





The Effect of Nature Education Project on Students' Cultural Heritage Awareness and Attitudes**

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the value of a nature education project on the awareness and attitudes of middle school students toward Cultural Heritage. The research was based on an experimental model and the sample consisted of twentyfour middle school students. There were some selection criteria as they must have participated in a science fair before, and also have high academic achievement, high communication skills, etc. They participated in a nature education project with the theme of cultural heritage, which lasted for a week and was held with accommodation. The data were collected with the help of an achievement test and an attitude scale prepared for cultural heritage issues. They completed both measurement tools twice, the pretest on the first day and the posttest the three months after the project. The data were analyzed with appropriate methods in a computer-assisted data analysis program. These data revealed that the implemented nature education project greatly increased the achievement and attitude of the students towards cultural heritage issues. However, critical recommendations were made for the sustainability of the measured effect.

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Introduction

The definition and protection of cultural assets in Turkey is done with Law No. 2863 on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets. In this law, assets with cultural characteristics are defined as "all movable and immovable assets above ground, underground or underwater, which have scientific and cultural original value, which are related to science, culture, religion and fine arts belonging to prehistoric and historical periods, and which have been the subject of social life in prehistoric and historical periods". Many subjects can also be included in the concept of cultural property. In a sense, they are the cultural capital of a country. These are environmental structures (entertainment and nature parks; cultural centers, shopping centers), and demonstrations (events and festivals) (Craik, 2004). Timothy and Boyd (2006) defined cultural assets as "the present use of the past". Aslan and Ardemagni (2006) defined cultural heritage as "the creative expression of a people's existence in the past, near past and present. It tells us about the traditions, the beliefs and the achievements of a country and its people" (p.1). There are two kinds of cultural heritage: tangible and intangible. The first includes material heritage (it can be physically touched) such as monuments, buildings, statues, paintings, objects, etc. The second deals with immaterial heritage such as music, dance, literature, theatre, languages, know-how, religious ceremonies, traditional performances, etc. Turkey is known for the richness of its cultural assets rather than its natural attractions, and these cultural assets play an important role in the touristic preference of the country (Alvarez & Koray, 2011; Bozok, 2018). The biggest responsibility for cultural heritage, which is very important for Turkey, is carried out by the state. In the sixty-third article of the 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey on the protection of historical, cultural, and natural assets, this situation took its place as "The state ensures the protection of historical, cultural and natural assets and values; for this purpose, it takes supportive and encouraging measures....". (see 1982 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey)

Today, training about the cultural heritage awareness of the society is gaining more importance. UN [United Nations Educational], UNESCO [Scientific and Cultural Organisation], the EC [European Commission], national governments, and numerous organizations have undertaken a series of initiatives and projects that are aimed at engaging young people in the preservation and promotion of cultural values from the international level to the local ones (Menkshi et al., 2021; UE, 2011; UNESCO, 1992, 2003, 2019). It is clear that the preservation of cultural values not only contributes directly to the socio-economic development of a country but also promotes cultural heritage values for the sustainable development of the country (Hoang, 2021). Cultural heritage preservation involves the preservation of physical heritage from being damaged, destroyed, or transformed; further, it also encompasses the transmission of intangible values by a community to reveal their existence (Hani et al., 2012; Yahaya, 2006) There are many studies on the subject in both formal education and out-of-school teaching environments (Akkus et al., 2015; Karadeniz, 2020; Soomro & Soomro, 2017; Srivastava, 2015). However, when the formal teaching curriculums of Turkey are examined, it is clear that this subject is not sufficiently covered (Aygün, 2011). We believe that all units have duties to raise a new, conscious society in the recognition and protection of cultural heritage. Thus scientists who work for the discovery, protection, and promotion of cultural heritage and educators who play a critical role in raising students who will form the society of the future, together with educational institutions, have the biggest responsibility. From this point of view, it is clear that the awareness to be created especially at young ages will be more effective in protection. Besides natural factors, most destruction is caused by humans, and therefore, the establishment of conservation awareness will only be

possible with well-planned training starting from the early childhood period. Many studies are emphasizing that cultural heritage education can be integrated with all educational processes and its interdisciplinary structure (Borman, 2004; Gokmen, 2010; Hunter, 1988; Patrick, 1992; Wilhelm, 2004).

