

19 Heritage Education in the School Curriculum: A Critical Reflection

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Introduction

This chapter critically highlights the importance of heritage education in the school curriculum in Namibia. It does so in relation to John Patrick's five pitfalls that heritage educators must avoid in the process of designing a heritage education school curriculum or infusing the right content into existing curriculum, namely: *elitism, extreme pluralism, localism, romanticism and anti-intellectualism* (Patrick, 1989). The chapter links this perspective by Patrick of heritage education infusion and integration in the school curriculum to the on-going reform process in education in Namibia. Debates have loomed on how the integration or infusion could be done. While some proponents propose the creation of an entirely new curriculum for heritage education in schools, others argue for the infusion of heritage education content into the current school curriculum by drawing on many disciplines such as history, geography, the natural and social sciences, the arts and literature as the best approach.¹

Heritage and its Forms of Manifestation

It is imperative at the outset to create an understanding of what the concepts 'heritage', 'history' and 'heritage education' denote. It should be noted as Silvester and Elago (2010, p. 4) have observed, that '...heritage is a word that is commonly used more often than it is understood'.² In a broader sense *heritage* can be conceptualised in five major forms as identified by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996, pp. 1-4). Firstly, it is used as a synonym for any relic's physical survival from the past. Secondly, it refers to objects, buildings, sites and places, and any other non-physical aspect when viewed from the present. In other words, as Sorensen (1990, cited in Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996, p.1) argued, '...it defines individual heritage in terms of individual memory then collective memory or national memory'. Thirdly, it denotes accumulated cultural and artistic productivity, whether produced in the past or currently. Tunbridge and Ashworth assume that this kind of heritage has been incorporated into a set of activities and

1 Kathleen Hunter's (1992) discussion on heritage education, supports the assertion that heritage education should be treated as an approach to the teaching and learning of people's history and culture that draws on many disciplines.

2 J. Silvester and H. Elago (2010) *Education into Heritage, Heritage into Education*. Report prepared for the MDGF, commissioned by NPC and UNESCO. Windhoek: Museums Association of Namibia.