



**CHIEF (Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future)**  
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**WP2: Qualitative research in formal educational settings**  
**Deliverable 2.2: Country based reports: Cultural literacy practices in formal education**

Authors	Croatia: Rašeljka Krnić, Benjamin Perasović, Dino Vukušić		
	Georgia: Tamar Khoshtaria, Tinatin Zurabishvili		
	Germany: Elina Marmer, Rosa Lüdemann, Louis Henri Seukwa		
	India: Chandrani Chatterjee, Swati Dyahadroy, Neha Ghatpande		
	Latvia: Alina Romanovska		
	Slovakia: Monika Bagalová, Ľubomír Lehocký		
	Spain/Catalonia: Marta Rovira, Mariona Ferrer-Fons, Judit Castellví, Nele Hansen, Julia Nuño de la Rosa		
	Turkey: Yıldırım Şentürk, Ayşe Berna Uçarol		
	UK: Eleni Stamou, Anton Popov		
Editors	Tinatin Zurabishvili, Elina Marmer		
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## About CHIEF

CHIEF (The Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future) aims to build an effective dialogue between different stakeholders in order to facilitate a future of Europe based on inclusive notions of cultural heritage and identity. The project focuses on the production and transition of cultural knowledge in both formal educational settings initiated from above, and a variety of informal human interactions. CHIEF will contribute to understanding and enhancing cultural literacy for young people, and the project will lead to a more effective use of European cultural heritage as a site of production, translation and exchange of heterogeneous cultural knowledge. It will also help to recognise existing innovative practices and develop a new organisational model to enhance the cultural and inter-cultural competence of young Europeans.

CHIEF is funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Programme. It brings together eleven partner institutions:

- Aston University, United Kingdom,
- Daugavpils Universitate, Latvia
- Institut Drustvenih Znanosti Ivo Pilar, Croatia
- Caucasus Research Resource Centers, Georgia
- Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Turkey
- Universidad Pompeu Fabra, Spain
- Culture Coventry, United Kingdom
- Univerzita Komenskeho V Bratislave, Slovakia
- The Savitribai Phule Pune University, India
- Hochschule Fuer Angewandte Wissenschaften, Germany
- University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom



## Introduction

*“I am a person”<sup>1</sup>*

Findings of the second phase of CHIEF project’s Work package 2 (WP2: Qualitative research in formal educational settings) are presented in this report for the nine countries of the CHIEF consortium: Croatia, Georgia, Germany, India, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey and the UK. After having completed the first phase – analysis of national/regional curricula with the goal to find out how they address the concepts of culture, cultural literacy, heritage and identity, the second phase’s qualitative fieldwork was carried out in order to learn how these concepts actually operate in the formal educational praxis. Approximately 70 semi-structured interviews with students and teachers were conducted in three schools in each partner country in order to learn about cultural educational practices and answer the following research questions:

- How is cultural education reflected in teaching practice and pedagogical tools?
- How do teachers and young people understand ‘culture’, ‘cultural heritage’, ‘cultural diversity’, ‘European/national/ethnic/regional identity’ and related concepts?
- What are the young people’s cultural practices in the contexts of formal education and outside the school, and what are the barriers to their participation?
- To what extent these understandings and practices are in line with the respective countries’ national policies?

Largely, the analysis of the interviews was informed by the findings of the review of national educational policies and curricula, presented in earlier CHIEF reports (CHIEF project, 2018; CHIEF project, 2019). This report adds invaluable first-hand evidence of how cultural education – even when it is not formally coined as such – is experienced and assessed by the most important actors in the process, the students and their teachers. Surprisingly similar evidence has been recorded in the context of countries as different as, for instance, Latvia and India, Croatia and the UK, which provides important impetuses for further reflections about ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’, ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ and, in the center of it – ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ ways of experiencing culture.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a quote from CHIEF project’s WP2 interview conducted in Spain.



## 1. Conceptual and Methodological Framework

Due to the interdisciplinary background of the research teams in the partner countries, critical social theory was the only common theoretical framework offered at the consortium level. The teams were encouraged to define their specific theoretical frameworks to best capture the particularities of the national and local contexts. The common starting point was conceptualization of culture as fluid, contextualized, relational and dynamic (Hall, 2000), while also characterised by a set of “communal memories, symbols and feelings” (Jusdanis, 1995: p.24) of the groups of people with shared meanings rather than exclusively along national boundaries. Culture is thus conceived rather as a process, than a marker of a stable identity (Halbet & Chigeza, 2015).

The research teams carried out their analyses inductively looking for themes emerging directly from the data. Such an approach offered them freedom to account for disciplinary as well as regional differences in discourses, concepts and meanings created by particular historical, political and social dynamics in each setting. While some teams have focused their efforts to understand the reasons behind some of the surprising, unexpected or contradictory attitudes reported during the interviews, others put an emphasis to scrutinise power relations and dominant discourses reflected in the data, and yet others took a more descriptive approach to the data analysis. All the more reassuring for the question of the scientific validity is the realisation that such an open approach has often led to comparable findings and conclusions.

Interview schedules for teachers and for young people were developed for all countries, with country-specific questions developed by partner teams (see Appendices G1 and G2 at the end of the report). The interview schedules were translated into the local languages; in multilingual of the partner countries – India, Latvia and Spain (Catalonia) the informants had the option to choose the language of the interview out of several languages offered.

In each country, three secondary schools were selected for the fieldwork, one in a large city, one a smaller town or semi-urban settlement, and one in a rural settlement.<sup>2</sup> The selected schools were located in the areas of the countries characterised by different levels of social and economic development, as well as varying degrees of ethnic diversity, levels of migration, and development of cultural infrastructure. In many cases, access to schools

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<sup>2</sup> A general overview of the applied methodological approach is provided in this section. Provided that the countries involved in the CHIEF consortium are very different, understandably, certain variations were inevitable. Detailed information about each country is provided in the beginning of each country report.



proved to be difficult, so the researchers often had to rely on schools with whom they have previously established contact.

The students of the upper grades were targeted, i.e. young people between the ages of 14 and 19, and teachers of the subjects that were in a certain way related to cultural education (history, languages, geography, art, civics, religion, etc.). In most partners' countries, 20 students and between 3 and 5 teachers per selected school were interviewed. As schools operate in their own organised and structured way, it was often impossible to recruit students (and in some cases, even teachers) directly. Often, it was the head masters or other representatives of school management who recruited the students for the interviews, and it was observed sometimes by the research team members that more active, interested and engaged students and teachers had been selected. Thus, the schools had an influence on how they wished to present themselves, and this certainly affected the collected data. In some cases, minority students have not been included, because the interviews were not conducted in the languages they are fluent in (e.g. in Georgia, Slovakia); but also exclusion and fear of repressions could have possibly played a role (Slovakia).

All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. After each interview, the researchers' general observations on the interview setting and process, informant's openness, his/her involvement and interest were recorded in the Participant notes, which also contained basic socio-economic data about the informants, summarised in Tables A1 and A2 after each country report. This data varies slightly according to each national context.

Both interview transcripts and participant notes were coded using NVivo software. The coding and analysis processes in all countries followed the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1996); specific aspects of the data analysis are, again, described in more detail in each country report.

This **Introduction** aims to draw the readers' attention to the most significant common themes that emerged as a result of the analysis. While the data collected during these qualitative interviews cannot be representative of all students and teachers of the CHIEF partner countries, it does provide valuable in-depth information about cultural literacy education in the schools of these countries.



## 2. School interviews: Common themes

### 2.1. (Mis)Understandings of ‘culture’

The young informants very often found it difficult to define culture; neither was it rare for them to resort to the use very broad, extremely general quasi-definitions, e.g. “*everything around us*” (Latvia), “*whatever makes a person unique*” (Germany). In both students’ and teachers’ narratives, ‘culture’ was very often seen in ethno-national interpretations, leading to ethnicised and racialised understandings of cultural background. Ethnicity/nationality was often essentialised as a normative and unifying feature (Germany, Turkey, the UK). While this frequently resulted in racialisation of the marginalised “other”, explicit racism and antisemitism were expressed only in some individual cases (Germany, Slovakia). Yet, German students and teachers of Colour talked openly of their experiences with racism to an interviewer of Colour, highlighting the importance of creating a safer space in an interview context when it comes to sensitive topics.

In all countries or regions, the culture (and language) of majority population was prioritised, while cultural belonging and contributions of minorities remained overlooked. Such an approach tends to create divisions and reproduce power relations. In the UK, for example, teachers were found to conceptualise culture and diversity based mainly on liberal political theories and legal conceptualisations. Several reports highlight how race, class or intersection of both, create barriers to cultural participation and recognition of cultural practices (Croatia, Germany, Slovakia, Turkey, UK). Others also analyse the impact of gender (Spain) and sexual orientation (Georgia) on cultural discourses and practices.

Despite most of the young informants being creative and socially active, they often failed to recognise their everyday cultural activities as manifestations of ‘culture’, thereby often reproducing the hegemonic perspective conceptualised as ‘high culture’ and something unrelated with their daily practices. Culture was also conceived as something old, (ethno-)national, highly respected, that “*follows us from the past and is rooted in us*” (Georgia), and of which they had a duty to maintain and to pass on to future generations. Culture was also seen as a phenomenon that is meant to help to understand the present through the understanding of the past (Spain).

### 2.2. Cultural diversity and hybrid identities

For many of the interviewed students, cultural diversity was an integral part of their lives, and they viewed it as an important asset. The country reports describe an open-minded young generation growing up to be respectful toward different opinions and, more generally,



different cultures. For the most part, though, the celebrated multiculturalism was of a ‘Eurocentric’ nature (Slovakia, Spain), although self-perception as Europeans was, at best, secondary after self-identification according to the informant’s own ethnic/national group.

A concept of young people’s ‘hybrid identities’ has been highlighted (Latvia, Spain, UK, Germany) to refer to the identities that are all but stable, and increasingly complex. Battling for recognition of their belonging to the mainstream Germany society, minority students here often constructed their cultural identities in a fluid and dynamic way, which was mistaken by their teachers for an ‘identity crisis’. Some informants in Catalonia found a solution for this complexity ascribing to a ‘human identity’: “*it has nothing to do with nationalities, I think we are all the same*” (Spain).

Speaking specifically about Europe, while the informants almost unanimously praised ‘European values’ such as democracy and tolerance, very few were critical of such an inept presentation of Europe, highlighting its brutal history, colonialism and contemporary racialised migration politics (Germany). Students often saw the very concept of Europe as rather distant (Spain), and their sense of belonging to their city or village prevailed over their sense of being part of Europe (Latvia). The Georgian case represented an extreme, with some of the informants seeing certain European values (notably, acceptance of LGBT) as unacceptable for Georgian society.

### **2.3. Schools as agents of cultural education**

Understandably, even in the presence of centralised curricula, important differences emerged between the schools in each of the countries when it came to their ‘cultural offers’ – the CHIEF project was, in fact, aiming at studying different schools in order to learn about a wide range of experiences. While the analysis in the UK showed that teachers perceive their students as deficient in terms of cultural literacy, in the German case, the way they evaluate their students differs from school to school and corresponds to the way students of that school perceive themselves as cultural agents. At the intersection of the ‘school cultures’ (discussed in the German report), geographical factors, the students’ family backgrounds, and multitude of possible scenarios of cultural socialisation and cultural participation were observed, with some schools offering a large variety of options, yet others being extremely passive in this respect, due to a number of objective and subjective reasons. The interviewed teachers across the countries, though, almost unanimously complained about having insufficient time in the classroom and/or relevant training to address the issues of cultural education in depth. Unsurprisingly, the data collected in countries as different as Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Slovakia, Turkey, and the UK suggests that the cultural education offered by schools is, very



often, inefficient, leading to clichés and stereotypes (including narrow ethno-national interpretations of culture) being reproduced.

Quite often, the schools seemed to fail to frame clearly cultural activities as such and, as a result, students did not see them as having to do with culture (Georgia, Latvia). Even the trips to historical or cultural heritage sites organised by schools, although rated very positively by the students, did not necessarily lead to an increased knowledge or understanding, as the interviewed students could not remember what they had discovered or learnt; or would forget even the names of the places visited (Latvia, Slovakia). As has been discovered during the interviews, some schools offered cultural activities on their websites, which interviewed students had never heard about (Turkey, Germany).

The use of online resources (beyond the school websites) is yet another very important issue, with schools across the consortium countries displaying quite opposing attitudes – while in India, the teachers tried to discourage such use, a school in Catalonia set up digital literacy classes focusing, in particular, on the assessment of credibility of online information (the latter being an important concern in Slovakia as well). The Turkish report emphasised the informants' view on digital media as a source of cultural knowledge that empowers young people to pursue their interests independent of or in addition to what the school has to offer, thereby increasing young people's access to cultural education and creating new cultural affiliations beyond the traditional. As our cross-national data suggests, such access is a particularly challenging issue in rural environments, largely due to very scarce cultural infrastructure in rural areas.

An important reoccurring theme through the country reports is the fact that young people not only reported highly enjoying interaction with peers at school but also often considered this interaction as their very valuable source of cultural knowledge. Students in many countries pointed out the importance of learning from each other and many believed this to be the most exciting part of their school experience. For many interviewed students, school was more than just a place of formal education (Georgia, Spain). In Germany, students reported valuing social interactions as more relevant for their cultural education than the actual lessons. Relationships with teachers (Spain, Turkey) and the school atmosphere (Latvia) were also believed to be significant to provide a favourable environment for learning.

As the Turkish analysis points out, students, their parents, teachers and the school administration are not passive receivers of top-down directives, but rather active agents when



it comes to the interpretation of curricula and their implementation. It is with such an understanding that we hope the following country reports will be read.

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## **Cultural literacy practices in formal education (Croatia)**

**Rašeljka Krnić, Benjamin Perasović, Dino Vukušić**

### **1. Executive summary**

This report presents the results of qualitative research conducted within formal education settings in Croatia. Research has been conducted in secondary schools at three different locations; urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Sixty pupils (twenty per school) and nine teachers (three per school) answered a semi-structured interview. Four thematic units were covered through the interviews, and a country specific theme was added as a fifth unit. This study analyses students' and teachers' responses to questions related to school experience, understanding of culture and cultural heritage, cultural identity of youth and youth participation in culture. The fifth thematic block in this study refers to history. It was selected as a country specific theme because of the different interpretations that exist in Croatian society around contemporary history, regarding different interpretations of crimes committed during the Second World War (by fascists) and crimes carried out in the aftermath (by communists). Croatia is one of the few European countries that has experienced bloody war in the recent past. The War for Independence (1991-1995), in Croatia called 'The Homeland War', strongly marked the process of transition from socialism to capitalism and influenced present-day Croatian society. This study analyses the cultural participation and cultural identity of young people who were born after the war. According to previous sociological surveys, young people in Croatia expressed significant social distance towards ethnicities from former Yugoslav republics, today's neighbour countries. Although this research is not a survey dealing with representative samples and it is obvious that there are no possibilities for generalisations, we were curious regarding aspects of nationalistic and similar discourses among participants in three different locations, knowing that in the semi-urban area there is a Roma minority and in the rural area there is a Serbian minority. The results of this research have shown considerable differences from previous sociological surveys measuring social distance. Only a few participants from the semi-urban area shared prejudices and stereotypes about the Roma as they exist in the public and parental culture (violence and theft attributed to the Roma). However, most participants in this region have shown a kind of neutrality and awareness of the complexity of the issue, while several young people expressed explicit inclusive, positive and empathetic views on the Roma minority. In the rural area, despite the presence of the Serbian national minority, interethnic relations have not emerged as a problem, which can be attributed largely to the economic prosperity of that region based on tourism. When asked about their own definitions of the term culture and the first associations



that appear on the term culture, almost none of the young people interviewed linked the concept of culture to ethnicity and religion. In addition, the former subcultural styles characteristic of the urban area during the 1980s and 1990s are slowly disappearing from the youth horizon. Music called *cajka* (new composed folk music, mostly coming from Serbia and a cause of labelling of young people who like it) becomes the main common denominator of the musical identity and leisure time activity of young people involved in this research.

## 2. Introduction

At the outset of the CHIEF project, Croatia was being rocked by an intense debate on curricular reform. This debate had actually begun much earlier, but as changes in the political parties in power took place the key actors who had created the proposed curricular reform, changed as well. Wars are still being fought in Croatia, even though the last war ended 25 years ago; these are wars in the spheres of culture and education due to differing ideological positions and world views. The school curriculum has also become a major issue on the political scene in right- and left-wing debates. The importance of the curriculum has been emphasised, considering the key role formal education plays in the production and transition of cultural knowledge and the development of cultural literacy among young people. School curricula embody dominant narratives in terms of identity formation processes, relationships to cultural heritage, and inter-culturalism. Accordingly, some of the most frequently addressed questions in the aforementioned debates in Croatia have been related to interpretations of history, particularly regarding the Second World War, the socialist era, and the Croatian War of Independence in the 1990s, which have been understood as fundamental parts of the national identity. Because of the significance of recent history and its different interpretations and because modern Croatian history is marked by war, we added topics from history as our country-specific thematic unit. The debate on curricular reform brought many people out onto the streets; once a rally drew roughly 50,000 demonstrators to Zagreb's main square. It would be logical to think that young people and secondary school students are involved in these divisions and emotionally charged discussions in various ways, if for no other reason than because of the involvement of their parents or teachers in events related to curricular reform. Considering our research tasks in this work package, interviews with students and teachers allowed us to learn how the teaching process is carried out, how students and their teachers perceive the concepts of culture, cultural heritage, and cultural identity, and how the life of a culture unfolds in school, in the home, and among peers. The research was performed in three schools located in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas.