Many museums in Turkey and other countries have been running some projects and developing educational programs for a while on cultural heritage. However, in the active excavation areas, which are outside the museum and whose relevance to the subject is too important to be discussed, some studies on the provision of cultural heritage education have only just begun. In these excavation areas, education programs should be prepared immediately and appropriate environments should be provided. Because seeing something where it was discovered will undoubtedly be more effective than seeing it inside the museum. The training to be given in the excavation area will be more permanent (Kucuk & Yildirim, 2021). In terms of educational areas, many subjects such as how the finds were obtained, what the geography is like, and the places where the events took place should be experienced by seeing and living (Bozok, 2018). The subjects related to cultural heritage are included in the visual arts and social studies curriculum at the primary education level of Turkey. Tasdemir (2018) examined the secondary school 6th-grade social studies textbook in terms of sensitivity to cultural heritage. It has been concluded that cultural heritage elements are given little place in other learning areas other than culture and heritage learning area, and visual and literary texts are given in detail and by the level of the student by including cultural heritage elements in the area of culture and heritage learning. Now, there are studies conducted by different disciplines, it is a fact that there are not enough interdisciplinary studies about cultural heritage. There is a need for studies such as many new methods, training modules, and activities that can be developed on the subject (Bozok, 2018).

This study, designed from this point of view, deals with the training program developed for the excavation site of the ancient city of Kaunos for Cultural Heritage Education. It aimed to investigate the value of a nature education project on the awareness and attitudes of middle school students toward Cultural Heritage.

Method

The research is based on an experimental model which is a type of quantitative research approach and the sample consisted of middle school students. Within the scope of this study, students participated in a nature education project with accommodation and a cultural heritage theme. The project was completed in a total of seven days. The project was carried out in the ancient city of Kaunos, located in the Dalyan District of the Ortaca District of Muğla Province in Turkey.

The Study Group

The sample of the study consisted of twenty-four children aged 11-15 years. They were deliberately selected from those who had science fair experience and high academic achievement before the project. Half of them were female students.

Intervention Procedure

Two tests were applied to them on the first day of the project and then the training prepared for cultural heritage education started to be implemented. The training has some differences from the cultural heritage education traditionally given in formal schools. These

differences are that there is practical training in the fields of archeology and visual arts. With this aspect, training was designed as an out-of-school educational activity. The titles of the program are;

- 1- The training program and general information on the subject
- 2- Visit the ancient city of Kaunos and the excavation site
- 3- Excavation work
- 4- Restoration work

Before the training, a short meeting was held by all researchers and an archaeologist regarding the training package, and it was decided which methods would be used at which time. The materials to be used in the process were prepared by the researchers and put into the learning environment created within the scope of the project. Visual materials about the ancient city of Kaunos were placed in the learning environment created for the lessons, and a presentation about the city was prepared. In the teaching activities, information about the program and cultural heritage was conveyed to the students with the presentation. Some critical information was also provided on the rules to be followed in the ancient city and excavation area, and on occupational safety.

Afterward, a tour of the ancient city and excavation area was started. Here, information was given in the pre-determined areas accompanied by archaeologists, and exemplary stories from the life of the period were told. The students' questions about the subject were answered and then the excavation area was started. By observing the archaeologists working in the field, information was given about how the finds were unearthed, how difficult it was, and after which stages they were transferred to the museum (see images 1,2,3, and 4).



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4

Groups of students were formed to find reproductions of artifacts that were previously dismembered and buried in a predetermined area, and each member was given a task (excavator, rower, photographer, etc.). The groups carried out excavations in the area reserved for themselves and surrounded by strips, in line with the information they obtained from archaeologists. They recorded the artifacts they found and delivered them to their instructors by reporting, documenting with photographs, and packing them. In the restoration workshop, which was prepared as the second stage of the application, the students cleaned the artifacts they found, performed the assembly and integration works, and delivered the restored works to their instructors to be exhibited (see images 5,6, and 7).



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8

They were asked to go to the learning environment and make a painting study as a result of the information they gained during the day. Then, educational games designed to reinforce important concepts related to the subject (word hunt, who am I, etc.) were played and the day was completed by giving participation certificates.

Data Collection Tools

The data were collected with the help of an achievement test and an attitude scale prepared for cultural heritage issues.

The achievement test was developed by the first researcher in an earlier study (Bozok, 2018). The questions in the achievement test were prepared from the subjects related to the "Cultural Heritage Education" learning field in the primary education visual arts course curriculum and guide. This test consists of a total of twenty-five questions with medium difficulty and high discrimination power and is written as multiple choice and four choices. As an example of the questions in the achievement test, the students were asked what material the coin was made of in the 9th question, and which of the materials used in coin making was not in the 25th question. The reliability coefficient was found to be .66.

