conditions and encourage artisans to pass on their skills and techniques to others, particularly within their own communities so that these traditions can be preserved. The project presented in this chapter is based precisely on this premise, allying itself to the ICT, as one of the main allies in the dissemination of knowledge in all areas and on a global scale.

The preservation of tangible and intangible heritage has received great attention over the last decades, with the presentation of concerted policies by several countries in that direction. This chapter presents the project of an online platform for the development and maintenance of building trades, that incorporates learning, involvement, and autonomy of those interested in applying in diverse contexts and with diverse motivations the application of manual construction techniques, typical of the traditional architecture of six European countries. Besides documenting traditional architecture techniques, the aim of this project is, is to convert information into knowledge through the creation of interactive learning

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