### 3. State of the Art

Croatia is the youngest member of the EU, with a population of just over 4 million. In the ethnic and religious sense, Croatia is a homogenous society. According to the 2011 Census, 99.4% of the population have Croatian citizenship, 90.4% of the population identify as ethnic Croats, and 86.3% of the population declare themselves as Catholic (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Despite this, Croatia has a certain multicultural element: 22 “national minorities”, formally recognised in Croatia’s constitution (and other laws), have traditionally inhabited Croatia. This is reflected in how the constitution defines Croatia: as a national state of both Croats and members of national minorities (Croatian Parliament, 2010). According to the 2011 census, the national minorities represented just under 8% of the total population. The largest ethnic groups beside Croats were Serbs (4.36%), Bosniaks (0.73%), Italians (0.42%), Albanians (0.41%), and Roma (0.40%) (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

The status of the national minorities, particularly Serbs as the largest minority group, is an especially sensitive issue in Croatia due to the historical circumstances, marked by the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995). On the eve of the war, Serbs constituted 12.2% of the population. After the war, in which Croatian forces fought against local rebel Serbs and the Serb-controlled Yugoslav people’s Army, the total number of people killed or missing is estimated at 20,091 (Živić, 2001). At its peak, the war displaced 550,000 people, resulting in 150,000 refugees moving to different countries (Perković & Puljiz, 2001). The legacy of both the Croatian War of Independence and the Croat–Bosniak Conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still felt, creating considerable challenges for policy makers responsible for cultural literacy and inter-cultural understanding. As a result of this context, a particular emphasis has been placed (in all aspects of life) on the Croatian ethnic identity, which potentially jeopardises the implementation of policies regarding respect for diversity and acknowledging minority culture.

In addition to the large number of human casualties, the economy was also severely affected. The State Commission for the Assessment of War Damage puts the direct cost (1990-1999) at 34 billion of Euros; while 180,000 units of housing were also destroyed (Perković & Puljiz, 2001). Since 1991, Croatia has gone through a long (and still ongoing) process of economic and social transformation from socialism to capitalism. This has involved the wholesale privatisation of public companies, the non-transparent manner of which has produced a large class of ‘transitional losers’. These transitional losers, primarily farmers and the former



‘working class’, remain relatively poor and have become less socially mobile as a class (Tucker, Pacek & Berinsky, 2002).

Croatia’s current two major political blocs were formed in the 1990s; the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ, the largest centre-right party) and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (the largest centre-left party). New ‘populist’ political forces have since emerged, exploiting general dissatisfaction with the established political parties. Their rise coincided with the 2008 economic crisis, which had a severe effect on the national economy and government spending. In 2017, the budget of the Ministry of Culture (0.65% of overall government spending) was lower than it was in 2008, although an upward trend has been noticeable since 2014, when it was at a record low of just 0.5% of government spending (Šugar-Glavaš, 2018). Post-crisis politics has also been characterised by the recurrent collapse of governments and snap parliamentary elections.

Croatian policy documents suggest that policy actors acknowledge deficiencies in the operationalisation of intercultural education in the formal education system. This is reflected in the prevailing view historically taken within the Croatian academic literature. For example, Puzić (2009) notes that intercultural education was not part of school programmes. Accordingly, Lukić (2010, according to Mrnjauš, Rončević & Ivošević, 2013) defines the Croatian approach as ethnocentric multiculturalism – in other words, a very narrow form of multiculturalism – which is consistent with Spajić-Vrkaš’s (2002) conclusion that the Croatian educational system implements cultural pluralism in theory only. It has still mainly focused on the preservation of the national identity and is characterised by a monocultural perspective, with only a basic presentation of cultural diversity (Puzić, 2009).

Analysing policy documents for the purpose of the CHIEF project, Hrستیć, Dergić and Vukušić (2018) note that cultural literacy is not recognised as a specific policy topic in Croatia. Nevertheless, most documents relevant to the topic are underpinned by two organising assumptions – the importance of preserving both national identity and a democratic, non-discriminatory society within which cultural diversity is respected. National identity is given priority, as is also made apparent by an analysis of key documents; Hrستیć and Marinović Golubić (2018), studying key documents/platforms in the education process such as the National Curriculum Framework, the Civic Education Curriculum, and the National Curriculum for Vocational Education, state that the adoption of the national identity is recognised as the main educational goal from the fifth to the eighth grade of primary school, while the adoption of the European identity or some other international identity is the goal only in secondary education, after the national identity is assumed to have been formed.



Social distance is one of the most commonly addressed issues involving intercultural education in Croatia (Previšić, Hrvatić & Posavec, 2004; Sablić, 2004). Research findings have shown pronounced social distance of majority Croats towards the Serb minority, but also towards Bosniaks, Montenegrins, Slovenians, Roma, and Albanians to some degree (Blažević Simić, 2011). On the other hand, social acceptance has been attested towards Americans, Western European nations, and the neighbouring Italian and Hungarian nations. In discussing the findings, Blažević Simić (2011) suggests that the main reason for social distance towards some of the largest national minority groups and all nations from ex-Yugoslavia lies in the political and social context in general, but specifically in the events of the Croatian War of Independence after the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Stereotypes have been transmitted intergenerationally (Mrnjauš, 2013). However, levels of social acceptance are consistently much higher than levels of rejection/distance. Therefore, some authors conclude that participants do not display ethnocentrism towards national minorities despite high social distance results in some cases (Blažević Simić, 2011).

These studies have also revealed the relationship between the type of education and social distance. Gymnasium students consistently show a higher degree of tolerance and a lower level of social distance than vocational school students (Sablić, 2004). This is interpreted as a result of gymnasium students' deeper knowledge of the differences between social groups and acquaintance with various aspects of different cultures. Classes on human rights, tolerance, and democracy are included in gymnasium curricula to a greater degree than those of vocational schools. Also, gymnasiums pay more attention to the development of critical thinking than vocational schools (Sablić, 2004).

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Context and information about the fieldwork

Three localities of Croatia were selected for fieldwork:

Interviews with secondary school students in Croatia, performed as a part of the CHIEF project Work Package 2, were carried out in three locations at three different secondary schools. The towns included in the research were situated in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. A total of 69 interviews were carried out, 60 of which were conversations with students (20 each), while the remaining 9 involved their teachers (3 each). The shortest conversation lasted 33 minutes, while the longest lasted 85 minutes.



The first school selected was located in an urban area, where we conducted interviews on two occasions, 18th and 19th of October 2019. Our decision to select this school was founded on its large number of students, as well as the fact that a large number of the activities of our non-academic partner on the CHIEF project.

The next secondary school where interviews with students and teachers were performed was in a semi-urban region from October 23rd to October 24th 2019.

The last school where interviews were conducted was in a rural region. An important factor in choosing this location was the existence of a significant Serbian minority. Interviews, were held on 1st and 2nd of October 2019.

The researchers did not find themselves in any ethically questionable positions. All participants in research were guaranteed their anonymity. Some participants choose their pseudonym, and for others researchers selected random pseudonyms. Also, all participants consented to participate in the research (they signed a consent form), and in accordance with the law, they were informed of all the conditions under which their data collected during the research would be used. Conversations were recorded using a dictaphone, and were transferred to a secure archive.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

We used NVivo 12 software for the qualitative analysis of empirical materials collected. At the beginning, we selected three students' interviews (one per school) and two researchers coded them inductively. Although we did not construct any node in advance, it became obvious that most of the nodes will follow the main research questions and our thematic blocks from the interview protocol. The five large thematic interview blocks were related to school experience, youth cultural participation, understanding of culture and cultural heritage, youth cultural identity, and history. An analysis of the empirical materials collected within each initial node resulted in the creation of sub-nodes in order to analyse the narratives of secondary school students with the greatest level of detail possible. Regarding interviewed teachers, we coded two interviews separately to develop a coding tree based on key questions and thematic blocks. Under the impression of much more extensive and detailed answers, we decided to code teachers' interviews in a separate NVivo file.



## 5. Findings

### 5.1 School experiences

#### 5.1.1 The school experience in general

When asked to discuss their school experience, participants often began from various aspects of schooling. Some of them experienced schooling through the lens of teachers and the materials taught within a particular subject, while others referred to the entire educational curriculum and the way in which classes were taught. A third trend in narratives was also noted relating to the experience of oneself in school through the lens of growing up and changing the views of one's life and surroundings depending on the passage of time. It is impossible to establish whether the participants were generally satisfied or unsatisfied, however it is certainly important to emphasise some comments that repeated throughout the interviews. Firstly, the majority of participants indicated a particular degree of dissatisfaction with school programmes, which they frequently rated as too “fact-based”, theoretically geared, and free from any practical implementation of the material learnt. Despite this, they largely agree that programmes built in this way result in a wide base of learned material, for example Nives said:

*I think we learn a lot in Croatia through primary and secondary school, we have a very diverse education, we learn about everything. I think it's a fairly good education.* (Nives, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia).

However, they are also sceptical towards the use of knowledge learned in this way in further education and in everyday life, like Romana and Miško pointed out:

*I would change all kinds of things. I'm satisfied but I'm not. The system isn't interesting enough for me. I would like more field work, more teaching that would be useful in everyday life. Not just learning by rote.* (Romana, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

*I've been learning something for many years that I'm actually not interested in. But you have to learn it and that's that.* (Miško, male, pupil, rural school, Croatia)



### 5.1.2 The future of education

One of the topics examined within the interviews of secondary school students in Croatia relates to their view of the future of education and the educational system. Some participants were sceptical towards change and claim that everything will remain as it has been, reiterating the lack of practical teaching and the insistence on theoretical education. Some secondary school students had positive opinions about the process of digitalising education, which they hope will become standard in Croatia in the future. We can by no means leave out those who showed disinterest in discussing this topic, claiming they had either never thought about it or even expressing doubt in the possibility of their influence on the further development of the school system. Goran is a good example of the first opinion:

*That's all the school's idea, we can't change anything. It's a place where we come to learn. Maybe if we changed our approach, if they made the material more interesting or more interactive, but I'm not sure how. (Goran, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

Nives is representative of the frequently expressed expectation of broader digitalisation:

*Maybe we could try to change something, but I'm certain there won't be as many books, technology will develop more, they will give tablets to all students. It will be easier because everything will be in the same place. (Nives, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

Tea is expressing the view of very slow and insignificant change:

*Well, I have the feeling that, judging by the appearance of the classrooms, that the school hasn't changed for a long time, or that it practically hasn't changed since it's existed and since my parents, grandmother and grandfather went there. The only thing we have, for example, even though they're not everywhere, is those whiteboards, not the green ones, and we don't write on the board as much, but I think the chairs, desks, everything is the same as 50 years ago, maybe even more, so I don't know if that will change in 10 years, if there will be some major improvements as far as that's concerned. (Tea, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)*

Teachers make great use of new technologies during the class, from various internet content, video materials, animations, graphic representations, chats, various applications created for



teaching, YouTube, etc. Although students are very interested in new ways of presenting teaching content, some teachers emphasise the importance of maintaining a balance with "traditional" methods. Teachers expressed critical attitudes towards technology, warning that being digital does not a priori mean that it is the best possible choice at all times.

*“I still believe in the power of conversation and debate, and it does not mean that new modern technology did not open up great opportunities for children, but it's actually within conversation and discussion where most things crystallise and therefore it is still the most important part of teaching.” (Emilija, female, teacher, semi-urban school, Croatia)*



### 5.1.3 Subjects

Discussing subjects, participants referred to teachers who teach them a particular subject, and on the basis of this experience, they construct their opinions about the subjects and material they are learning. Teachers are occasionally emphasised as factors that can make a subject more interesting; conversely, the way in which the subject is taught can also create an aversion towards something students are otherwise privately interested in and suppress their desire to develop in this direction. On the other hand, it is fairly clear that student's experience of a particular subject is conditioned by what they are interested in and what they are good at, and they thus indicate how they intend their education to proceed. Romana shows how a teacher could influence her dislike of chemistry: '*Chemistry is my worst subject, but it's interesting because of the teacher*'. (Romana, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia). Monika is a typical example of a statement regarding self-understanding: '*And my least favourite... I don't know, the natural sciences, math or chemistry perhaps, because I'm more a social type than mathematical*'. (Monika, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia). Mars is similar, emphasising his interest in society: '*The most interesting of all the subjects I've learned so far... Psychology, Ethics, Philosophy. They deal with social structures*'. (Mars, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

### 5.1.4 Textbooks and reading materials

Although the interview protocol was initially intended to examine the opinions of secondary school students about the textbooks they use in the classroom, conversation with them made it apparent that this thematic unit should be expanded to include the reading materials they read. Students grouped textbooks into three categories – those they like, those they do not like, and those which some students claimed to use exceptionally rarely in certain subjects. Again, similar to impressions of teaching and school programmes, they refer to a high degree of “fact-based learning” in textbooks, considering only a small number of textbooks to have been written in a way that interests them and frequently emphasising the lack of interactive learning that might inspire differently designed textbooks. As a specific part of the school programme within the subject of Croatian language, reading materials are in fact intended to inspire students to read different types of literature in their private lives; however, students assessed them as exceptionally poorly structured and outdated. Students primarily expressed dissatisfaction with how “up to date” the material they read was, and while they expressed “respect” towards literary classics, they were of the opinion that the reading list could be “updated”, as they said, to keep up with the times. Some participants noted reading materials as one factor that makes students averse to reading in general, while others commented on the inability to expand the fund of books depending on individual preferences. Teachers are mostly satisfied with textbooks and reading materials.



*I'm not too satisfied, there's too much information that isn't necessary for our further education, there shouldn't be some kind of minimum. Gymnasiums need more breadth of course, but there has to be something that happens in everyday life, something we'll need later on. (Dora, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

*There are a few interesting books, but the majority aren't good enough to inspire us to think and make us want to learn. (Dalibor, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

Nives expressed the importance of the teacher's role when it comes to textbooks:

*The content and how current it is, the reading materials are boring to us and we don't understand the language they're written in, it's not clear to us so we need our professor to explain it to us. (Nives, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

## **5.2. Understanding of culture and cultural heritage**

### **5.2.1 The personal experience of culture and cultural heritage**

In examining perceptions of culture and cultural heritage amongst our participants, it was important to establish how they experience culture personally. We focused on their definition of the concept of culture, as well as on the broader perception of the phenomena, activities, and other aspects they believe culture comprises. A few different concepts relating to the concept of culture should be singled out. Some participants perceived culture as a group of different norms relating to rules of behaviour in society, as well as to behavioural patterns acquired during one's upbringing. Other participants equated culture to art, also thus referring to tradition and the sum total of inherited cultural "artifacts". The final distinction noted in the personal experience of culture amongst our participants related to their perception of different levels of culture, ranging from regional cultural specificities to national culture, and even to accentuating the importance of a holistic perception of culture through the lens of human civilisation. It is important to note that almost nobody mentioned ethnicity or religion when we asked about their first ideas regarding the notion of culture. So, Damjan simply defined it: *'Culture is what we humans have created separate from our nature'*. (Damjan, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia). Apart from those statements linking culture with arts or even with 'washing hands before eating', Arsen is trying to make the picture more complete: *'Culture. A combination of many things. History, homeland, folk dress earlier in*



*history, language, dialects, stories, written works, food definitely, dance, and so on, something like that*'. (Arsen, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia). One of the rare examples where the word 'nation' comes in is Jelica, who simply stated '*Well... It's something national, something every nation has*<sup>3</sup>'. (Jelica, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia)

When asked how they interpret the concept of cultural heritage, a large number of participants tied the term 'heritage' to their previously expressed opinions related to their personal experience of culture. In doing so, they show a high degree of identification with local cultural specificities and accentuate heritage typical of the region in which they live. When analysing the relationship between heritage and regional belonging, it is important to emphasise that this approach to heritage was often accentuated by students from smaller towns, while students from the big city referred more often to the totality of heritage in Croatia.

*Cultural heritage, it reminds me of some general group of works of art, traditions... Not content, traditions, art, generally anything specific to a particular area... Yeah, an area, territory, state, or any kind of region... It all somehow makes up people's lives, it's very specific to a particular group.* (Romana, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)

*In this region, traditional meals are important that are eaten for Easter, Christmas, birthdays.* (Matija, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

### 5.2.2 Culture in school and in the family

We spoke with participants about school as a place where they learn about culture, and we asked them about the ways in which culture is present within their families. Regarding culture in school, a large number of participants believe topics related to culture and heritage are lacking in school programmes, with the exception of a few subjects where they appear on the margins of the curriculum. However, they do state that some cultural activities take place at school; often they do not analyse this content thoroughly, instead "factually" listing what they see as cultural events held on school grounds. When asked to say something about culture in their own families, the majority mentioned specific traditions they practice with their families, most often referring to the celebration of traditional holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Some participants claim that they spend time together during the holidays, despite

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<sup>3</sup> In the Croatian language the notion of national in fact means ethnic



the fact that their families are neither overly traditional nor religiously oriented. Another important aspect within the block of questions related to culture and family are cultural activities within the family itself. Students' answers to this question display a wide range of content, from family trips to traditional cultural events (especially in the two small towns) and trips to the theatre, museums, and classical concerts. Asked about learning about culture and cultural heritage in school, Igor responded: *'Not really, I mean, we learn history as part of our schooling, outside of that maybe in civics, but in other subjects definitely not.'* (Igor, male, pupil, urban school, Croatia). Ida would like to see a separate school subject on these issues: *'It would be great if it were a bit broader, if it was an entire subject even, then we'd learn a little about everything.'* (Ida, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia). Dalibor (like many others) was focused on regional gastronomic festivals. It is important to note that sometimes the school organises visits to such events and sometimes pupils go there with their parents.

*Picokijada [a traditional event in the town of Đurđevac] for example, some seasonal things, Bučijada [a traditional, presentation of the use of pumpkins] or something like that. Then there's a fairly strong feeling of civility amongst everyone, everyone wants to bring the best they've raised, pumpkins for example, and to excel in that. I think that's where you feel culture and tradition the most.*  
(Dalibor, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

For Matija, family is the central point in learning about culture and heritage: *'Family, because they made us read a lot, I used to get some books and I read them when I was a kid... We travel quite a lot.'* (Matija, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

All teachers interviewed, regardless of the subject they teach, agreed that cultural education in school is exceptionally important, and that it is never too early to introduce this type of content:

*"Personally, as a foreign language teacher, culture and civilisation are what I most enjoy working on with students...and I actually want to open the kids' eyes to see what the similarities are, and what the differences are, and first and foremost to learn to accept differences."* (Senka, female, teacher, urban school, Croatia)

### 5.2.3 Croatia, the Balkans, Europe

When discussing European culture, our participants offered various replies, including the experience of European culture as a universal determinant for a cultural sphere on the level of the continent that divides Europe from other parts of the world, the perception of European



culture as interwoven from various national cultures, and the inability to estimate what the fund of European culture and heritage might be.