The attitude scale towards cultural heritage developed by Gogebakan (2011) was also used. In this attitude scale, there are thirty-seven items about recognizing and protecting cultural assets. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to completely agree. The reliability coefficient of the attitude scale is .78. Both measurement tools were implemented on the students as a pre-test on the first day of the project and as a post-test at the end of the third month after the project was completed.

Data Analysis

The data were evaluated through a computer-assisted data analysis program. The conformity of the data to the normal distribution was checked with the Shapiro-Wilk test. In the analysis of data with normal distribution, the .05 significance level related samples t-test, which is a parametric test was used.

Results

The Cultural Heritage Achievement Test Results

Table 1 shows the results regarding descriptive istatistisc scores of the students in the pre-test and post-test of the Cultural Heritage Achievement Test.

Table 1

Cultural Heritage Achievement Test Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	s
Pre-test	24	8	32	16,83	7,07
Post-test	24	40	76	60,67	9,55

Table 1 shows that the scores of the students in the pre-test vary between 8-32, while the scores they get in the post-test vary between 40-76 points. The pre-test average score of the students was 16.83, and the post-achievement test average score was 60.67.

Table 2 shows the normality test results regarding descriptive istatistisc scores of the students in the pre-test and post-test of the Cultural Heritage Achievement Test.

Table 2

Normality Test Results of Cultural Heritage Achievement Pre-Post Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	,17	24	,06	,92	23	,07
Post-test	,11	24	,20	,96	23	,59

Table 2 shows that both pre-test and post-test ($p > .05$) show normal distribution. The related sample t-test, which is a parametric test, is used to test the difference between two measurements (pretest-posttest). Table 3 shows the Related Samples t-test results.

Table 3

Comparison of Cultural Heritage Achievement Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Test	N	X	s	SD	t	p
Cultural Heritage Achievement Test	Pre-test	24	16,83	7,07		
	Post-test	24	60,67	9,55	23	-44,84
						,00

It is clear that the difference is significant ($p < 0.05$) and in favor of the post-test ($t = -44,84$). The effect size ($d = 9.15$) also shows that the difference is very high. This result reveals that the project made a significant contribution to the success of students in cultural heritage issues.

The Cultural Heritage Attitude Scale Results

Table 4 shows the results regarding descriptive istatistisc scores of the students in the pre-test and post-test of the Cultural Heritage Attitude Scale.

Table 4

Cultural Heritage Attitude Scale Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	s
Pre-test	24	51	65	58,04	3,23
Post-test	24	71	87	78,38	4,75

It is seen that the scores of the students in the pre-test vary between 51-65, while the scores they get in the post-test vary between 71-87 points. The attitude scale means the score of the students before the training was 58.04, and the post-attitude scale means the score was 78.38. Table 5 shows the normality test results.

Table 5*Normality Test Results of Cultural Heritage Attitude Scale*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	,12	24	,20	,97	24	,74
Post-test	,15	24	,15	,94	24	,18

It is seen that both pre-test and post-test ($p > .05$) show normal distribution. Table 6 shows the results of the Related Samples t-test.

Table 6*Comparison of Cultural Heritage Attitude Scale Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores*

Test	n	X	s	SD	t	p
Cultural Heritage Attitude scale	Pre-test	24	58,04	5,88		
	Post-test	24	78,38	9,55	23	-16,91
						,00

It is seen that the difference is significant ($p < .05$) and in favor of the post-test ($t = -16.91$). The effect size calculated ($d = 3.45$) shows that this difference is very high. This result reveals that the project made a significant contribution to the attitudes of students toward cultural heritage issues.

Discussion

Individuals should adopt, recognize and protect the cultural heritage of the geography they live in (Afanasyeva, 2007; Akkus et al., 2015; Bozok, 2018; Król et al., 2021; Srivastava, 2015). However, it is known that the achievements of higher education students are quite weak, as is the case with children at the K-12 level (Donmez & Yesilbursa, 2014; Duyan, 2010; Gogebakan, 2009; Mattone & Frullo, 2022; Yesilbursa, 2011). The pretest data in the current study also support the claimed situation. In this study, the effect of a nature education project carried out in the open field on the understanding of the concepts of cultural heritage and attitudes of children aged 11-15 was examined. For this purpose, the difference between the achievement test on the subject of cultural heritage and the attitude scale data, which was implemented on the participants twice as a pre-test and post-test, was opened to discussion. Currently, the acquisitions related to recognizing and protecting cultural assets are included in the curriculum of visual arts and social studies courses at the primary education level in Turkey (Bozok, 2018; Cengelci, 2012; Polat, 2019) In this context, classroom learning environments are mostly used in the achievement of related subjects and acquisitions (Bozok, 2018). However, in the current project, innovative cultural heritage training was carried out with the cooperation of visual arts and archeology in the realization of the aforementioned learning (Henson, 2004). Some studies are showing that this type of education encourages quality learning outcomes in children (Aslan & Ardemagni, 2006); Bozok, 2018; Lemelin & Bencze, 2004).

