



Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future



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How Could Policy and Practice around Culture and Heritage Be More Engaging and Socially Just for Young People?

ABOUT THE STUDY

This is the third policy brief in a series published by the Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future (CHIEF), a research project funded by the European Commission and led by Aston University (UK). This brief brings together evidence gathered through interviews and participant observations in cultural organisations and schools in England.

As the UK emerges from the pandemic, it is important to consider how a more sustainable and socially just future can be created for the next generation. Racism and social and cultural discrimination are at the forefront of these considerations, as recent debates indicate current practices and policies on cultural learning are insufficient.

To understand how policymakers can address these shortcomings, we carried out a review of schools and cultural organisations where we observed how young people's learning about culture, heritage and belonging occurs in formal, semi-formal and informal settings.

Our research offers insight into the limitations and gaps of current policy and practice in the UK. This brief translates these findings into a set of policy recommendations for Arts and Heritage organisations, schools and Local Authorities.

The aim is to contribute these insights to the wider quest for a sustainable and socially just post-pandemic recovery by tackling racism, expanding the scope of inclusivity, as well as deepening the recognition and incorporation of diversity at a systemic level.

FINDINGS

Dominant ethnonational views of culture and diversity

We noted that British ethnonationalism dominated views of culture and diversity. This perception emphasises cultural differences and often favours visible and superficial expressions of culture. The study highlighted the need to develop a more complex and in-depth appreciation of the cultural process and to translate this into practice in (non-)formal educational and heritage settings.

Gaps in school curricula on culture

Family and local community are significant sources of cultural knowledge and participation, but school curricula do not build on these forms of knowledge. Cultural learning providers should recognise the value of young people's embodied culture and look to bridge the gap in school curriculum content with immediate life experiences.

Insufficient financial and logistical support

Cultural participation and access to leisure activities enable the development of transferrable skills, such as creativity, perseverance, focus, confidence and non-verbal communication, among many others. However, our research shows that the lack of financial and logistical support has

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created barriers to young people's participation and access, thereby limiting their development of these skills. The existence of these barriers points to the need for greater financial and logistical support to improve access for all young people.

Limited representation of young people

The opportunities for young people's participation in decision-making processes were limited. The representation of young people from different social and economic backgrounds in institutions that develop or provide youth-based activities should be improved.

Positive impact of youth clubs and youth workers

Young people need safe spaces, outside formal institutions, to spend time with peers. All research sites acknowledged the positive impact of these spaces. There is a need to support, strengthen and recognise the role of youth clubs and the contribution of youth workers.

Recognition and inclusion of marginalised youth through collaborative efforts

Cultural sector institutions have a key role to play in the de-stigmatisation and positive recognition of young people. By working with different professionals and local communities, cultural sector institutions can help foster greater and more meaningful inclusion of marginalised youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop appreciation for the complexities of culture and its diversity

Arts and heritage organisations should:

- recognise the diversity of culture, shifting to expand diversification and encourage cultural diffusion;
- diversify programmes by incorporating activities that are relevant to young people and valued by their families;
- rethink the language used in professional practice to reflect inequalities in shaping and expressing what constitutes cultural heritage, by whom and for whom, as well as to convey an intention to recognise the diversity of cultural practices and identities that constitute local and national heritage;
- introduce professional development programmes to support colleagues with change.

Bridge the gap between school curricula and immediate life experiences

Schools should consider how they can:

- bring the cultural knowledge and cultural capital of young people to the centre of the teaching/ learning process, including valuing learners' cultural background (e.g. family mnemonic traditions, with the

aim of improving representation in their curriculum to reflect the world and the increasingly diverse learning population in UK schools;

- incorporate continuing professional development and learning support for educators to help them deliver a representative and inclusive curriculum/syllabus;
- use funding to involve various organisations in delivering activities for school-age young people, such as summer schools and other extracurricular activities.