*To be honest, I haven't heard the term 'European culture', but I can assume it's a culture specific to Europe, or rather to countries in the European Union. So it doesn't include some eastern cultures, but rather what those countries in Europe share. (Tea, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)*

Participants often perceived this question as unintelligible, as a large number of them had never thought of Europe as a place with a shared culture, even though they did begin to speak of the existence of some aspects shared by the majority of people who live in Europe, while distancing themselves from the holistic perception and refraining from erasing borders between national culture and European culture. It is important to note that some participants experience Europe and European culture not as cultural production, heritage, tradition, or anything similar which they relate to national culture, but as a system of norms and behaviour and a particular value framework. In addition to national and European identity and culture, it was noted that some young people also mention the Balkan identity and Balkan culture as an important determinant and place of comparison between different identities and aspects of culture.

Initially, we only mentioned the term 'Balkan culture', which some participants portrayed as being opposed to the concept of 'European culture'; however, some individuals perceive the Balkans as a cultural sphere to which they belong. Participants from the big city were the only ones who mentioned Balkan culture, trying to emphasise the differences, like Igor '*Balkan culture is a bit different from European culture, they're a little different, they're not so stuck up, I don't know...*' (Igor, male, pupil, urban school, Croatia). Sonja thinks Balkan is not regulated and civilised like the West:

*I mean, that's the question, but I don't know, I think we want to present ourselves as being more a part of European culture than Balkan culture, but when we look at things like how people treat each other, for example, it's totally normal here for kids under 16 to get destroyed by alcohol, but somewhere else in Europe that's not really considered normal. (Sonja, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)*



### 5.3. Cultural identity of youth

#### 5.3.1 One's own culture

Participants frequently approached the concept of their own culture in different ways, i.e. they perceive it differently. Students from schools in the rural area or small town are somewhat more inclined to view their own culture as a part of a broader regional culture they share with the community in which they live. They discuss the traditions and heritage of their region in this light, including the characteristics of the people, cultural events, the various activities of cultural and arts organisations, the clothes worn in villages, and the food typical of the culture of their region. As is the case with students in big city, pupils from rural and semi-urban schools very rarely mentioned aspects of national culture they identify with when speaking of their own culture without being prompted; except for a few cases, they did not mention their religious affiliation without being prompted either. Sometimes pupils embraced stereotypes regarding their region: *'My culture, well, I look at myself and people from [this region] like other people describe us, mostly hard-working, we don't complain much, mostly you work, work, work.'* (Trn, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia.) Ida and Slađana represent a wide spread understanding of culture and heritage as being regionally based: *'Potatoes from this region [laughter], cabbage, baked potatoes, traditional folklore.'* (Ida, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia).

*Now that autumn is coming, we have the plum harvest, we make brandy, jam, and so on. Maybe that's quite different from other countries. I don't know, the pig slaughter and so on.* (Slađana, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia)

On the other hand, participants from the gymnasium in the big city somewhat more frequently perceived their own culture as a culture of everyday life, which includes personal daily rituals and habits, free time activities, and preferences for cultural content and activities. They discuss their love of drinking coffee, whether they first shower or brush their teeth when waking up in the morning, or whether they prefer the theatre or the cinema. Particular students, even when they mention the concept of 'Croatian culture', mention it to emphasise their anti-nationalist orientation and to accentuate the importance of their own individual choices as opposed to collective cultural norms. Many who spoke about 'Croatian culture' also consider it important to say that the culture is not 'pure', but rather contains numerous elements of other cultures in some of its aspects, and they have a positive relationship towards this fact.



### 5.3.2 The European identity

When asked if they feel like Europeans, nearly all participants answered affirmatively, although they often base their identification with Europeanism exclusively on the fact they were born on the European continent, or that Croatia has acceded to the European Union<sup>4</sup>. Some participants recognise particular advantages of EU membership, and are thus informed about the usefulness of EU funds, however they believe that Croatia's belonging to the European Union has no effect on their lives whatsoever. On the other hand, some see in EU membership the possibility of a better education, networking, and the chance for a better life, and it is in this openness and the possibility of taking advantage of it that they see their European identity. In discussing Europeanism, a few students emphasised the superiority of old, powerful European nations such as Germany, Great Britain, and France, suggesting that the European identity is something that belongs to them, and not the Croats, whose influence and culture is minor in relation to those countries. Particular participants explained their Europeanism through shared cultural values, i.e. Christianity as the basis of European culture, while one participant noted that the fact he is not Christian does not make him any less European. One student from the rural area sees the shared European identity as a kind of pledge for a better future, in which cooperation and community shift the power of ethnic identity into the background.

*Yes, I definitely consider myself European. All of my family, my grandmother, grandfather, they're all from Croatia, it's not like anyone came from Kazakhstan. I mentioned that Christianity is something that connects all of Europe. I'm not Christian, for example, but that definitely shouldn't matter to whether or not you consider yourself European. (Arsen, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

The only example of celebrating supra-national identity because of the destructive and dividing forces of ethnic identity is expressed by Miško:

*I: But do you think that potential European identity or the further networking of Europe can influence national identity in some way?*

*R: It might be able to, but only if we forget about the 'I'm a Croat, I'm a Serb, I'm this or that' as soon as possible. It would be easier to move forward.*

*I: Do you see that as something positive?*

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<sup>4</sup> Many pupils equate the term Europe with the EU



*R: Yes, it will be easier to make progress if you say yes, we're all Europeans, let's cooperate and progress together, instead of I'm this, I'm that, I'll work for myself, you work for yourself. (Miško, male, pupil, rural school, Croatia)*

### 5.3.3 Diversity within years and among peers

As regards participants' perceptions of differences between their classmates and peers, the data shows that there are particular differences in perception, especially considering where particular participants come from – these perceptions focus on different distinguishing criteria according to the different socio-spatial contexts within which the research was conducted. Members of the Roma national minority live in the county, where the selected town is located, and so students from this area often mentioned Roma students when asked about differences among students in their year. However, regardless of their being perceived as different, nearly all participants who mentioned this expressed mostly positive or neutral opinions, and did not show any signs of intolerance. The same relationship was expressed towards religious and other ethnic minorities, indicating harmonious relationships regardless of differences.

*I think it's a good thing that we have students from the Roma minority. I know them and some of them went to school with me, they're really great and it's great that they're here and that they're welcome. I'm from a village with a fairly large Roma settlement I've been there many times, it isn't easy for them coming from that ghetto, they live their own way of life and no one knows what it's like, but it's hard to come from that way of life into ours. There's a lot of resistance from their parents, brothers, sisters, friends. There's a few of them, around 10, but I'm glad they're there. (Vladimir, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

The town where the rural school is located and the surrounding area is characterised by a heterogeneous populace including various religious and national minorities, however the majority of participants described an exceptionally high degree of community among students and peers. They claimed that particular provocations based on ethnicity do occasionally occur between Serbs and Croats, however such incidents were described as rare and the majority condemned them.

*For example, I know there have been a few situations here at school, for example they claim some kids are Serbs, they don't want to hang out with them because they're Croats. But fine, OK. There have been a few who act like big Croat*



*patriots, use fascist slogans, and so on. They got on our nerves so we calmed them down in the end. (Miško, male, pupil, rural school, Croatia)*

*My best friend is Orthodox, but it was never important, I don't look at her like that nor does she at me, nor has she ever provoked me, nor did I provoke her, I mean, I don't see the point of that. (Sanela, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia)*

Aside from the aforementioned perceptions of differences, students from both small towns also mention differences in style, musical taste, behaviour, etc., however significantly less than do their peers from the big city. Students from the city discussed this type of stratification in their year – related to interests, lifestyle, music, choice of cultural content, and world view – far more often; these differentiations have far greater weight to them, although these are far from subcultural divisions in the “classical” sense.

*There are students from more liberal surroundings and students who are a bit more conservative, and then that argument happened fairly often. For example, topics like abortion or homosexuals, and then people have really strong opinions, even if they don't know exactly what they're talking about, but they got some kind of opinion from their culture that isn't their own true opinion, but it emerged from their (parent) culture. (Sonja, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)*

Considering that the classes in the big city gymnasium are mainly ethnically homogeneous, what teachers note there is also the creation of a particular distance regarding world view issues.

*“They believe that, if they hold to some kind of cultural origin, that means they are this way or that way, so if they do this then they consider themselves, or others consider them die-hard traditionalists, or if they don't then they're open-minded, liberal, hyper-liberal, and so on. But I can feel a problem in ethics classes<sup>5</sup>, where kids who enrol in ethics in Year I are viewed by those who don't enrol in ethics as some kind of turbo left-wingers, Marxists, and so on, while those who take ethics view those who take religious studies as hard-core traditionalists who spend all day in church, praying the rosary, and so on.” (Teuta, female, teacher, urban school, Croatia).*

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<sup>5</sup> In Croatian secondary schools pupils should choose between two subjects; either ethics or religious education.



#### 5.4. Youth participation in culture

Our participants spend their free time doing various activities, such as going out with friends, listening to music, watching films and series, reading, playing video games, taking part in sporting activities, etc. Nearly all participants claimed to partake in some kind of music listening, whether in clubs, at concerts, or at home. They listen to various musical genres including rock, metal, electronic music, rap, hip hop, pop, and jazz, depending on their tastes. However, the majority of participants, regardless of location, claimed that the most popular musical genre among youth is currently *cajke* – modern folk music. Some spoke of *cajke* in a negative context as music they would never listen to, however the majority of students go to clubs where this kind of music is played at least occasionally. Even those who claim not to like *cajke* music and say they would never listen to it at home visit such places with their friends in order to fit in with society at large. The data generally suggest that the majority of participants have a very flexible, fluid musical taste, and the first thing they say when asked what they listen to is that they can mostly listen to anything. A negligible number showed an attachment to exclusively one musical genre or describe music in the context of a strong determinant in their identity. When describing their musical tastes, a few pupils from the big city used the term ‘alternative music’, which is intended to include genres such as jazz, blues, alternative rock, experimental, hip hop, trap, and indie music; the students from the rural area did not mention any of these musical genres a single time.

*Techno, electronic music, that’s what we like to listen to. Fine, we can listen to cajke, we don’t have anything against that, but most of the time we listen to electronic music.* (Ranka, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

*We’re all very different, there are those who listen to folk and some who listen to metal, to Croatian pop and to mix of everything. It’s not like people hang out more with people who listen to the same music.* (Vinka, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)

It is interesting that one teacher in the rural school perceived *cajke* as an integrative factor among pupils.

*“What brings them all together is cajke. You can feel that it brings them together in a way. What might draw them apart, I would say, is more the political situation in Croatia, the division into left and right, more than whether you’re a Croat or a Serb.”* (Pavao, male, teacher, rural school, Croatia)



The majority of participants watch films occasionally, mostly thrillers and science fiction. Pupils from the big city go to the cinema somewhat more often, as the selection of films screened in the semi-urban and rural areas is considerably poorer, and there are no modern cinemas there. Television is not especially prevalent as a free time activity; students watch films on the internet and Netflix. The majority of participants use the internet as their main source of information. Regardless of location, nearly all participants use some kind of social network such as Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Snapchat, etc. A few students read books in their free time; there are somewhat more of these among students from the big city. Volunteering is not a particularly popular free time activity; a few students from the semi-urban and urban schools have had some experience volunteering, while one participant from the rural school expressed the desire to, although she knew of no such possibilities in her town. The selection of sporting activities here is also limited. Male participants most often play football and basketball, while girls rarely take part in sport, which they blame mostly on a lack of opportunity. Male and female pupils from the big city take part in sports in equal measure; as the selection is significantly larger, they mention sports such as tennis, judo, horseback riding, boxing, cycling, volleyball, etc. Football is less popular than in the other two locations.

*Very few of my peers watch television, they don't read newspapers or news portals. Just the other day, our English teacher asked us if we read those portals, and they said 'only if something pops up', like some kind of striking news story, otherwise they spend their free time on their phones, on Instagram, Facebook.*  
(Irena, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia)

*As far as sports activities goes, there's none of that, mostly football, and even that depends. They mostly have sessions for boys and they unlock the hall for them, there aren't any other activities. I mean, some of us would train if they opened something here, a gym or just a hall that would be open to everyone, but within the school, it's not really accessible when the school isn't open.* (Sanela, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia)

Few participants take part in cultural activities such as going to the theatre, classical concerts, museums, or exhibitions outside of their school obligations, although some – most often gymnasium students from Zagreb – go to galleries or the theatre, sometimes on their own initiative and sometimes with their parents or friends. The students from small towns visit cultural events promoting the traditional, local culture of their region a few times a year.



*Wild Garlic Day, that's in May. A few culture and arts associations come as well, they play something, then they make meals with wild garlic, it's some kind of party* (Ojdana, female, pupil, rural school, Croatia)

*We have to go to a few concerts a semester for music class, and we went, it was great, we went to a Christmas concert, and we go to exhibitions for fine arts. There are interesting things and we learn a lot about culture in art and music classes, in those cultural subjects.* (Damjan, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

## **5.5. History**

### **5.5.1 History teaching**

Participants find history classes interesting to a greater or lesser degree depending on their personal affinities towards this type of content or towards the period they are learning about, as well as depending on whether or not they like the teacher and the way the subject is being taught. Of those who expressed an opinion as to what they find most interesting in the history curriculum, the majority prefer learning about World War II. When students have complaints about history classes, the majority are related to the excessive amount of information they perceive as useless and easy to forget, such as bare facts or the years in which particular historical events took place. Complaints also relate to a weak focus on the cause-and-effect interpretation of events, which participants state is necessary to an understanding of some content; some participants also emphasise bias, or the one-sidedness of particular content that lacks another perspective. Students who praise their teachers generally emphasise interactivensness in teaching and dynamic lecturing as things that maintain their interest; they also advocate more learning through direct experience, e.g. field trips.

*Maybe they should give us other sources. As they say, "the winners write the history books." They should include texts from the winners' side and the losers' side into the textbook, so we can compare.* (Dalibor, male, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)

### **5.5.2 Historical figures**

Only a few students discussed figures who had any special meaning to them or their family, or towards whom they had any deep emotional relationship. The majority of participants list historical figures they have learned about in school and who are important to their national or local culture in some way, including Ljudevit Gaj, Fran Krsto Frankopan, Petar Zrinski, Matija Gubec, Josip Jelačić, etc. Only one participant described Dr. Franjo Tuđman,



Croatia's first president, as a person her family celebrates as a hero; the others who mentioned him mostly spoke of him in principle only, as an important figure in modern Croatian history. One student noted that, while Franjo Tuđman is exceptionally important to his father in a positive context, he has a different opinion. Ante Pavelić [head of the Independent State of Croatia, a Nazi puppet state] was mentioned once, in a negative context. Hitler was the most frequently mentioned figure in world history, and Mussolini and Stalin were also mentioned a few times; all three were mentioned in a negative context. A few gymnasium students from Zagreb mentioned figures important in the context of human rights, such as Abraham Lincoln or Rosa Parks. Generally, the analysis of statements points to a lack of strong emotions towards historical figures. Only one participant spoke with great enthusiasm about writer Oscar Wilde, whom she sees as an inspiration in her life. The most frequently mentioned figure was inventor Nikola Tesla.

*Adolf Hitler, Stalin, those are dictators who had a bad influence. More importance should be put on scientists and inventors. Because we only focus on negative things, we just skim over inventors, but I think that the invention of the airplane is very important for example. We should look at that. Nikola Tesla is important in Croatian history, maybe King Tomislav, Ivan Mažuranić. (Valeri, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

### 5.5.3 Historical events

Discussing historical events they consider important or which they enjoy learning about, participants frequently mentioned the Croatian War of Independence and the First and Second World War. Some participants noted that recent history (20th century) is of little interest to them, instead placing emphasis on concepts such as ancient times or the Middle Ages. One participant also answered that the French Revolution most greatly changed the course of history and human development, especially in the context of the cultural development of civilisation. It is important to note that some of these answers were conditioned by regional affiliation and the history of that particular region. However, the great majority mention the Croatian War of Independence, not only as an important historical event, but also tying its role in creating the reality in which they live. Responses involving the Croatian War of Independence often include the terms 'Croatian independence' or 'collapse of Yugoslavia'. Some participants tie important historical events to the creation and collapse of the multi-ethnic communities Croatia has found itself throughout history (the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, socialist Yugoslavia). It is impossible not to note that a large number of participants found this interview question "problematic", as they



could not decide on a specific historical event; some also tied this question to the question on the influence of history on everyday life and the context of life in modern Croatian society.

*Croatia's independence was a very significant event in Croatian history, and while we were in a union with Hungary, that was an important period because Croatia developed a lot then. (Suzi, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

*The Croatian War of Independence certainly inspired and produced even more of that national identity, which is a large part of culture. (Denis, male, pupil, urban school, Croatia)*

*I think that World War I and II were important for every culture in general, including my own, simply because it's generally known, and even though I haven't learned about it yet and I don't really know everything in detail but I think that's really important, because after that the world changed, there was regime change in the world, and that's the world in which I live today, so that's pretty important to my culture. (Iskra, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)*

It is important to note that many participants couldn't answer simple questions about World War II, some of them even couldn't differentiate between the main sides in the conflict.

#### **5.5.4 History from other sources**

When speaking with participants, it was important to establish which other sources they use to learn about history, and whether or not they use other sources of information or exclusively the “institutionalised” knowledge they receive through history class in their secondary school. There is a wide range of potential sources through which youth find information about various elements of history, including the media and films of various kinds (documentary and feature films). However, their families and their specific family history also play an equally important role in their perception of history. Some participants noted that they were not particularly interested in finding information on their own and researching history, while others mentioned the media as an important source of information, especially the internet, but also historical films and documentaries. However, we feel it is most important to note participants' exceptionally frequent reference to perceptions of history through conversation with their parents about various historical topics, or even through the direct experience of their parents. The peer group rarely presents a framework within which history and historical topics are discussed. A number of participants emphasised the discrepancy between history teaching in school and the information they get from other sources.