Supporting the results of these studies, the cultural heritage education carried out in cooperation with visual arts and archeology implemented in the current project also led to the observation of important outputs. Considering the results of the achievement test and attitude scale proving this, it was seen that a significant difference emerged in a short time. The results of the achievement test (pre-test) conducted before the intervention, it is seen that the scores of the children in the pre-test ranged between 8-32, while the test score averages were (16.83). Likewise, according to the results of the achievement test (post-test), the average of the test scores was 60.67. The related sample t-test showed that the difference was significant ($p < 0.05$) and in favor of the post-test ($t = -44,847$). The effect size calculated as a result of the test ($d = 9.15$) showed that this difference was quite high (see table 3). The attitude scale means the score of the children before the intervention was 58.04, and the post-test score was 78.38. The related sample t-test results showed that the difference was also significant ($p < 0.05$) and in favor of the post-test ($t = -16.918$). The effect size calculated as a result of the test ($d = 3,45$) showed that this difference was quite high (see table 6).

There are some studies supporting these results. In another study carried out by the first author of this study, the effect of cultural heritage education, conducted in cooperation with visual arts and archeology, on the understanding and attitudes of 11-15 age group children living in the ancient city of Aizanoi was examined (Bozok, 2018; Spiridon et al., 2014). Lemelin and Bencze (2004) also carried out a project for two years within the framework of the reorganization of the education program of the Ontario Science and Technology Museum. Museum educators, university officials, primary school second-grade teachers, and students participated. The research showed that associating the restructured museum education programs with the school curriculum especially contributes to the cognitive and social skills of the students. Bowker (2004) investigated the effects of the large-scale education program prepared within the scope of the Garden of Eden Project for primary school students. Seventy-two students from eight different primary schools participated. The study showed that carrying out correct and planned educational activities during museum visits will lead to positive changes in students' perceptions. Aslan and Ardemagni (2002) conducted a case study on the historical city of Petra, which is on the world heritage list, with a group of sixteen Jordanian, Lebanese, and Syrian students and five teachers in the 14-16 age group. Within the scope of the research, the students visited the ancient city of Petra and participated in various activities. Some of these activities were to participate in conservation and restoration activities with cultural heritage experts. The results of the research showed that heritage education can be an important educational tool, can make an important contribution to developing students' analytical capacities and powers of observation, supports classroom discussions on fundamental problems, and stimulates generating solutions. In addition, students can understand complex issues such as degradation and preservation if presented simply. They also realize that it is their responsibility to protect the cultural heritage, and finally, if students are adequately prepared, they are the most effective defenders of their heritage.

In this study, it was also revealed that the students who tried to learn the subjects and achievements on the subject of cultural heritage only in the visual arts and social studies courses could not achieve the expected learning. In this context, it is clear that the success of classroom teaching based on presentation and didactic teaching is very weak in cultural heritage, as in many other subjects (Kucuk, 2020, 2021; Kucuk & Yildirim, 2020). In this respect, teachers should take children to places where real objects are located, instead of carrying real objects to the classroom through models or visuals in normal teaching (Kucuk & Yildirim, 2019; Meydan & Akkus, 2014). This should be done especially when teaching a subject related

to cultural heritage. Because the learning and sustainability of subjects related to cultural heritage require not only cognitive processes but also affective processes. In this context, children should experience the psychology and sociology of cultural heritage as well as the physical aspect of the environment (Salvesen & Keitsch, 2021). Games that will activate children are also very important in this kind of cultural heritage education. (Lyubenova, 2021). In the study, the positive results of combining the two disciplines of archeology and visual arts in an out-of-school environment with an interdisciplinary approach revealed the emergence of quality learning products.

Conclusion

It is the duty of all citizens as well as states to protect cultural assets and transfer them to future generations. In this context, children are expected to at least recognize the cultural assets in their close environment and value and protect them. How to achieve this is a matter of considerable debate. The achievements in the visual arts and social studies curriculum in Turkey have not been sufficiently achieved. In this respect, it has been revealed that an out-of-school education with an interdisciplinary approach and incorporating archeology, rather than in-class teaching, gives more successful results. However, the current study needs to measure the long-term effects of the difference in understanding and attitudes towards cultural heritage issues. It should be investigated how a cultural heritage education, which is understood to work in a short time, guides children's daily life practices. This subject will be investigated with new studies that researchers are curious about and planning unanimously.

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