Develop partnerships to share resources

Arts and heritage organisations should:

- focus more on outward-looking partnerships instead of looking inward to their own organisation;
- develop links and foster equal partnerships among different actors, organisations or units at a local level;
- develop platforms that bring together and connect, on an equal basis, various organisations, (small and large, more or less established, with various degrees of power, etc.) as well as key local people to map available cultural learning opportunities and co-produce further provision.

Local government should:

- consider developing a wall of professionals around young people by building on existing assets and deploying the available infrastructure. Bringing together different professionals can join up various pockets of knowledge to obtain a fuller and richer understanding of young people's lives and needs;
- devote funding from the Youth Investment Fund and Youth Create to (respectively) accelerate direct impact and promote the voices and lives of communities.

Create opportunities for young people to embrace and share their heritage and culture

Arts and heritage organisations should:

- encourage young people to become part of the ongoing formation of narratives that inform cultural learning and support them to develop the skills to tell their stories and their communities' stories. Young people should develop transferrable skills in order to frame and narrate their stories to different audiences.

Local government should consider:

- working with the police, probation services and other youth and social care services to create opportunities for young people to tell their stories.

Local Authorities in partnership with local cultural education partnerships should consider how they can:

- support interventions that encourage young people's mobility to cross the physical and symbolic boundaries of their immediate region (e.g. free bus pass, arts pass, etc.);
- collate opportunities locally and regionally and

work on extending opportunities beyond the immediate region.

and engagement with the art and heritage sector. This would lead to shifts in resources for youth work and more professional training and development opportunities for youth workers.

Recognise value of, and work with, youth clubs and youth workers

Arts and heritage organisations should:

- rethink their role and how they make their settings welcoming for young people. The role of staff within cultural institutions is key in liaising with youth workers and other professionals already working with local young people.

Local Authorities in partnership with local cultural education partnerships should consider how they can:

- recognise the essential role that youth work and youth workers play in young people's cultural literacy

Foster greater and more meaningful inclusion of marginalised youth

Arts and heritage organisations should:

- identify and bring to the fore hidden corners/silenced voices/marginal cultures when designing cultural learning opportunities.

Local government should consider:

- adopting place-based policymaking to reflect the histories, voices and stories of a particular area.

ABOUT CHIEF

Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future (CHIEF) is an international research project funded by the European Commission and led by Aston University (UK). The project started in May 2018 and runs until October 2021. It involves academic, civil society and policymaker partners across nine countries (Croatia, Georgia, Germany, India, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, UK).

CHIEF:

- examines the processes and environments that influence young people's cultural literacy and cultural identity through an inter-disciplinary and methodologically varied approach;
- advocates an inclusive interpretation of Europe's cultural heritage as a foundation for cultural literacy and cultural identity;
- challenges ethno-nationalist, xenophobic or otherwise exclusionary understandings of European cultural identity that may lead to intolerance and marginalisation; threatening the future of the European project;
- recommends effective strategies for enhancing cultural literacy among young people in ways that reflect both the heterogeneity of modern Europeans' cultural backgrounds and heritage, and diversity as a historic feature of Europeanness.

PROJECT IDENTITY

Project Name	Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future (CHIEF)
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Website	http://chiefprojecteu.com/
Further Information	Contact Dr Anton Popov, CHIEF Project Coordinator a.popov@aston.ac.uk
Further Reading	<p>Mapping Reports of Cultural Heritage http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/mapping-reports-of-cultural-heritage/</p> <p>National Cultural/Educational Policy Review http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/national-cultural-educational-policy-review/</p> <p>National Curriculum Review Reports http://chiefprojecteu.com/deliverables/national-curriculum-review-reports/</p> <p>Policy Briefing 1 http://chiefprojecteu.com/wp-content/uploads/CHIEF-Policy-Brief-1.pdf</p> <p>Policy Briefing 2 http://chiefprojecteu.com/wp-content/uploads/CHIEF-Policy-Brief-2.pdf</p>