*Well... If something interests me, some part of history, I'll always google it to find out what I was interested in. (Vuk, male, pupil, rural school, Croatia)*

*This is OK, I mean, we have films we can watch, or for example, I asked my Dad what it was like during the War of Independence. He was a soldier then and he told me everything, I was really interested. (Ranka, female, pupil, semi-urban school, Croatia)*

*I think it's certainly a good source for people who are bored of listening to their history teacher in class, instead they can watch fun clips on YouTube, but I don't know, I always found it suspicious, for example, is it smart to follow stuff like that on the internet, like, for example, some media outlet or something reports on something because, for example, they can always be biased towards one side and they don't necessarily have to give an objective picture, so it was always easier for me to follow what's going on out of my textbook. (Sonja, female, pupil, urban school, Croatia)*

## 6. Discussion

Considering the War of Independence as the moment in which the modern state of Croatia was created, the dominance of right-wing political options in Croatian society, the great significance of ethnic identity to youth (Baranović, 2002), and the discussion of social distance mentioned earlier in the text, we expected to find social distance and particular stereotypes and prejudices among youth. However, in all three settings, emphasis on the ethnic and religious dimension of identity and a strong social distance towards minority groups was, surprisingly, lacking. This finding in the big city can be explained through a few elements, such as ethnic homogeneity and the fact that youth have no contact with 'others'. However, it is also important to note that the youth from these schools are usually children of university-educated parents, members of the middle class; it is also possible that teachers, who are not rigidly nationalist or xenophobic themselves, influenced the selection of participants. However, even if the findings from the big city were to be expected, the findings from small towns, where significant ethnic minorities live, represent an even greater surprise. There are numerous discourses regarding the Roma minority in the semi-urban region, even including demonstrations against the Roma by the local population. Our participants, when asked about that, frequently referred to the Roma as ethnically and culturally different, as



they encountered them in elementary school. None of our participants was a member of the Roma minority, as Roma rarely attend gymnasium (this indicates their subordinated position in society). Some of the students mentioned their contact with members of the Roma minority, while the majority spoke of them as a closed community with which they have no contact. Only a small number of students expressed a negative opinion towards Roma, mentioning theft and violence. Contrary to that, another small number of participants from the semi-urban school (including their teachers) expressed very positive, inclusive and empathic views toward the Roma minority. Moreover, they showed an awareness of a double-stigma against Roma who move from their community to a Croatian village, buy a house and live there, and will never be accepted on equal terms with their neighbours regardless of positive examples of integration, and who are also considered traitors by their own people for leaving the community and living outside the Roma settlement.

In the rural region, which has a significant Serb minority, we didn't find any ethnic or religious component in concepts of culture or identity, nor did we find any significant social distance despite data from the literature claiming that youth in Croatia have a strong social distance towards Serbs. As opposed to some other places in Croatia, where the Serb minority has been ghettoised to a certain extent, we found no such examples among youth in this town. Some students referred to incidents they had heard about, while some pupils are aware that members of the Serb minority might feel uncomfortable during events that emphasise the Croatian national and religious identity (especially during celebrations marking events from the War of Independence). However, pupils' answers were dominated by a kind of generational school integration, without delineations or perceptions of cultural difference. Considering that the economic health of the region is founded on tourism, our impression is that the ability to make a living and work in contact with people from around the world has contributed to a reduction in social distance.

The final block of questions was intended to relate to specific phenomena defined by the research team in each country participating in the project. In the case of Croatia, history was chosen as the final interview topic. Conversations regarding history were founded on a few different aspects, from history teaching to individual student's opinions of historical events and figures resulting from information from other sources. Croatian history is full of turbulent events and complex relationships with neighbouring states, and history as a subject is often present in the media space, turning it into a kind of everyday political topic through which various ideological standpoints related to current events are expressed. The results of research from 2013 showed little interest in history among Croatian youth (Franc et al., 2013). Examining this information within the context of our participants, it becomes apparent that



they display a great degree of disinterest in discussing history and historical topics. However, when asked to mention historical figures and events, the vast majority do provide an answer. It is interesting to note that the majority of youth mention historical figures that are universally accepted in public discourse (for example Nikola Tesla), while these same figures are often tied in various ways to the region in which the youth live, especially as regards the small towns. When discussing important events from Croatian history, a large number of participants mention the 1991 Croatian War of Independence, not referring to the broader context of these events but rather just to factual data or facts that sources of information note as exceptionally important to the modern Croatian context. Additionally, those few participants who did refer more broadly to events or historical figures often emphasised conversation with members of their family as their basic source of knowledge and opinions on history. Some previous research aids in interpreting this data: Mustapić (2015) notes that the lack of interest in history among youth is often tied with a very low level of knowledge of history; while discussing the interactionist model of creating a personal past narrative, Vuković Juroš (2010) considers it important to note the presence of a pluralism of past narratives to which the individual is exposed, such as the family narrative, class narrative, or religious narrative. Within the context of the current research, it is apparent that participants who mentioned historical events or figures often display the narratives to which they have been exposed, especially family narratives and media narratives, as well as identity aspects with a focus on regional belonging expressed among students from small towns. World War II is still the subject of academic and media interpretation in Croatian society, with one side emphasising fascist concentration camps and mass murder and the other focusing on communist crimes and murder of civilians immediately after the war. For young secondary school students, with some exceptions, World War II represents a distant, very hazy past event; some students are unaware of even elementary facts about who fought whom.

As concerns the primacy of national and regional identity over some supranational identities, our findings correspond with those of other research. It is important to note that the concept of the Balkans was not mentioned in either of the small towns, but rather only in Zagreb. The Balkans has never been simply a geographical determinant in Croatia – this concept has manifold symbolic meaning. Some consider it to relate to the other, to Croatia's eastern neighbours, indicating something wild, uncivilised, and unacceptable. The Balkans are considered the opposite of civilised Europe, and Croats are divided on this subject; supporting the negative connotation of the term, one group wishes to see itself as completely different and separate from this concept, while the other group considers themselves at least partially steeped in Balkan culture.



Similarly, the findings of Ross, Puzić and Doolan (2017) suggest that the majority of young people identify primarily in terms of national and sub-national (regional, within Croatia) identities. They do not see themselves as full Europeans, but rather define their identity as ‘almost European’. On the other hand, they consider themselves more inclined towards the ‘Balkan’ identity. Ross, Puzić & Doolan (2017) conclude that both the European and Balkan identities coexist, despite their mutual perceived opposition. Furthermore, as regards cultural literacy, it is particularly interesting to note that the participants in this research recognise Europe primarily as a political construct rather than a cultural one, unlike the Balkans, which seems to be understood more often in cultural terms.

In our research, participants also frequently tied the feeling of ‘being European’ with the political project of the Union rather than with culture. In this light, it is interesting to view data on which music youth listen to most often and the way they spend their free time – whether in urban, semi-urban, or rural surroundings; *cajke* music dominates, a style from Serbia that was once referred to as ‘modern folk music’, and which was referred to in the 1990s as ‘turbo-folk’ due to its heavy beats and the use of rhythm machines and synthesisers<sup>6</sup>. Discourse against this music has appeared multiple times since the 1990s in Croatia through the media and public forums, statements of associations, and other public actors; media expressions of this discourse often represent textbook examples of moral panic. The discourse against ‘turbo-folk’ can be divided into two dominant narratives. One is an urban, rock-oriented, elitist discourse disgusted by the music and lyrics, while the other is purely nationalistic and based on the fact the music comes from Serbia. However, the moral panic that has appeared to a greater or lesser extent throughout the past two decades has not succeeded in suppressing the great popularity of this music among youth in Croatia. For some of our participants, the strong presence of this music proves Croatia is part of the Balkans, not Central Europe.

## 7. Conclusion

Having analysed the empirical material collected through interviews with secondary school students and their teachers, we shall offer a few conclusions related to the research questions. Upon studying the school experience of Croatian secondary school students, we have concluded that the individual level of school experience is frequently subject to the participant’s own personal interpretation; it is impossible to exclude self-reflective references

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<sup>6</sup> Gotthardi-Pavlovsky (2014), in his ethnological approach to this phenomenon, showed how scientific research works against stereotypes and prejudice. Through the research, the author changed some of his own prejudice towards the phenomenon of ‘turbo-folk’.



to the life experience individuals receive in their formative years, which certainly include secondary school. However – especially in the Croatian context – it is important to note that the majority of participants are dissatisfied with the current education system; the most frequent criticism is directed at the excessive theoretical nature of teaching and the resulting lack of practical aspects in teaching content. The teachers we spoke to also noted the excessive focus of the curriculum on mere facts, and each attempts to make their lectures more interesting in their own way. More importantly, due to the use of the mandated textbooks, teachers also occasionally attempt to make their classes more socially current. As mentioned in the introduction, curricular reform is a burning issue in Croatia, and the data provided by these interviews prove that those most greatly affected by this reform – students – are highly sceptical towards what the future holds for the education system. Students are mostly prone to the opinion that the future will not bring any significant changes, although a minority sees the digitisation of the education process as a potentially positive, feasible change.

As far as the personal experience of culture and cultural heritage is concerned, participants mostly tied culture to behavioural norms and norms imprinted through upbringing, while a minority tied it to concepts such as the national or supra-national (European culture). An analysis of the empirical data affirmed the existence of the concept of Balkan culture in student narratives, which is interesting because it shows an exceptionally strong connection of culture with norms and values, as the majority of pupils see Balkan culture as something negative, but inseparable from Croatia. It is important to note that the majority of participants from small towns tied culture to the region where they live, speaking of the local culture which has dominant significance to them in the cultural, artistic, and traditional sense.

When answering questions about identity and the identity aspects of their lives, a large number of participants referred to regional belonging, especially those from small towns, while national identity remained secondary. A small number of participants noted the importance of identifying as a member of a particular ethnic or religious group, which is surprising considering the social climate and some past research on this topic. Our discussion has offered some possible interpretation of this phenomenon; the conclusion will reiterate some of the most important ones. By distancing themselves from the importance of these identity determinants, participants oppose the referent framework of their parents, not in the sense of youthful rebellion but in the context of a different view of the modern social context and a different order within the value framework in which they live. It is important to note that this conclusion cannot and must not be taken as a generalisation of all youth in Croatia, however it does stand in the context of our research in the selected locations. Differences



among peers was experienced differently depending on the size of the town the school is located in; Zagreb thus represents a place of exceptional ethnic and confessional homogeneity, where the majority of participants do not even perceive differences. In the rural school, which has a significant Serb national minority, differences between students is perceived as secondary; the majority emphasised the economic aspects of life as primary aspects that transcend ethnic divisions.

As concerns the cultural participation of youth, it can be concluded that the participants are exceptionally inert in their consumption of cultural and artistic content, which they define as 'high culture' (theatre, museums, classical concerts, etc.). On the other hand, when asked about cultural activities in the context of free time and various things they do outside of school, the majority emphasised a lack of focus on a particular genre of music or film; numerous participants noted socialising involving folk music ('*cajke*'), frequently justifying this as not their choice, but rather that of their friends. The majority of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the mandatory school reading materials, emphasising a desire to read books they choose themselves; we then concluded that the great majority of participants actually do not read on their own initiative in their free time. Other media content mentioned included social networks; only a small number of participants stated that they read internet portals as a source of information.

The topic selected as a specific feature of the Croatian part of the research was related to history. As stated in the discussion, we can conclude that the majority of participants are not overly interested in history, and that in addition to their lack of interest, they also display an exceptional lack of knowledge on history and historical topics. The majority of participants noted the excessive insistence on bare facts without context as a failure in history teaching. Discussion with teachers affirmed our thesis on the lack of interest in history, as well as that on the poor teaching concept and the implementation of this part of the curriculum. As history in Croatia is discussed often in daily politics and numerous historical topics are portrayed as ideologically coloured positions, it is no wonder that the majority of participants emphasise that they learn more about history from other sources than from history class. They identify their parents and grandparents as their primary sources of historical information, thus allowing us to conclude that, in addition to a lack of knowledge of history and a lack of youth interest in it, there is also a strong tendency in Croatia to interpret history on the basis of specific family histories; this leads to the further ideologisation and political reinterpretation of the past, which undoubtedly influences the present.



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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

Pseudonym	Date of interview	Age	School area	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of household	Parents' working status	Citizen-ship(s)
Barbara	18.09.2019.	17	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed	Croatian
Igor	18.09.2019.	18	Urban	M	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed	Croatian
Kornelija	18.09.2019.	17	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother, brother	Employed	Croatian
Martina	18.09.2019.	18	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sisters	Employed	Croatian
Monika	18.09.2019.	18	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Father, brother	Employed, Unemployed	Croatian
Sonja	18.09.2019.	18	Urban	F	Croatian, English, Italian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed, working abroad	Croatian
Tea	18.09.2019.	17	Urban	F	Croatian, English, Italian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother	Pension	Croatian
Denis	18.09.2019.	16	Urban	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, grandfather	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Iskra	18.09.2019.	17	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Grandparents, sister	Pension	Croatian
Klara	19.09.2019.	18	Urban	F	Croatian, English, Italian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brothers	Employed	Croatian
Maja	19.09.2019.	17	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed	Croatian
Mia	19.09.2019.	18	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother, brother	Employed	Croatian



Pseudonym	Date of interview	Age	School area	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of household	Parents' working status	Citizen-ship(s)
Mislav	19.09.2019.	16	Urban	M	Croatian, English, Italian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed, Unemployed	Croatian
Tonka	19.09.2019.	17	Urban area	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed	Croatian
Vinka	19.09.2019.	18	Urban	F	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother	Employed	Croatian
Leo	19.09.2019.	17	Urban	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Father, sister	Employed	Croatian
Ema	19.09.2019.	17	Urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sisters	Unemployed, employed	Croatian
Bartol	19.09.2019.	18	Urban	M	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed	Croatian
Darijo	19.09.2019.	18	Urban	M	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother, brother	Employed	Croatian
Mark	19.09.2019.	17	Urban	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister	Unemployed	Croatian
Dalibor	23.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed	Croatian
Dora	23.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sisters	Employed	Croatian
Goran	23.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, grandparents, brother	Employed, unemployed, pension	Croatian
Matija	23.10.2019.	16	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother, grandparents, sister	Employed, pension	Croatian
Nives	23.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed	Croatian
Romana	23.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, English,	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed, unemployed	Croatian



Pseudonym	Date of interview	Age	School area	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of household	Parents' working status	Citizen-ship(s)
					Slovenian						
Vladimir	23.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, Slovenian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brothers	Employed	Croatian
Arsen	23.10.2019.	16	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister	Employed	Croatian
Damjan	24.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Unemployed	Croatian
Karlo	24.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, grandparents	Employed, pension	Croatian
Mars	24.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother, sister	Employed	Croatian
Mirta	24.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed	Croatian
Pluton	24.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Ranka	24.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sisters	Employed	Croatian
Suzi	24.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	F	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother, sister	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Trn	24.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	M	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed	Croatian
Valeri	24.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brothers, sisters	Employed	Croatian
Vera	24.10.2019.	17	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Nadežda	24.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brothers	Employed	Croatian
Miranda	24.10.2019.	18	Semi-urban	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brothers	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Irena	01.10.2019.	17	Rural	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother, sisters	Employed	Croatian



Pseudonym	Date of interview	Age	School area	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of household	Parents' working status	Citizen-ship(s)
Kristina	01.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Mateo	01.10.2019.	16	Rural	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, grandparents, sister, brother	Employed, pension	Croatian
Matilda	01.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister	Unemployed	Croatian
Mičo	01.10.2019.	17	Rural	M	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother, sister	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Renata	01.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed	Croatian
Teodora	01.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brothers	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Vlad	01.10.2019.	17	Rural	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Ivan	01.10.2019.	18	Rural	M	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister	Employed	Croatian
Jelica	01.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sisters	Employed	Croatian
Miško	01.10.2019.	16	Rural	M	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Unemployed	Croatian
Ojdana	02.10.2019.	17	Rural	F	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed, unemployed	Croatian
Sanela	02.10.2019.	17	Rural	F	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister	Employed	Croatian
Slađana	02.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian, German	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, grandparents	Employed, unemployed, pension	Croatian
Tara	02.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister, brother	Employed, pension	Croatian
Vojko	02.10.2019.	18	Rural	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Unemployed, pension	Croatian
Vuk	02.10.2019.	17	Rural	M	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Mother, brother	Employed	Croatian
Jova	02.10.2019.	17	Rural	F	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, sister	Employed	Croatian



Pseudonym	Date of interview	Age	School area	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of household	Parents' working status	Citizen-ship(s)
Soma	02.10.2019.	18	Rural	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brother	Employed	Croatian
Rena	02.10.2019.	17	Rural	F	Croatian, English	Croatian	Croatian	Croatian	Parents, brothers	Employed, unemployed	Croatian

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

Pseudonym	Date of interview	Gender	Years of teaching experience	Subjects	Languages fluent	Citizenship(s)	School area
Senka	18.10.2019.	F	20	Sociology, Politics and economics	Croatian, English	Croatian	Urban area
Teuta	18.10.2019.	F	16	Sociology, Politics and economics	Croatian, English	Croatian	Urban area
Marija	19.10.2019.	F	23	English language, German language	Croatian, English, German	Croatian	Urban area
Emilija	23.10.2019.	F	24	Sociology, Politics and economics	Croatian	Croatian	Semi-urban area
Mate	23.10.2019.	M	14	History	Croatian, English	Croatian	Semi-urban area
Paulina	24.10.2019.	F	21	Sociology, Politics and economics	Croatian, English	Croatian	Semi-urban area
Pavao	01.10.2019.	M	13	Sociology, History	Croatian, English	Croatian	Rural area
Rada	01.10.2019.	F	18	Ethics, Politics and economics	Croatian	Croatian	Rural area
Koraljka	01.10.2019.	F	16	Croatian language	Croatian, English	Croatian	Rural area



**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

#	Area	“Migration”/ “ethnic diversity”	Income diversity	Med. income	Deprivation (unemployment)	Cultural infra- structure	Regional political indicator (results of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) the largest centre-right party (elections 2016)
1.	<b>urban</b>	Low	High	High	Low	High	Low
2.	<b>semi- urban</b>	Low	High	High	Low	High	Low
3.	<b>rural</b>	High	Low	Low	High	Low	High

**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school)**

#1 School description		rural
School type		Secondary school
School size	# students	243
	# teachers	28
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		Presence of Serbian minority above the average

**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Semi-urban school)**

#2 School description		semi-urban
School type		Secondary school
School size	# students	650
	# teachers	63
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		Despite above average presence of Roma minority in the region, no Roma students in the secondary school



**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Rural school)**

#3 School description		Urban
School type		Secondary school
School size	# students	168
	# teachers	54
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		Gymnasium in the city center, participation in EU projects, many cultural activities, main foreign languages offered



## **Cultural literacy practices in formal education (Georgia)**

**Tamar Khoshtaria, Tinatin Zurabishvili**

### **1. Executive summary**

This report presents findings of a qualitative study of cultural education practices in three state schools of the country providing full secondary education. The study analyses student and teacher perspectives on their schools and the education system, and examines youth cultural participation and cultural activities within a formal education context. The study also provides insights into how young people in Georgia perceive European and Georgian culture, their understandings of ‘cultural heritage’, cultural diversity and identity.

