

Reframing Heritage Education in Egypt (Re-HeED)

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Work Package 1: Surveys of Heritage Education and Gap Analysis

WP 1.7 Report on the Workshop Discussing the Results and Outcomes of the Different Surveys

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Being a label of identity connecting people to their own culture, heritage should receive nation-wide attention across Egypt while heritage education should rise to the fore.

Having a quick look on heritage education in Egypt, one can safely say that it is still lagging behind. To be more precise, the quality of heritage education is no match to the eminent place and status of Egypt's rich and rather unique heritage. Therefore, the proposed RE-HeEd project aims in the first place to enhance the quality of heritage education in Egypt whether formal or non-formal and to effectively incorporate it at all educational levels.

The first Work package of the Re-HeEd entitled: "Surveys of Heritage Education and Gap Analysis" started on 15/01/2020. There were some inescapable delays due to the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic worldwide which negatively affected the original schedule that had to be adjusted several times. At last, it was successfully completed on 03-06-2021.

Within this first work package a number of surveys were mainly conducted to compare the current status and the actual performance to the ideal one. This was meant to detect deficiencies, highlight shortcomings and most of all find out the best ways to bridge the gap and realize the goals. Then they were followed with a final workshop to which representatives of stakeholders were invited to discuss the results of these surveys and provide their insights to construct a clear vision of the forthcoming part of the project.

The above mentioned surveys were divided into six tracks:

1.1 A desk- based research on graduates' programs in EU partners and other EU universities:

It was carried out by EU partners in France, Greece and Italy. Helwan University also took part in this activity by carrying out a research on heritage education in Germany. The deliverable was a detailed report that listed the programs offered on heritage studies and heritage education in four EU countries and examined their syllabi with respect to content, teaching methods, materials, evaluation, credits as well as staff and class infrastructure.

1.2 A desk- based research on how heritage is being taught at Egyptian universities and schools:

It consisted of two parts the first one aimed to investigate the current status of heritage education programs offered at the Egyptian universities and chart a critical outline of such programs and its contents and objectives. It should be noted that the research was limited to clear-cut and explicit heritage programs offered at Egyptian universities and under this title. Furthermore, the contents of courses offered at History, Geography and Social Studies departments at Faculty of Education (Helwan University) were similarly analysed because it is the graduates of those departments who will teach heritage at schools.

The second part examined the course contents of school curricula together with the teaching methods and materials. it served as an exploratory study to clearly define the situation of heritage education in Egyptian schools and shed lights on its multiple dimensions.

The deliverable was combined reports that discussed how heritage is being taught at Egyptian universities and schools

1.3 A questionnaire specifically targeting the graduates of some existing education programs in the field of heritage studies in EG and EU to come upon their status, their needs and what qualifications they are lacking and are considered to be essential to develop a good career. The deliverable was a questionnaire based report on the feedback offered by graduates of some of those heritage educational programs in EG and EU to investigate the actual needs of the workplace

1.4 A questionnaire based study concerning the qualifications, and tasks of school teachers and employees at educational departments of cultural and heritage organizations and sites. The deliverable was a questionnaire based report on the required qualifications for school teachers assigned with teaching heritage as well as employees at educational departments of cultural and heritage organizations and sites

1.5 A questionnaire based survey of potential teaching staff concerning their current aptitudes, motivation, knowledge, and needs for training. The deliverable was a questionnaire based report on the current status of competency and the required training

1.6 A questionnaire targeting the managerial level and human resources managers of different education and cultural organizations and institutions for potential employees including the appropriate qualifications and the skills they are expected to have. The deliverable was a questionnaire based report on the expertise and skills needed to enhance the efficiency of school teachers and personnel on heritage sites and institutions

1.7 A closing workshop discussing the outcomes of the different surveys that had been taken on the ground within work package 1 and set the stage for work package 2.

This workshop was held on June 3rd 2021 and it was attended by officials of Ministry of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture, university professors, graduates of heritage programs, NGOs members working in the field of heritage preservation and others.

The deliverable is this report where potentials, opportunities, shortcomings, major findings of all past activities as well as proposed solutions are highlighted.

Results

Because heritage education with its formal and informal wings solidifies national identity, fosters social cohesion and gives people a sense of pride and rootedness, it must take precedence. After conducting all the previously mentioned surveys, fully examining the current situation and consulting with stakeholders within WP1, the Re-HeEd team came by these findings briefly stated below:

- Methods used in teaching heritage at schools are traditional and outdated. They depend mainly on lectures, recitation, memorization, repetition, with little discussion due to the large numbers of students in class, especially at the elementary stage.
- Crowded classes constitute an enormous challenge that hinders teachers from applying active learning strategies that spark students' interests and engage them.

- With regard to class activities or extra-curricular educational activities accompanying the curricula, they are hardly implemented due to the large number of students in class which make them time-consuming
- The lack of advanced teachers training programs on the application of non -traditional educational activities forms another obstacle.
- Heritage is superficially taught at schools and lacks in-depth approach. Major heritage issues aren't thoroughly discussed or even hardly mentioned in school curricula like for example the collective responsibility towards this rich heritage and the role of both the community and the individuals in its maintenance and preservation for future generations.
- Heritage education doesn't apparently lie at the center of Heritage and Museums Studies programs that had been developed recently at Egyptian universities. One can hardly find education heritage courses among its structure which confirms that it is not placed on their top priorities.
- Outreach programs designed by heritage institutions fell short to achieve the desired outcome so far. They still couldn't effectively engage the larger local community or extensively attract them to explore heritage sites mistakenly believed to be reserved for tourists. They appear to be inadequate and rather insufficient to dispel this stereotype. They need to be multiplied, redesigned with considerable creativity so as to create a nation-wide interest in heritage and make a difference.
- There is a dire need for capacity-building and professional development for teachers and personnel working in the field of heritage education whether formal or informal through developing specialized programs that would train them on key skills directly affecting their performance. This would eventually bridge this gap and give heritage education in Egypt a push forward.
- Building a heritage bank and a digital repository to provide teachers with reliable audio-visual materials needed to enrich students learning experiences.
- Adopting a community-based approach that considers the needs of the local community, highly respects their values and most of all encourages them to take part in the project and engage actively to gain benefits.
- Organizing mega events at heritage sites as well as school trips to them with the aim to raise public awareness and ensure the participation of the local community in the preservation process of the heritage sites where they live in its vicinity on the one hand and inspire students and direct their attention to cherish their heritage and valorize it on the other hand.
- Establishing partnerships between universities offering heritage programs, heritage experts working on the ground and Ministry of Education to improve the quality of heritage education and bring it to its deserving status.