The study is based on 69 semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, undertaken by CRRC-Georgia in April and May, 2019. Researchers interviewed 60 students from grades 9 to 12 (ages 14 to 18) and 9 teachers teaching subjects related to cultural education, such as art, music, history, Georgian and English languages. The study used the grounded theory approach (see Charmaz, 1996) when interpreting the data, allowing researchers to inductively focus on emerging themes and structuring analysis around core research questions and the themes of the study without prejudicing the investigation with prior theoretical models.

The study identified two understandings of culture that dominate relevant discourse. At an individual level, the informants understood culture in the context of being a well-behaved, ‘cultured’ person, as patterns of behaviour based on politeness and respect. At a collective level, culture was strongly associated with traditions and history of Georgia, its heritage, national pride and religion. The informants reported that knowledge of the culture of the country is highly important, reflecting aspirations in policy documents and the national curriculum. Findings of the study suggest that cultural education focuses primarily on Georgian national and religious culture, with limited attention paid to the cultures of ethnic minorities living in Georgia and that of other nations. Young people reported that they gain information about Europe through history and geography lessons, but appear to lack an in-depth understanding of European culture and values. While the overall attitudes towards Europe and European values are positive, some young people see foreign cultures, including the European culture, as threatening Georgian traditions. When European values were perceived negatively, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues were invariably mentioned.



The interviewed young people expressed interest in expanding their understanding of other cultures through formal education, in many cases noting that their main source of information about cultures of other countries comes from the internet and television. Very few young people reported having significant engagement with individuals from other cultures.

The informants were also vocal in their desire to see improvements in their schools, expressing appreciation for modern teaching methods that emphasise student participation and critical thinking, and calling for an improvement of textbooks. Overall, the study found some significant gaps between the aspirations set out at the policy level and the reality on the ground in schools. Whilst Georgia has national strategies and a curriculum that emphasise the importance of cultural diversity, European integration and implementation of modern teaching practices, there remains significant work to be done before policies are translated into practice.

## 2. Introduction

This report presents findings of a qualitative fieldwork conducted for the CHIEF project's Work Package 2 (Qualitative research in formal educational settings) in three schools of Georgia. The central research questions addressed in this report are:

- How do young people understand 'European / national culture', 'cultural heritage', 'cultural identity', cultural diversity and related concepts?
- How do their teachers understand these concepts, and communicate them to the pupils?
- How do young people describe and assess their experience of getting familiar with these concepts?
- What are the young people's cultural practices in the contexts of formal education and outside the school?
- To what extent are these understandings and practices in line with the national policy?

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 60 young people and 9 teachers in three public schools in Georgia. The findings are focused mainly on young people's school experiences and their attitudes towards the learning process and textbooks; their cultural activities and cultural engagement in and outside of school; their perception of culture, cultural heritage and cultural identity, as well as their perceptions of Europe and European culture.



Prior to the presentation of the findings, an overview of relevant literature is provided; the findings of the CHIEF project's previous deliverable reports on policy documents and curricula in the fields of culture and cultural literacy are also presented.

### 3. State of the Art

Schools represent the most important formal context for young people's cultural education. Importantly (and inevitably), cultural education takes place at schools in both highly formalised ways (i.e. via lessons, discussions, textbooks, organised events, etc.) and informally, through out-of-class communication with classmates and teachers, or with guests attending various school events. There is, so far, no policy document in Georgia specifically focused on the issues of cultural education (Khoshtaria, Mestvirishvili & Singh, 2018: p.48). As described in earlier CHIEF reports, in the relevant policy documents, cultural education represents 'a means of preserving cultural diversity [...] national identity, [...] socio-economic regeneration and development' (Khoshtaria, Mestvirishvili & Singh, 2018: p.11) and is a powerful tool of national(istic) propaganda.

A very strong focus on Georgia's past (its history, traditions, religion) represents a cornerstone of cultural education in Georgia's schools (Khoshtaria, Mestvirishvili & Singh, 2018: p.65). This past is portrayed as glorious, and the students internalise this perspective on the country's history. Earlier research in Georgia demonstrated that young people see history as important: in the words of one informant, historical events should be remembered because 'firstly, one cannot "move forward" if one does not know one's own past, and, secondly, knowing history prevents past mistakes being repeated' (Khoshtaria, Kobaladze & Zurabishvili, 2018: p.299). According to Georgia's Unified Strategy for Education and Science for the years 2017-2021, museums and other sites of historical heritage are to be integrated in the process of formal cultural education (Khoshtaria, Mestvirishvili & Singh, 2018: p.62). Such integration is envisaged to not only lead to better educational outcomes, but should also potentially increase cultural participation among young people, encouraging museum visits and participation in commemorative activities. At the same time, findings from previous studies also suggest that the school curriculum is heavily focused on the country's history, culture and traditions, leaving almost no space for education related to other countries and cultures, and also largely ignoring the diversity of cultures within Georgia (Mestvirishvili, 2019: p.39). Such an emphasis on Georgian culture<sup>7</sup> alone runs counter to the government's commitment to ensuring cultural diversity in accordance with the UNESCO

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<sup>7</sup> Thought this report, 'national/Georgian' culture, traditions etc. refer to the mainstream understanding of a set of 'communal memories, symbols and feelings' (Jusdanis, 1995: p.24) that are often equivalent of ethnic Georgian culture, traditions etc.



2005 Convention on Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression (Khoshtaria, Mestvirishvili & Singh, 2018: p.64). In the long run, this approach may prove dangerous in the light of the ‘contact hypothesis’ and substantial evidence that familiarity with the culture(s) and lifestyle(s) of ‘others’ is strongly associated with higher levels of tolerance (e.g. Henry & Curtis, 2006; Weldon, 2006; Veugelers & de Groot, 2019).

Thus, the educational system – and the students who are in the very centre of this system – need to find a balance between two extremes. On the one hand, the existing curricula of the subjects is highly ‘Georgia-focused’ and pays little if any attention to non-Georgian culture. On the other hand, the Georgian National Curriculum presented in the previous Deliverable (Mestvirishvili, 2019) highlights the importance of multicultural education and ‘acknowledge[s] the diversity of cultures worldwide as well as within Georgia’ (ibid: p.46). In addition, the existing policy documents repeatedly refer to Georgia’s ‘European orientation’ and, mirroring the government’s aspiration for European integration, stress Georgia’s shared values with the EU (Khoshtaria, Mestvirishvili & Singh, 2018).

Similar to the situation in many other countries, ongoing educational reform in Georgia has encouraged increasingly interactive educational practices, with greater emphasis placed on activities, whether in a traditional classroom setting or outside the school premises. Although there is no convincing evidence that would support complete rejection of the ‘classical’ approach, a number of studies suggest that a thoughtful combination of the ‘traditional’ and ‘active’ teaching methods yield the best results (see for example, Omelicheva & Avdeyeva, 2008: p.606). Learning is no longer an activity that is to be performed exclusively at desks – a change that young people are expected to be very happy about.

The revision of textbooks, on the other hand, is a more controversial aspect of educational reform, at least in Georgia. While such revision is inevitable, serious concerns have been raised about the quality of the new textbooks that have often been prepared in a hurry (Gorgodze, 2017). There have even been reports that some editors chose to quit their collaboration with the Ministry of Education<sup>8</sup> because of the latter’s unrealistic expectations and irresponsible approach to the issue (ibid).

One of the latest developments in this respect was the announcement by the Prime Minister of Georgia of the decision to reintroduce a revised version of the iconic textbook of the Georgian language for the 1<sup>st</sup> graders, *Deda ena* (‘Mother tongue’) from the academic year

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<sup>8</sup> The full name of the Ministry is Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia (<https://www.mes.gov.ge/index.php?lang=eng>).



2019/2020.<sup>9</sup> *Deda ena*, written by one of the first celebrated Georgian educators, Iakob Gogebashvili, was first published in 1876, and was the main textbook of Georgian language for many years. All subsequent textbooks have, to various degrees, relied on *Deda ena*, although it would be safe to assume that Gogebashvili could have hardly foreseen that *Deda ena* itself would have made a return in 2019. A heated debate followed the Prime Minister's announcement, giving rise to criticism from experts in the area of education surrounding two major aspects: (a) modern educators' perceived lack of capacity to produce quality modern textbooks, and (b) the inefficiency of the Ministry of Education while developing new textbooks (Jeladze, 2019). Importantly, this debate was missing a solid discussion about the specific changes and revisions in the proposed revised version of *Deda ena*.

However important, the production of textbooks is but one of the challenges faced by the system of general education in Georgia. The much-needed reform of the system has been underway since the early 2000s, with a primary goal to improve the quality of education, but there is little, if any, evidence to date of any success in this direction. On the contrary, the most recent PISA survey showed that '[s]tudents in Georgia scored lower than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science' (Avvisati et al., 2019: p.1), ranking among the last few of the 79 countries surveyed. Alarming, while some improvement has been noted in scores in mathematics, 'PISA 2018 results in Georgia were significantly below those observed in 2015 in reading and science, reversing most of the gains observed between 2010 and 2015' (ibid, p. 3).

The PISA report presents more alarming findings on several indicators about the climate in Georgian schools: 24% of students reported being bullied at least a few times a month and 21% of students reported that, "in every or most language-of-instruction lessons, their teacher has to wait a long time for students to quiet down". Attendance figures are also well below OECD averages, with a worrying 62% of students who had skipped a day of school and 60% who had arrived late for school, compared to OECD averages of 21% and 48% respectively (ibid: p.7). These figures suggest a widespread lack of discipline in the school environment in Georgia.

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<sup>9</sup> Like in cases of the textbooks for all other school subjects, *Deda ena* is to be reintroduced along with several other textbooks, out of which the school or the teacher will choose the one(s) they prefer to use.



## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Context and information about fieldwork

Sixty semi-structured interviews were conducted with young people aged 14 to 18 and a further nine interviews with teachers in three public schools in Georgia. The schools were selected based on the following criteria: all three schools provide full secondary education (12 grades) in Georgian, and have over 100 pupils in the upper grades<sup>10</sup>. Schools were also selected to reflect various settlement types, with one school located in a metropolitan city (referred to as the urban school), one in a smaller urban settlement (semi-urban school) and one – in a village (rural school).

The urban school offers advanced German-language classes and is involved in an international exchange programme to Germany. Some of the interviewed students reported having participated in the exchange programme and have either been to Germany themselves, or have hosted incoming German students in their homes and shown them local heritage sites. Students in this school are mainly ethnic Georgian. During the interviews, renovations were taking place in the school, with the sports hall and toilets being under renovation. This noted, the repairs did not interrupt the learning process.

The administration arranged a meeting with several classes from the upper grades. CRRC-Georgia's researchers presented the CHIEF project and gave information sheets and parental consent forms to students who expressed an interest in participation. The administration assigned the deputy director's office space for the interviews, however, when two interviews were conducted simultaneously, one of the interviews was conducted in the school corridor (which was otherwise empty during the interviews). The interviews with teachers were conducted in the teachers' room. During two interviews, other teachers were present in the room; however, because the room was big, the other teachers could not follow the interview. Both students and teachers spoke openly during the interviews and the interview process went smoothly without any major interruptions.

The semi-urban school is located in a city close to a state border. According to the school administration, students are mainly ethnic Georgian, however, a few students are ethnic Russian, Azerbaijani and Armenian, and some are Muslim. Currently, the school has no exchange programmes, but sometimes takes the students on excursions to neighbouring countries. The interviews were planned by the school administration and several classrooms were allocated for the interviews.

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<sup>10</sup> I.e. grades 9, 10, 11 and 12.



The rural school is a homogeneous school with mainly ethnic Georgian students. It was obvious that the administration cares about its infrastructure, as the halls were decorated with plants and pictures were hung on the walls. The school also pays attention to discipline, as there was no running and screaming in the hall, which is usual in public schools in Georgia. The administration helped with selecting the students here as well. Three interviews were conducted simultaneously, one in the principal's office and two in classrooms. In all three schools, researchers ensured gender balance across interviewees, as well as a more or less equal distribution between pupils of 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Teachers of history, art, music, English, Georgian and civic education were interviewed. One of the informants was also a deputy principle who taught mathematics. Out of nine teachers, seven were female. Most of the interviewed teachers and students reported to be ethnic Georgian and Orthodox Christian. Further information about the informants and the schools can be found in the Appendix.

All interviews were conducted in Georgian, during April and May 2019. On average, the student interviews lasted 33 minutes and teacher interviews lasted an average of 38 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Immediately after each interview, the interviewer filled in a participant note, describing general observations on the interview settings, process, and the informant's interest and attitude. The interviews were conducted by a team of five researchers from CRRC-Georgia: Tamar Khoshtaria, Rati Shubladze, Anano Kipiani, Kristina Vacharadze and Mariam Kobaladze.

Prior to the interviews, all participants read an information sheet about the project and signed consent forms. For the students who were not yet 18 years old, consent forms were signed by a parent/guardian, and brought to the school by the students on the date of the interview.

#### **4.2 Data analysis**

The interview transcripts and participant notes were anonymised (all information that could potentially identify the person was removed from the documents), pseudonyms were assigned to each informant at random from a list of predefined names by the researchers who conducted the interviews. The documents were coded using the NVivo 11 software.

When coding the data, an inductive method was used. The interview transcripts and participant notes were analysed using the grounded theory approach summarised by Charmaz (1996). The idea behind this approach being to focus on the information collected during fieldwork when coding, without having pre-existing analytical models and assumptions that



would usually come from a literature review or theoretical paradigms. This makes it possible to first look at the content and, at a later stage, ‘generate ideas that may later be verified through traditional logico-deductive methods’ (Charmaz, 1996: p.48).

During the first stage of coding, three transcripts were coded line by line by two researchers working independently. These codes were then discussed and grouped into larger categories (level 2 nodes) and sub-categories (level 1 nodes). As a result, the coding tree consisted of themes emerging from the interviews (for example, ‘notion/definition of culture’) and attitudes and assessments gathered under these themes (for example, ‘culture means traditions’). After the coding tree was agreed upon, the remaining interviews were distributed between four researchers to be coded. At this stage, most nodes added to the tree were at level 1, with a few level 2 nodes also being added. When all 69 transcripts and participant notes were coded, the coding tree consisted of 42 level 2 nodes and over 1,000 level 1 nodes. After all the data were coded and the coding tree finalised, the researchers began finding explanations by consulting the literature and looking into theories.

## 5. Findings

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, the study reports on interviewees’ experiences at school; it discusses what young people like about school and what they would like to change, how they see their experience of cultural education, and describes cultural activities at school. The second section reports on research participants’ understandings of the notions of culture and cultural heritage, the extent to which they view culture as important or less so. The third section presents the interviewed students’ and teachers’ views on Georgian and European culture, and their exposure to cultural diversity. The fourth section describes the interviewees’ cultural participation practices in and outside the school.

### 5.1 School experiences

When asked to name positive things about school, the interviewed young people most frequently discussed relationships with classmates and teachers. For many of them, school is more than just a place of formal education. Young people reported enjoying socialising and communicating with each other and their teachers: “*school is a place where one learns how to communicate with others*” (Gela, male, student, semi-urban school, Georgia). Some highlighted the importance of communication as an essential life skill. Some of the young people also mentioned that they enjoy getting to know new students in their school.



General attitudes towards teachers were positive. According to young people, they have good relationships with most of their teachers, who were described as open, warm-hearted and helpful:

*What I like about this school is that the teachers have a very good attitude towards the students. They are very communicative and I can tell them about any issue I have. They also try to explain the topics every way they can.* (Elza, female, student, rural school, Georgia)

This noted, not all students reported liking all their teachers. Some students expressed dissatisfaction with ‘old’ teaching methods such as reading from books instead of telling a story. Some found their teachers strict, and reported that many yell at the students:

*Most teachers are professionals, but it would be good to replace the old teachers, because they are teaching with old methods [...] students often protest.* (Khatia, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia)

These informants reported a preference for teachers that use modern teaching methods and involve students in class discussions.

Young people also expressed appreciation for aspects of school life which require their active involvement, such as projects and clubs, and activities which are not “[just about] listening to the teacher talk”: *“What do I like about school? I like the new activities, the clubs, where we can express our opinions, do projects, have discussions”* (Tinatin, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia).

The interviews suggest that for the most part, the young people enjoy their lessons, as well as other activities and projects held in their schools, although they often tend to prioritise communication with their peers: *“The most interesting thing is communication with students and teachers, and receiving an education, of course”* (Liana, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia).

Many informants described participation in a range of cultural activities at school, including: events commemorating writers and famous persons, celebrations of historical events, and school-organised trips to museums, heritage sites and theatres. Young people reported that their schools had organised events during which students undertook research and made presentations related to the event’s theme. Students in the rural school reported that cultural



events are sometimes held outside the school grounds and students from several schools participate in those events together. In such cases the activities are less formal, and may involve, for example, traditional Georgian dances or the preparation of *churchkhela* (Georgian sweets). For these larger cultural activities, the school administration typically invites representatives from local government, and from educational and religious institutions.

When discussing desired changes in their schools, students reported wanting to be able to participate in more projects, and to have greater opportunity to express themselves and present in front of an audience. Whilst not directly related to cultural education, one very important general change that the interviewees would like to see in their schools is related to school infrastructure. The interviewed young people were frustrated at the condition of their schools and equipment, and expressed desire for renovation and the introduction of new technologies:

*A new school inventory is really needed. [Our] desks are in really bad shape, some have broken corners, one is assembled from two old desks, the writing sides of the desks are scribbled on and dirty. It is unpleasant to see them in such a condition. (Gega, male, student, urban school, Georgia)*

In some schools, students were happy to see progress, with some of the desired changes having been brought about in recent years:

*What I wanted the most has already been implemented. We are using slide shows during the lessons; there is also a renovated room with a comfortable environment where we have our English lessons. I think it is better when you teach the students in a comfortable environment. (Anano, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia)*

Teachers also talked about the changes to teaching methods. Traditional teaching approaches saw teachers talk throughout a whole lesson, in most cases reading from books. New approaches are however being implemented, with more interactive classes which involve young people in discussion. One of the teachers in the semi-urban school noted that since the introduction of the new approaches, students are not only listening, but also writing, reading and talking during lessons. Other teachers also pointed out that while in previous years, students would just listen to the teachers, nowadays schools try to be more diverse and include more activities and practical assignments during the lessons.



Nonetheless, the interviewed young people wanted to see more engagement, and a greater emphasis on practical lessons and on class discussions:

*I don't like that all the lessons are the same. We sit, then get up and [repeat what we have learned] and it is all the same. I would like to have more practical lessons, so that there are more activities. Students are more involved during [active] lessons. (Keonia, female, student, rural school, Georgia)*

Interviewees felt that new approaches bring about better learning outcomes, and that theoretical knowledge does not last long unless there are practical exercises to reinforce it.

As mentioned above, the study covered students from the upper grades, who were already more or less aware of what they would like to do in the future. Many sought to pursue post-secondary education, and had a clear idea of what they would like to study at university. Some young people felt that not all subjects should be mandatory in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, and that students should be able to choose to focus on subjects that are relevant to their future:

*Everyone should have a basic education in all subjects, but a student who would like to study politics or international relations [at the university] should no longer be learning chemistry or physics [in upper grades of secondary school]. (Tina, female, student, urban school, Georgia)*

Students had strong opinions about their textbooks and numerous suggestions about how those could be improved. Many felt that their textbooks lacked illustrations and practical assignments which would make the topics more memorable. Many felt that textbooks put too much emphasis on theory: *"I would add more practical assignments in the textbooks, less theory"* (Damiane, male, student, rural school, Georgia). The informants were enthusiastic about practical group work, reporting that they found the group approach an effective learning tool, and argued that textbooks could include more group assignments at the end of each topic: *"For example, if there is a topic in history about Georgia's first king, I would ask the pupils to do a presentation in groups. That would be the best way to remember"* (Gizo, male, student, rural school, Georgia).

Young people also claimed that, in many cases, a difficult, hard-to-understand language is used in their textbooks. Chemistry and physics were singled out as particularly challenging, with interviewees reporting that teachers frequently have to help the students write short summaries and write-ups of each chapter to ease the learning process. Moreover, according to



the interviewed students, textbooks contain information that is not useful and is easily forgotten. Some felt that textbooks are overloaded with facts for memorisation and that they lack sufficient context to help students understand why a particular topic is important. In the case of History textbooks, for example, students reported that they do not find it useful to memorise the years in which historical events happened. A strong preference was expressed for material that requires thinking and judgement:

*I would change the Georgian textbook, since there is a lot of material that we do not need, and I would also change the questions that are given in the end of each chapter. These questions are about facts, while I would change them to be more analytical. For example [I would like to look at] why certain things happened and not who did what in in which year. (Tina, female, student, urban school, Georgia)*

Adding examples and explanations, as well as illustrations to the textbooks would make the learning process easier for the pupils:

*In natural science subjects like chemistry, physics, biology and math, I would use many diagrams, charts and illustrations, because children remember better when they see and also many exercises and examples should be there to make the topic exhaustive. As for the humanities, such as languages and history, the information should be shortened. There might be more lessons, more time allocated for the subjects, but the information should be precise and not touching other unnecessary themes, so that children can remember the information better. (Anano, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia)*

When asked about subjects that are not taught at their schools, but that they would like to learn, some young people named subjects related to culture: including cultural studies, world cultures, art, religious studies and mythology, as well as foreign languages. Students also expressed sadness that arts and music are not taught after ninth grade. They reported receiving a lot of information about Georgian culture, but noted that they would also like to learn about the culture of other countries. Learning about different religions would also make people more tolerant towards other cultures, beliefs and values.

## **5.2 Notions of culture and cultural heritage, cultural education**

Two major themes emerged in informants' understanding of culture. The first understanding relates primarily to a person's behaviour. Interviewees linked culture to 'being well-behaved'



and knowing how to act in society, to be polite and respectful to other people, in particular, towards elder members of society and women: *“Culture is politeness first of all”* (Lekso, male, student, rural school, Georgia). The interviewed young people described a ‘cultured person’ as someone who knows how to talk and listen, and how to sit and eat. According to them, actions like raising one’s voice, talking rudely to adults, or throwing trash in the streets show that someone lacks culture. Young people explained that they felt that they express their culture in school by behaving the way they were taught in their families.

*[P]eople say that this kid is ‘cultural’, a good kid, who was raised properly in the family.* (Leila, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia)

*A cultural person is someone who has proper rules of conduct, who has good talking manners, knows what to say, how to behave, what attitude to have towards others. I think I have good culture [laughs], I am not impolite to people.* (Nanu, female, student, rural school, Georgia)

The interviewees described how they want to be better people, to live their lives so that they do not bother others, and how they seek to respect and please other people. Young people were also conscious of the fact that society would make judgements about a person’s family based on how one behaves in society: *“My culture is my measure, the [line] I should not cross; things I have to take into consideration in order to avoid others saying bad things about my family”* (Nuki, female, student, urban school, Georgia).

The second understanding of culture expressed by the informants refers to traditions, history, heritage, religion and art: *“Culture has different meanings. It is the behaviour of a human being and it is also something that unites art, tradition, music and other”* (Liana, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia). Culture was often linked to the country, described as ‘everything that unites a nation’. Some interviewees linked culture closely with history and tradition, described culture as something that *“follows us from the past and is rooted in us”* (Lasha, male, student, urban school, Georgia). Some young people saw culture in terms of particular practices, such as dancing and folklore, or traditions related to weddings, births and deaths – for example whilst visiting the graves of ancestors. Students sometimes described culture as what is passed down from previous generations (including tangible and intangible heritage), seeing it as something they hold a duty to maintain and to pass on to future generations. The importance of knowing about the nation’s culture and cultural heritage was highlighted by almost all informants; often, young informants linked culture with maintaining ‘Georgianness’:



*The notion of culture is linked with loving your country, it is related to past, present and future. I think the existence of Georgians depends on culture and traditions. (Asmat, female, student, rural school, Georgia)*

*Not only I, but everyone should know their culture. It is important, because if you do not know your past, you cannot plan the future. You have to have some foundation or base. This is very necessary, and I think it is a shame if someone does not know [their culture]. (Elza, female, student, rural school, Georgia)*

Young people claimed that they learn a lot about culture at school, mostly during history, Georgian, geography and civic education classes:

*During history lessons we learn everything about Georgia, for example about the origin of viticulture, how St. Nino brought the cross [i.e. Christianity] in our country, about clay, buildings and anything else that has been preserved in our country. (Nita, female, student, rural school, Georgia)*

Whilst both students and teachers repeatedly stressed the importance of knowing about Georgian culture, teachers also felt that school subjects focused on culture are not seen as important or ‘useful’ compared to other subjects that are perceived more ‘beneficial’ for young people in the future. Employment opportunities in the cultural field are limited in Georgia and often not very profitable, so despite constant reinforcement of the message that Georgian culture is valuable and important, young people prefer to invest their time in other areas. One teacher expressed frustration at the challenges in motivating students to learn culture: *“There is this attitude, that [music lessons] will not be useful for young people in the future. ‘Leave me alone, teacher. What would I need music for?’ is the attitude”* (Barbare, female, teacher, semi-urban school, Georgia). Teachers reported similar attitudes amongst children with regard to art lessons, suggesting that these attitudes often stem from parents who want their children to learn ‘important’ subjects, like mathematics.

Little emphasis, however, is placed on learning about the culture of other nations, although some students in the rural school reported that they had studied ‘world culture’, and learned about other countries’ customs and traditions. Whilst students in other schools are also receiving some education on other cultures, few felt that they were being adequately taught and many reported feeling that their knowledge in this regard was superficial. Many informants felt that they would like to spend more time learning about foreign cultures and less – learning about Georgian monasteries. The interviewed young people felt that knowledge of foreign cultures and religions, being aware of the similarities and differences



between Georgia and other countries is important, since ignorance could potentially lead to intolerance:

*We should learn about different religions, so that children have the right insights and not the wrong, fanatical visions like almost everyone has now. This is very important and it would also be good to discuss different cultures. [At the moment we] only learn about other countries' geographic locations. (Tea, female, student, urban school, Georgia)*

### 5.3 Georgian and European cultures

The informants often reported that their families follow traditions, celebrate religious holidays and teach their children the importance of Georgian culture and heritage: “My family is very traditional. They respect the old traditions and are trying to preserve and pass it on to us, to the next generation” (Liana, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia). Like their families, young people are also very keen to respect Georgian culture and claim to follow traditions and celebrate religious holidays, which they regard as a way to express their culture.

When talking about their culture, a portion of young people also contrasted their perceptions of Georgian culture with modern, liberal values and tolerance (for example the acceptance of LGBT groups, gender equality):

*Overall, I am very traditional. I do not have positive attitude towards LGBT. I am not homophobic, but I also do not support them. I am neutral towards them. I do not want them to bother me [...] I really like and am interested in old traditions. When I go to the village to my grandmother, I try to help her with everything, because it is very interesting to communicate with ancestors. (Anita, female, student, semi-urban, Georgia)*

European culture was seen as modern and liberal. Interviewed students associated European culture with freedom, equality, human rights, the rule of law, tolerance, democracy, development and education. However, in some cases, European culture was seen negatively, as a ‘bad culture’ that could threaten Georgian traditions. Consequently, the attitude towards European culture and values is twofold: while some of the interviewed students claimed to respect the European culture, others drew a line between Georgian and European culture, and reported that certain European values (notably, tolerance towards homosexuality) were unacceptable for Georgian society. A compromising approach was also voiced, claiming that



Georgia should take from Europe everything that is ‘good’ and ‘positive’ and ignore the ‘negative’ side:

*I think that Europe is not bad. If you ask the previous generation about Europe, they will say that only filthiness and immorality comes from Europe to our country. This is not true, it is that Georgians adopted the bad things and not the good ones. Europe has a lot of good things. They are much more developed in certain things, but I do not think that being European means that we should forget our culture... In our country, our culture should be the most important.*  
(Asmat, female, student, rural school, Georgia)

Some young people claimed that they do not really know or understand what being European means. People in Georgia often hear about the country’s aspiration to become part of Europe, and the idea that Georgian culture has always been part of European culture; however, some of the young people interviewed reported that they do not fully understand European culture:

*I do not consider myself to be European, because I do not really know what is going on there. I just know from others and from the internet, but we do not really realise yet what Europe is and how it is to be European.* (Avto, male, student, semi-urban school, Georgia)

Such responses suggest that young people are not able to understand Europe and European culture based on the information they are given. Students report that they receive information about Europe from school, mainly through geography and history lessons, where they learn about European countries’ populations, geographical locations, political relationships, historical events and world wars; some students also reported knowledge of European writers. Some interviewees claimed that their main source of information about European culture is the internet or television, and not school. These students reported receiving more information about Europe and its values from watching movies and listening to music, rather than through formal education. In some cases, students reported that certain teachers had taught them about Europe noting that they felt lucky in this regard, as they felt Georgian schools do not provide an in-depth education about European culture: “*We do learn many things about Europe, we also learn certain things about European culture, but we never go in-depth*” (Rusudani, female, student, urban school, Georgia).

Many of the interviewed young people, who, as noted above, identified as ethnic Georgians and Orthodox Christians, reported not having systematic contact with representatives of different ethnic groups and cultures. This is despite the fact that there were some Muslim



students in the semi-urban school, and that the urban school had exchange programmes with Germany through which some interviewees had travelled abroad. Thus, informants often said that the culture and behaviour of their friends is similar to their own, that they all follow the same traditions. The diversity was mostly reported in terms of personalities, interests, tastes, and occasionally how tolerant they are, but rarely in terms of cultural behaviour:

*My classmates are diverse in terms of personal characteristic. Some might be more tolerant, understandable, and patient, than others. [...] Some might agree with Georgian culture, some with European culture, some are mixed. (Dima, male, student, urban school, Georgia)*

#### **5.4 Cultural participation**

Young people's formal participation in cultural activities often involves school-organised sightseeing at historical and heritage sites, and visits to museums. Informants reported going on excursions throughout Georgia, and have taken trips from school to visit old churches, monasteries, the house-museums of famous Georgian artists and writers, as well as nature reserves, parks, canyons and caves. Students say that when possible, visits are linked to their studies during history, Georgian or civil society lessons. In some cases, the visits are accompanied by guided tours and discussions.

*We mostly go to historical places and museums during excursions. This time we are going to Samtskhe Javakheti [a region of Georgia] and the last time we were in Kakheti [a region of Georgia] to see the house-museum of Alexander Chavchavadze [a Georgian poet]; we also visited David Gareji monastery complex. (Anano, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia)*

Young people expressed interest in the history of the heritage sites they had visited, and were noticeably proud of their country's history and what the heritage sites have to offer:

*We were in Vardzia [a cave monastery site] for an excursion and it is an interesting historical place and we got interested in its history. We were also in Sataplia cave and saw the dinosaur footprints. There are very many historical places in Georgia that are worth seeing. (Kato, female, student, urban school, Georgia).*

During such visits, young people not only do sightseeing, but also get to know old traditions and customs. Some of these traditions are not always seen positively though:



*We were in a museum in Svaneti [mountain region in Georgia], the civics club's teacher organised an excursion there. The museum's guide told us about Svanetian customs and I do not like the blood feud tradition, as I do not think killing each other actually solves the problem. Everything else was very interesting: the coins found there, the ammunition, weapons and other things. The nature was very beautiful.* (Damiane, male, student, rural school, Georgia).

Overall, young people reported thoroughly enjoying their excursions, describing both the heritage sites and surrounding nature as very beautiful, calm and pleasant.

In addition to excursions throughout Georgia, schools sometimes take students to museums and exhibitions. These are either house-museums of famous individuals, or ethnographic museums which display traditional Georgian clothes, swords and handicrafts. Some informants also reported visiting art museums to see the works of Georgian and international artists. In some cases, students expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to take part in activities at museums, for example making traditional handicrafts:

*With this activity, I understood history better, we had fun. We also talked about the traditional clothes [which we saw at] the museum. I really liked [the clothes] because I also dance Georgian dances.* (Nato, female, student, semi-urban school, Georgia)

Teachers stressed the financial constraints involved in taking students out to cultural events, noting that some students cannot afford to buy museum or theatre tickets, even though some discounts apply:

*Even with the discounts, we sometimes can't [go to a theater or museum], because the prices are too high. It is not affordable for every student and in the end it turns out that not everyone can go.* (Natia, female, teacher, urban school, Georgia)

Some of the interviewed young people said that they visit exhibitions, museums, theatres, musical events or concerts outside of school, with their family or friends. Many also reported going to heritage sites when they have free time, along with monasteries, churches and religious events, especially during holidays. Most of them reported being recently involved in at least one cultural activity in their free time.



Attendance of cultural events has been reported less often during the school semester, when the students rarely manage to find time, because they have private lessons after school:<sup>11</sup> *“I have not been involved in any cultural activities this year, because I have private lessons with teachers all the time. After three private lessons a day, I go home exhausted”* (Lana, female, student, rural school, Georgia).

Volunteering is a new practice reported by interviewees. Many of the young people interviewed claimed to have volunteered in the past. Some of the volunteering activities were initiated by the school, and sought to promote civic responsibility among participants (for example, cleaning the school yard or the library). Other volunteering activities were more cultural or social in nature and were initiated by the students themselves. These activities included organising cultural or educational projects, participating in debates, donating money to help the poor, and undertaking activities to protect the environment. Some students reported taking part in activities or projects organised through governmental or non-governmental organisations which promote volunteering activities for young people. Such activities included helping to organise competitions, participating in local government, or helping out after a natural disaster.

## 6. Discussion

The interviews with young people and teachers in three public schools in Georgia provide information not only about the cultural education young people receive in schools and the cultural activities they get involved in, but also their understandings of culture and cultural heritage, perceptions and knowledge of national and European cultures.

The study finds that young people enjoy the opportunity that school presents for communication with their peers and (for the most part) with their teachers. Their desire to express themselves and their opinions can be seen in their enthusiasm for participation in activities and projects. Research participants seek more of a voice and active role in their schools, asking for greater involvement in presentations and events. Whilst schools host some cultural activities, young people are not satisfied with what is offered and would like to be able to take part in more activities, and to have more involvement and engagement in their cultural learning process. Young people have a strong preference for modern teaching

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<sup>11</sup> The fact that many young people take private lessons after school to learn the school material and to be able to pass their university exams points to the overall low quality of education in state schools in Georgia. It is common practice in Georgia to pay for private lessons in the upper grades to be better prepared for university entrance exams. Private tutoring has been common practice in Georgia for the last few decades, and has continued in spite of ongoing educational reforms.



approaches, and call out for interactive lessons, in which they can participate actively and fully instead of merely sitting and listening to their teachers. Students see a diversity in their teachers' approaches, reporting that whilst some are more advanced in this regard, others continue to be 'old school', monotonously reading from textbooks and rarely involving students in lessons. The government acknowledges a need for innovative teaching techniques, with policy documents seeking to 'support the integration of culture and creativity into the school educational system through creating stable professional learning and training systems for teachers (develop curricula, refine study and other materials in collaboration with relevant institutions of higher education; integrate innovative and creative approaches in the teaching process)' (Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, 2016: p.6). However, the study finds that despite a desire for change at the strategic level, much remains to be implemented on the ground.

Interviewed students would also like to see changes in their textbooks, finding their language difficult. According to them, textbooks are filled with unnecessary, unimportant information that one has to memorise but will eventually forget, and detached from practical application. Young people would like to learn from textbooks that require practice, critical thinking and individual judgement. The need for practical learning was also stressed whilst discussing lessons' structure, with students seeking a better understanding of their material through a learning-by-doing approach which they feel will help them better retain what they have learned. Again, whilst modern, practical approaches and critical thinking are prioritised in policy papers and the revised Georgian National Curriculum, this report's findings suggest that more needs to be done to achieve these goals in secondary schools. Moreover, in the Georgian National Curriculum 'there are certain aspects of education, e.g. in the field of history, that the pupils are not expected to question at all. National heroes, for example, are exempt from any attempt at critical thinking. Rather, they should simply be accepted and appreciated' (Mestvirishvili, 2019: p.39). This means that in schools history is hardly ever questioned and actions of historical heroes are rarely discussed or critiqued during the lessons. The facts are simply memorised.

Interviews suggest enthusiasm on the part of students for a greater role for culture and cultural studies in their curriculum. Students expressed a desire to have more diversity in their cultural education, seeking to learn more about what they call the culture of other nations, as well as broaden their knowledge in art, religious studies, mythology and foreign languages. Again, student's desires are in line with stated government policy of increasing 'the number and quality of culture and arts lessons in schools of general education' (The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, 2016: p.6). There are, however, tensions between students stated desire for broader cultural education on the one hand and



prioritisation of ‘beneficial’ or ‘useful’ subjects (e.g., economics, foreign language(s), business or law) which are seen to offer better chances of finding a highly paid job.

Young people also ask for greater choice in personalising their curriculum, namely, choosing the subjects they study in their last years of secondary education, expressing frustration that certain subjects are mandatory despite having little relevance to their plans for university. Given their pragmatic perspective on education and the job market, should more flexibility be offered in the upper grades, it may be unlikely that many young people would prioritise subjects on culture, as neither the educational system nor the job market provide appealing choices in the area. This tension is implicitly recognised in policy documents, which set out the goal of promoting ‘interest towards culture among children and youth’ (The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, 2016: p.5).

Interviewees have a two-fold understanding of culture. On the one hand, culture is seen as something related to a person’s behaviour, how a person is raised, and how s/he acts. Within this conception of culture, a ‘cultural person’ is someone who is well behaved, polite, educated and one who has respect for others. When talking about their own culture, the interviewed young people stressed the importance of their families’ opinion and reputation. Many noted that in behaving as a ‘cultured person’ they are acting in a manner that would be acceptable to their families, and that one’s family should be proud and not ashamed of a young person’s actions. More broadly, they felt that society should approve of a person’s actions, and that the actions of an individual reflect on their family. Such an attitude is in line with the findings of other studies, which find collectivistic, traditional and conservative values dominant in Georgia, something which is frequently contrasted with the more individualistic value systems of European countries (Khoshtaria, 2017; Sumbadze, 2012).

A second understanding of culture is predominantly linked to a nation, its history and religion. When describing their own culture in these terms, informants reported to be very proud to be part of a Georgian culture that has a long history and which Georgians managed to preserve over the centuries. This understanding of culture is dominant in Georgian policy documents, which, despite professing the value of contemporary culture and new cultural lifestyles, activities, and ideas, more often focuses on preserving Georgia’s historical past and cultural heritage (Khoshtaria, Mestvirishvili & Singh, 2018). Cultural activities undertaken by schools are also predominantly linked with Georgian history and religion and most often involve visits to historical and religious sites, or events commemorating the historical past. Again, this understanding of culture as a religious, historical and national phenomenon underpins major policy papers (e.g., National Policy of Georgian Cultural Heritage, 2014;



Main Data and Trends of the Country for 2013-2016, 2013; The Present Situation of Georgian Culture and the Concept of its Development, 2012).

One important observation is that although informants often discussed cultural events at school (for example, dance performances or visits to a heritage site), they did not always qualify these as cultural activities. This gap suggests that, in some cases, cultural activities and education are not framed as ‘cultural’ by schools, and are not understood so by the students.

Georgian culture featured prominently in conversations with all informants, however much less was said about cultural education about other countries and religions. Thus, the findings strongly suggest that cultural education within formal educational settings in Georgia is almost exclusively framed around a national culture. This presents considerable risks for nationalist tendencies to develop among the younger generation. It may also be indicative of a broader public opinion that is hesitant to embrace cultural diversity. For example, according to the 2017 wave of CRRC-Georgia’s Caucasus Barometer survey, over 60% of the population disapprove of Georgian women marrying Azerbaijanis, 66% disapprove of them marrying Turks and 71% – of marrying Iranians (CRRC-Georgia, 2017). Despite claims of advancing ‘public awareness about the significance of cultural diversity’ and ‘acknowledgement of differences, acceptance and tolerance of different cultures’ (The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, 2016: p.12), CHIEF interviews suggest very little information about foreign countries’ cultures is being passed on to students in secondary education system. Furthermore, whilst the Georgian National Curriculum does highlight the importance of world cultures as an area of study, it ignores the diversity of cultures in Georgia. As noted by Mestvirishvili, ‘more focus on cultural diversity within Georgia, including ethnic and religious diversity, as well as encouragement of pupils to explore this diversity, would be very important for successful integration of ethnic minorities’ (Mestvirishvili, 2019: p.39).

The interviewees, overwhelmingly from the majority group, report little direct personal experience of other cultures. In a context in which young people have limited knowledge about cultures, this paucity of engagement with representatives of different cultures creates an environment in which stereotypes can go unchallenged, allowing negative attitudes to deepen. The same dynamic can be at play even where baseline perceptions are largely positive, for example, in relation to European culture(s). Even though Georgians often claim to be part of European culture and European integration has been declared by the government as a very important goal (Government of Georgia, 2013), the CHIEF interviews suggest that young people often do not really know or understand what being European means. While



many young people have strong positive associations with European culture, emphasising respect for freedom, democracy, development and education, some students also see European culture as a ‘bad culture’ that threatens Georgian traditions. For these students, any values that are not embedded in Georgian traditions are regarded as unacceptable. The most frequently cited example is perceived acceptance of LGBT and same sex marriages. This often ambivalent attitude towards Europe and the EU<sup>12</sup> is also confirmed by the results of quantitative studies in Georgia. A recent survey conducted by CRRC-Georgia for the Europe Foundation confirmed that ‘[i]n 2019, as much as 46% of the population disagrees with th[e] statement [that the EU threatens Georgian traditions]; however, the share of those who agree with it is also high (42%)’ (Europe Foundation, 2019: p.8).

## 7. Conclusion

A focused approach to cultural education is not prioritised in the formal educational system in Georgia. Specifically, whilst policy documents stress the importance of creating a multi-cultural environment and fostering integration of ethnic minorities, the school curricula are, so far, almost exclusively focused on Georgian culture, and the interviewed students do not have much to say about foreign cultures and the cultures of minorities in Georgia. Importantly, the students are well aware of this and would welcome the opportunities to learn about other cultures. Not surprisingly, both students and teachers interviewed for this study overwhelmingly reported that it is important to know and ‘maintain’ the nation’s culture and heritage.

Schools enhance cultural participation by taking students to heritage sites, museums and encouraging their participation in cultural events. Georgian policy documents promote the integration of museums and other sites of historical heritage into formal cultural education programmes. Such an integration may potentially rise the interest in culture, increase cultural participation and make subjects related to culture more popular among youth. However, interviews suggest that, so far, school-organised visits to museums and heritage sites are not always perceived by young people as being focused on ‘culture’ and as being part of ‘cultural education’. This suggests lack of understanding of the multifaceted phenomenon of culture. The interviews do, however, provide two distinct understandings of culture by the interviewed students, discussed in detail earlier in the report. In both cases, highly collectivist perceptions are in place: the culture is understood either as an outcome and/or reflection of one’s family, or one’s nation.

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<sup>12</sup> Europe and European Union are often used as synonyms in Georgia.



Another facet of lack of cultural education is the demonstrated difficulty in defining ‘European culture(s)’, despite government’s prioritisation of European integration and long-term propaganda of Georgia being part of this very European culture. Certain aspects of what is perceived to be European culture (notably, acceptance of LGBT and same sex marriages) are seen as opposing or even threatening Georgian values and are reported to be unacceptable in Georgia.

Young people were passionate about the changes they would like to see in their schools. They were overwhelmingly in favour of modern approaches to teaching which emphasise applied knowledge, critical thinking and student involvement. Whilst policy documents outline plans to update teaching methodologies and involve students in school activities, the study suggests that, so far, these ambitions are fulfilled only partially. Students were also critical of their textbooks, which they see as overly-focused on facts for memorisation and containing redundant, easily forgotten information of what seems to them to have little value. Young people would like to see assignments that require critical thinking and discussion.

Overall, considering that ‘acknowledging the diversity of cultures and people, fostering a holistic worldview, humanistic values, civic participation and critical thinking are among the major declared objectives of the Georgian national curriculum’ (Mestvirishvili, 2019: p.61), the interviews conducted in the selected three schools suggest that these objectives are only partially fulfilled.



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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
1.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nanu_R	02/05/2019	Female	17	Georgian, English	Christian
2.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nona_R	02/05/2019	Female	17	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
3.	WP2_GEO_YP_Ekaterina_R	02/05/2019	Female	16	Georgian, English	Christian
4.	WP2_GEO_YP_Makhare_R	02/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English	Christian
5.	WP2_GEO_YP_Gizo_R	02/05/2019	Male	17	Georgian	Orthodox Christian
6.	WP2_GEO_YP_Asmat_R	02/05/2019	Female	17	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
7.	WP2_GEO_YP_Keonia_R	02/05/2019	Female	17	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
8.	WP2_GEO_YP_Tsotnec_R	02/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
9.	WP2_GEO_YP_Damiane_R	02/05/2019	Male	17	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
10.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nita_R	02/05/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
11.	WP2_GEO_YP_Omar_R	02/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian	Orthodox Christian
12.	WP2_GEO_YP_Valeri_R	02/05/2019	Male	15	Georgian	Orthodox Christian
13.	WP2_GEO_YP_Shota_R	02/05/2019	Male	18	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
14.	WP2_GEO_YP_Tsisan_a_R	02/05/2019	Female	19	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
15.	WP2_GEO_YP_Archili_R	02/05/2019	Male	15	Georgian, English, Russian	Christian
16.	WP2_GEO_YP_Elza_R	02/05/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
17.	WP2_GEO_YP_Elene_R	02/05/2019	Female	15	Georgia, Russian	Orthodox Christian
18.	WP2_GEO_YP_Lado_R	02/05/2019	Male	18	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
19.	WP2_GEO_YP_Lana_R	02/05/2019	Female	18	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
20.	WP2_GEO_YP_Lekso_R	02/05/2019	Male	15	Georgian	Christian
21.	WP2_GEO_YP_Leila_S	08/05/2019	Female	16	Georgian, Russian	No affiliation
22.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nato	07/05/2019	Female	15	Georgian,	Christian



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
	S				English	
23.	WP2_GEO_YP_Keti_S	07/05/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian	Agnostic
24.	WP2_GEO_YP_Khatia_S	07/05/2019	Female	17	Georgian, English, Russian	Christian
25.	WP2_GEO_YP_Gia_S	07/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English, Russian	Christian
26.	WP2_GEO_YP_Andria_S	07/05/2019	Male	17	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
27.	WP2_GEO_YP_Sopho_S	07/05/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian	No affiliation
28.	WP2_GEO_YP_Vano_S	07/05/2019	Male	15	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
29.	WP2_GEO_YP_Anano_S	07/05/2019	Female	16	Georgian, English, Russian	Christian
30.	WP2_GEO_YP_Vakho_S	07/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
31.	WP2_GEO_YP_Avto_S	07/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English	No affiliation
32.	WP2_GEO_YP_Anita_S	07/05/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English	Christian
33.	WP2_GEO_YP_Marta_S	07/05/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian	Christian
34.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nikoloz_S	07/05/2019	Male	14	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
35.	WP2_GEO_YP_Gela_S	07/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English	Christian
36.	WP2_GEO_YP_Deme_S	07/05/2019	Male	14	Georgian, English	Christian
37.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nugzar_S	07/05/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
38.	WP2_GEO_YP_Tinatina_S	07/05/2019	Female	14	Georgian, English	Muslim
39.	WP2_GEO_YP_Liana_S	08/05/2019	Female	16	Georgian, English	Orthodox Christian
40.	WP2_GEO_YP_Luarsab_S	08/05/2019	Male	15	Georgian, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
41.	WP2_GEO_YP_Toma_U	19/04/2019	Male	15	Georgian, English, Russian, German	Orthodox Christian
42.	WP2_GEO_YP_Kato_U	19/04/2019	Female	14	Georgian, English, German	Orthodox Christian



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
43.	WP2_GEO_YP_Tako_U	19/04/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian, German	Christian
44.	WP2_GEO_YP_Rusdani_U	22/04/2019	Female	16	Georgian, English, German	Christian
45.	WP2_GEO_YP_Lasha_U	22/04/2019	Male	15	Georgia, English, Russian	Orthodox Christian
46.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nika_U	19/04/2019	Male	14	Georgian, English, Russian, German	Orthodox Christian
47.	WP2_GEO_YP_Levani_U	19/04/2019	Male	15	Georgian, English, German	Orthodox Christian
48.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nini_U	19/04/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian, German	No affiliation
49.	WP2_GEO_YP_Rati_U	19/04/2019	Male	14	Georgian, English, Russian, German	Christian
50.	WP2_GEO_YP_Oto_U	22/04/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English, Russian	Christian
51.	WP2_GEO_YP_Nuki_U	22/04/2019	Female	15	Georgian, English, Russian, German	No affiliation
52.	WP2_GEO_YP_Demna_U	22/04/2019	Male	15	Georgian, English, Russian, German	Partially Christian, partially atheist
53.	WP2_GEO_YP_Gega_U	22/04/2019	Male	15	Georgian, English, Russian, German	Orthodox Christian
54.	WP2_GEO_YP_Tamar_U	22/04/2019	Female	16	Georgian, English, German	Christian
55.	WP2_GEO_YP_Leo_U	23/04/2019	Male	18	Georgian, Russian, English, Ukrainian	Orthodox Christian
56.	WP2_GEO_YP_Giorgi_U	23/04/2019	Male	16	Georgia, English, German	Christian
57.	WP2_GEO_YP_Tea_U	23/04/2019	Female	16	Georgian, English, Russian, German,	No affiliation



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
					Polish	
58.	WP2_GEO_YP_Dima_U	23/04/2019	Male	16	Georgian, English, German	Don't know
59.	WP2_GEO_YP_Tina_U	23/04/2019	Female	16	Georgian, English, Russian, German	Orthodox Christian
60.	WP2_GEO_YP_Marina_U	23/04/2019	Female	17	Georgian, English, Russian, German, Korean	Christian

Note: All interviews were conducted in Georgian, and all informants were citizens of Georgia. Information about the languages the informants are fluent in, and their religious/spiritual affiliation are based on the informants' self-assessment.

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
1.	WP2_GEO_T_Irina_R	02/05/2019	Female	40	Georgian, Russian	Christian
2.	WP2_GEO_T_Mana_R	02/05/2019	Female	37	Georgian, Russian	Orthodox Christian
3.	WP2_GEO_T_Gogi_R	02/05/2019	Male	66	Georgian, Russian	Orthodox Christian
4.	WP2_GEO_T_Maia_S	09/05/2019	Female	38	Georgian, Russian, English	Christian
5.	WP2_GEO_T_Barbara_S	09/05/2019	Female	49	Georgian, Russian	Christian
6.	WP2_GEO_T_Teona_S	08/05/2019	Female	48	Georgian, Russian, French	Orthodox Christian
7.	WP2_GEO_T_Ani_U	22/04/2019	Female	39	Georgian, Russian, English	Orthodox Christian
8.	WP2_GEO_T_Gia_U	18/04/2019	Male	33	Georgian, Russian	Orthodox Christian
9.	WP2_GEO_T_Natia_U	22/04/2019	Female	54	Georgian, Russian, English	Orthodox Christian

Note: All interviews were conducted in Georgian, and all informants were citizens of Georgia. Information about the languages the informants are fluent in, and their religious/spiritual affiliation are based on the informants' self-assessment.



**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

School:	Migration / ethnic diversity	Income diversity	Median income	Unemployment	Cultural infrastructure	Election turnout in 2018 presidential elections
<b>Urban</b>	High	High	Relatively high	Relatively low	Developed	High
<b>Semi-urban</b>	High	High	Average	Relatively low	Developed	Average
<b>Rural</b>	Low	Low	Low	High	Under-developed	Average

Note: Authors' assessments are presented in the Table, as no official data for the selected areas was available.

**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school)**

#1 school description		Urban
School type		Public school
School size	# students	About 1100
	# teachers	About 80
Information relevant in the CHIEF context: e.g. inclusion, multilingualism, multicultural approaches, cultural activities and projects, languages offered, international exchange programmes etc. advertised on the website.		The school provides education in Georgian. German is taught intensively in this school and it offers international exchange programmes. Students are mainly ethnic Georgian and Orthodox Christians.

**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Semi-urban school)**

#2 school description		Semi-urban
School type		Public school
School size	# students	About 2200
	# teachers	About 120
Information relevant in the CHIEF context:		The school provides education in Georgian. School students are mainly ethnic Georgian, however, few students are ethnic Russian, Azerbaijani and Armenian. At this point, the school has no exchange programmes but offers tours to neighbouring countries.



**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Rural school)**

#3 school description		Rural
School type		Public school
School size	# students	About 400
	# teachers	About 35
Information relevant in the CHIEF context:		The school provides education in Georgian. It is a rather homogeneous school with mainly ethnic Georgian students who are also Orthodox Christians.



# **Cultural literacy practices in formal education (Germany, Hamburg)**

**Elina Marmer, Rosa Lüdemann, Louis Henri Seukwa**

## **1. Executive summary**

This report focuses on cultural literacy practices in formal educational settings. This includes sources of cultural knowledge, learning experience on the topics of culture, diversity and identity and young people's cultural participation. Findings from empirical study – qualitative interviews conducted in three schools in the German Federal State Hamburg – are presented and discussed. The analysis is oriented towards CHIEF's aim to advocate a more inclusive interpretation of European cultural heritage as a site of production, translation and exchange of heterogeneous cultural knowledge.

Sixty students aged 14-19 and eleven teachers from three secondary schools have participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews about school experience, notions of culture and cultural heritage, cultural identity, and participation of young people, complemented by a country-specific question on German history. This topic was added because of the important role commemoration culture plays in German policy documents and the discursive shift towards postcolonial perspectives that have been observed during the course of the project, especially in Hamburg.

The interviewing process was a very positive experience for the majority of participants, who enjoyed thinking and speaking about these issues. As a result, extensive data was produced and it proved quite challenging to present the rich and multifaceted experience of young people that it reflects in the concise format of a report.

The findings focus on how culture was conceptualised and how these concepts also became apparent in the young people's self-reflection of their cultural practices. On the one hand, culture was prone to a reductionist discourse attributing it narrowly to 'ethno-national origin'. The 'ethno-national origin' functioned as a marker of 'othering' and was often used to define boundaries and construct differences by students and teachers alike; at the same time, in the course of the interview, boundaries could be shifted and differences relativised. However, the 'ethno-national origin' construct defined and guarded the access to belonging to the dominant 'German culture', to Germany as a country and even to Europe.



On the other hand, culture was also understood as a combination of more universal human achievements, expressed through arts and sports or through political, social, digital and other spheres of life. Unequal access to participation in culture defined in such a way was observed across and within schools and could be linked to what we have termed as a *school culture* that is determined by various aspects, such as the environmental and familial backgrounds in terms of socio-economic, educational and cultural resources, but also by educational policy as well as institutional and individual decisions. The German selective school system itself can produce, increase or reduce these barriers.

Questions on German history revealed a problematic aspect of German identity prompting defensive responses in regard to hurt national feelings because of the Nazi past, especially from those who identified as ‘normal’ or ‘standard’ Germans. Very few considered comparisons between Nazi ideology and contemporary mainstream racism and antisemitism. In confirmation of the previous research, Germany’s colonial past and its impact on the present were largely absent from educational content and there was very limited or no knowledge of this issue. In part, this was due to the way commemoration culture is (not) practised in the formal educational sector and beyond.

By highlighting and analysing discourses and practices on the ground and especially barriers to participation they create, this study hopes to contribute to the development of more inclusive concepts of cultural education in formal settings.

## 2. Introduction

CHIEF project’s Work package 2 – Qualitative research in formal educational settings – aims to explore policies and practices for the provision of cultural literacy in formal education, one of the main institutional settings where young people acquire resources and develop their cultural literacy skills. CHIEF’s unique approach is to study discourses, conceptions and practices on culture, cultural heritage and identity from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. After having analysed the Hamburg curricula in Phase I (top-down) (Sylla, Marmer & Seukwa, 2019), the current study, Phase II, is particularly interested in understanding how cultural literacy is acquired and enacted in the selected schools of the city (bottom-up). The city-state of Hamburg was utilised for both phases for consistency. Like all German federal states, Hamburg enjoys sovereignty in the issues of formal education. It is home to the University of Applied Sciences (HAW Hamburg).

Curricula analysis showed that culture was not defined or conceptualised in any way, but mostly used in the context of a binary contrast of ‘our culture’ vs. ‘other cultures’. Culture



was assumed to change with time, but cultural diversity, hybridity and fluidity in a given time and space were often overlooked. And while diversity was often discussed in the context of conflict, cultural identity was considered as something acquired mainly through comparison. Claims to inclusion, equality and participation were found to be in conflict with the selective concept of the formal education system, as curricula are set up to select and educate young people in accordance with their determination in the neo-liberal world. This and other mechanisms of power relation, discrimination and exclusion were hardly addressed by the curricula. Sporadic attempts to shift dominant discourses on culture and identity towards more inclusive notions could be observed, but they remained isolated and were not integrated in the overall narrative of manifesting the differences (Sylla, Marmer & Seukwa, 2019).

But what is the situation on the ground? The second Phase of the study aims to understand how young people in Hamburg schools view issues of cultural identity, to get some insight into their cultural practices in school and beyond, and to analyse how cultural literacy is approached by teachers in their pedagogical practice in different school environments. The main research questions for this Phase II study are:

- How do teachers perceive ‘European/national cultural heritage’, ‘cultural identity’ and ‘cultural diversity’?
- How do teachers communicate these concepts to their pupils and, in particular, facilitate cultural competence and participation?
- How do young people see ‘European/national cultural heritage’, ‘cultural identity’ and ‘cultural diversity’?
- How do young people describe their experience of getting familiar with the concepts of ‘European/national cultural heritage’, ‘cultural identity’ and ‘cultural diversity’?
- How do they engage with these concepts in practice in the contexts of formal education and outside the school?

To answer these questions, qualitative, semi-structured in-depth interviews with students between the ages of 14 and 19 and their teachers were carried out at three selected schools – one academic secondary school (*Gymnasium*) and two district secondary schools (*Stadtteilschulen*). In academic secondary schools students are selected according to their academic performance, with white German middle- and upper- classes usually over-represented<sup>13</sup>, district secondary schools are overwhelmingly attended by students who did not get selected for a *Gymnasium* or do not wish to attend one. The selected schools are

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<sup>13</sup> Chzhen, Y., Gromada, A., Rees, G., Cuesta, J. & Bruckauf, Z. (2018) An Unfair Start: Inequality in Children's Education in Rich Countries, *Innocenti Report Card* no. 15, UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence, 42-43.



located in three very different neighbourhoods of the city: in the city centre, in a deprived, isolated neighbourhood and in a suburb servicing neighbouring rural communities.

In the following section, relevant literature as well as some previous findings of the CHIEF project are briefly highlighted to contextualise the report in terms of existing research. After explaining the methodology with a short overview of relevant events which might have influenced the discourses, the main findings are presented. These are then analysed and discussed in a broader theoretical context in the Discussion section, followed by concluding remarks.

### 3. State of the Art

In his recent book, which deconstructs the essentialism of cultural identities and the common idea of the Western/European/Christian culture, Appiah (2018) lays out his view on culture in what he calls a “more cosmopolitan picture in which every element of culture – from philosophy or cuisine to the style of bodily movements – is separable in principle from all the others” (Appiah, 2018:p.207). He sees “all cultural practises and objects [as] mobile; they like to spread; and almost all are themselves creations of intermixture” (ibid, p. 208). Culture, thus, is conceived as ‘diverse’ and ‘intercultural’ in every one of its aspects.

The head of the German Council for Cultural Education<sup>14</sup>, Eckart Liebau, divides the world into ‘modern societies’ and ‘indigenous groups’ when it comes to cultural education (Liebau, 2014:p.21). In his view, *neo-liberal approaches* to cultural education, justified and motivated by economic considerations, are most likely found in ‘modern societies’. The *heritage approach* – as formulated by the UNESCO Tangible World Heritage List<sup>15</sup> and the programme for preservation of the documentary heritage, Memory of the World<sup>16</sup> – is in Liebau’s understanding closely related to ‘high culture’, something that he also assigns to these ‘modern societies’. In his view, ‘modern’ approaches are paired with what he calls the ‘old European’ concept to further develop art and culture. In contrast, in the ‘indigenous’ world, what he calls the *diversity approach* is rather relevant – with reference to UNESCO Conventions for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>17</sup> and on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions<sup>18</sup>. He locates the ‘indigenous’ world in Africa, Central Asia and South America, as well as among minority and migrant

<sup>14</sup> This is an independent advisory body on cultural education in Germany, <https://www.rat-kulturelle-bildung.de/index.php?id=2>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/cairo/culture/tangible-cultural-heritage/>; <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow>

<sup>17</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en>

<sup>18</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention>



populations in the ‘modern’ world (ibid:p.22). By dividing the world into ‘modern’ and ‘indigenous’, Liebau produces differences which obviously lack evidence, because tangible world heritage and notions of high culture are not restricted to Western societies, while the protection of intangible heritage and diversity are intrinsically global issues. Such a dichotomic approach constructs a hierarchy of societies and cultures, which, from the postcolonial view, is at the core of perpetuation of coloniality of knowledge<sup>19</sup>, i.e. knowledge production based on a colonial hierarchical division of the world, people, cultures, needs, ideas, etc. High culture is considered a western achievement, meanwhile diversity is reduced to an issue of minorities in and outside the (post)colonial centres. Such Eurocentric approaches to cultural education are very common in the mainstream literature and can be observed in the German Educational Policy Review (Seukwa, Marmer & Sylla, 2018), e.g. through the analysis of public cultural funding. One example from the Hamburg Ministry of Culture and Media<sup>20</sup> are the various funding categories for ‘visual arts’, ‘film’, ‘literature’, ‘music’, ‘theatre and dance’, etc. funding mostly white majority German projects, and a separate category ‘intercultural cultural exchange’ for projects initiated and/or participated in by people considered ‘intercultural’, whether they refer to film, literature, music, theatre or dance, etc. (personal communication with Hamburg’s artists and cultural managers during CHIEF fieldwork).

But who are those considered ‘intercultural’? Regardless of their theoretical, political or ideological orientation, most authors on youth and cultural identity are concerned with the ‘natio-ethno-culturally others’ (Mecheril, 2003), i.e. those who are perceived to be different and whose cultural identity is often questioned by the majority population.

In fact, Mecheril coins the term ‘natio-ethno-culturally other’, to describe the interlinked othering processes some young people are facing in Germany (ibid). Considering “children and grandchildren of migrants of colour as second and third generation migrants and not first or second generation citizens” is what El-Tayeb (2015:p.15) calls *migrantisation*. Black Germans and Germans of Colour (BPoC), German descendants of South European and Turkish ‘guest workers’, immigrants from Eastern Europe<sup>21</sup> and the Global South, and their German descendants, as well as German Jews, Muslims, Cinti and Roma are treated as “eternal newcomers, forever suspended in time, forever ‘just arriving’” (El-Tayeb, 2011:p.xxv). Dannenbeck (2002) carried out a study on cultural identity of young people in ‘heterogeneous milieus’. He pursues the question of when, how and why natio-ethnic

<sup>19</sup> Quijano, A. (2000) Colonialidad del Poder y Clasificación Social. *Journal of world-systems research* 6, 342–386

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.hamburg.de/bkm/downloads/>

<sup>21</sup> Except for those who migrated in the aftermath of WW2 from former German territories in Eastern Europe and whose descendants are fully recognized as Germans.



identities are assumed by young people and/or attributed to others, and when, how and why this specific category is chosen over many other types of identities (family clan, political orientation, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, hobbies, preferences or dislikes etc.). He understands identities as “a cultural positioning within a difference” (ibid:p.xx), which are always temporary, contextualised and situated e.g. within an interview setting. The interview processes themselves are made a subject of analysis – they are spaces of an ongoing ‘struggle for meanings’, the constant shifts of (cultural) positions and interactive cultural identity-work by all parties involved, including the interviewers. The author suggests that the ‘identity crisis’ commonly attributed to youth with a so-called ‘migration background’ could as well be produced by the essentialist framework of the researchers themselves. Riegel and Geisen (2010) analysed what they called ethnically-gendered attributions and natio-cultural associations that confront young people with a ‘migrant background’, making their belonging a precarious issue. In his book “Precarious conditions”, Mecheril (2003) shows how such confrontations lead to a construction of new multiple cultural identities. Contrary to the prevailing ‘between two chairs’ narratives, as the assumed identity crisis of youth with ‘migration background’ is often visualised, he shows how young women produce their own meanings of identity and belonging in extremely difficult conditions of the Federal Republic of Germany. He strongly suggests to finally recognise these forms as genuinely existing ‘multiple’ natio-ethno-cultural affiliations. The idea of hybrid identities has been picked up since by the mainstream German academic discourses on youth and migration.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile cultural identity of the majority population – those who self-identify and are identified as German – remains under-researched. Messerschmidt (2015) analyses the impact of the Nazi legacy on the dominant natio-cultural German identity, which is based on *ius sanguinis* (the principle of blood) and is exclusionist, but paired with a strong desire to be innocent. Dealing with the memories of Nazi crimes is guided in Germany by a “consistent motive [...] [which] is the defence against a suspected and always expected accusation of guilt, which does not have to be pronounced in order to provoke a premature assertion of non-guilt. This strongly emotional component is also found in the third and fourth generations after 1945, whose relatives cannot be seriously accused of guilt” (ibid:n.p.). Analysing the German culture of remembrance, Özyürek (2019) discusses the ambivalence that results from the claim that in “a democratic Germany that bases its principles on the negation of National Socialism, fighting anti-Semitism is central to German identity” and the observed fact that “increasing numbers of Germans report being weary of hearing about the Holocaust and no longer want to feel guilty (Markovits, 2006; Margalit, 2010)”. He concludes that in order to resolve this identity ambivalence, contemporary antisemitism in

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<sup>22</sup> See the contribution on cultural competence of hybrid youth by Ahmet Toprak on Deutsche Welle, 26.07.2018 <https://www.dw.com/de/metwo-zwei-kulturen-in-sich-zu-vereinen-ist-eine-kompetenz/a-44822674>.



Germany is considered to be imported by ‘immigrants and specifically Muslims’ and passed on to their children and grand-children (Özyürek, 2019:p.42), which are defined as target groups by preventive programs to combat antisemitism (ibid).

Rarely is ‘cultural identity’ framed outside national and ethnic categories. The Hamburg Curriculum sets an example by offering a more inclusive and fluid definition:

“Culture should not be understood only in the sense of ethnicity – rather, every society consists of a plurality of constantly changing cultures. These are determined by the social milieu, the geographic region, gender, generation, belief, sexual orientation etc. Every individual therefore bears various cultures and can contribute different facets of his or her cultural imprint to different situations (model of multiple belonging)” (Hamburg District School Curriculum Grades 5-11, General Tasks, Intercultural Education, 2011:p. 27).

The CHIEF Curricula Review shows, however, that this approach to culture and identity is not followed through and is often in contradiction to the dominant narratives of cultural identity as developed through comparison with other cultures and understanding of existing differences (Sylla, Marmer & Seukwa, 2019).

In their work “White spots in cultural education”, Schütze and Maedler (2018) claim to fill void spaces of hegemonic cultural knowledge production by having authors with diverse perspectives and experiences examine structures, practices and methods of cultural education in regard to the (re)production of unequal power relations. Contributors represent fields ranging from cultural studies to social work, from cultural education to art; activists are also represented. They analyse and discuss the issues of racism (Varatharajah, 2018; Bytyci, 2018) classism (Abou, 2018; Theißl, 2018), ableism (Judith, 2018), heteronormativity (Seeck, 2018) as well as intersectionality (Aukongo, 2018; Diallo and Erni, 2018) in the context of cultural education theory and practice. Adultism – discrimination of children and youth by adults – is rarely discussed or even explicitly mentioned in publications on cultural education. According to Ritz (2018), cultural programmes and projects are designed by adults for the youth, but often without their participation and recognition of their knowledge and interests. Auma (2018) argues, paraphrasing Bishop (1990), that cultural offers for young people need to function as ‘mirrors’ that reflect “their own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience” (ibid:p.74) as a means of self-affirmation, but also as ‘windows’ that expose them to all kinds of diversity. In order to be inclusive and diverse, cultural education needs to critically approach “social hierarchies and traditions of exclusions associated with



art and culture” and address “discrimination and barriers to access” (ibid:p. 74). To achieve this end, hegemonic cultural knowledge production needs to be decolonised.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Specific circumstances surrounding the fieldwork

During the fieldwork from April to June 2019, political discourses in Germany were strongly influenced by the topic of EU-Parliament Elections in May and the rise of right-wing extremism in the country and elsewhere. The Hamburg city-state is traditionally governed by the central-left, but since the 2015 Hamburg state election the extreme right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) has been represented in the city hall.

In the fall of 2018, Hamburg AfD launched a portal for Neutral Schools<sup>23</sup> (sarcastically referred to as ‘denunciation portal’<sup>24</sup>) asking students and parents to report supposed “violations of neutrality” by teachers. The AfD forwarded over 100 complains, mainly about anti-fascist stickers and Fridays for Future<sup>25</sup> banners, to the Hamburg school authorities. Cases of schools being forced to remove Antifa and anti-AfD stickers made some headlines<sup>26</sup>. Anti-racist and feminist discourses have also gained some momentum in Germany during the period of fieldwork, especially on social media platforms like Youtube, Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. Since the Fall of 2018, people report cases of everyday racism using the #metwo hashtag, which received coverage in a few mainstream print and online news outlets. These stories reveal that racism is often exerted by white German teachers towards BPoC students and other racialized groups<sup>27</sup>.

Another controversial issue are the so-called “International Preparation Classes” (IVK), initiated after the arrival of a relatively large number of refugees in 2015. Here, newly arrived school children are taught German in mixed-aged classes for one year before joining a regular class. In 2019, around 9,000 students attended IVK classes in the city-state. This approach is being criticised for segregation, which could also be observed during the CHIEF fieldwork in one of the schools. The IVKs at this school took place in containers in the schoolyard (like those used for temporary housing in refugee camps), outside the school building, and attending students seemed to be isolated from the main school activities.

<sup>23</sup> <https://afd-fraktion-hamburg.de/aktion-neutrale-schulen-hamburg/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/hamburg/Ein-Jahr-AfD-Meldeportal-Mehr-als-100-Faelle.afdmeldeportal100.html>

<sup>25</sup> Since December 2018, students in Hamburg joined the global youth climate movement Fridays for Future, organising strikes, demonstrations and other public events.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/hamburg/Antifa-Aufkleber-in-Schule-sorgen-fuer-Wirbel,schule1798.html>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.zeit.de/2019/03/deutschsein-ali-can-metwo-alltagsrassismus-migranten>



The interviews in two of the schools (the rural and semi-urban schools) took place during the month of Ramadan, which was observed by some Muslim students by fasting and celebrations.

#### 4.2 School selection and data collection

Three schools in the city-state of Hamburg were selected for inquiry. The selection process was guided by the research design and Fieldwork manual. However, access issues also played a significant role. The first requirement was to find three schools located in urban, semi-urban and rural areas (referred to as, accordingly, schools U, S and R). Finding a rural school in the city-state proved difficult. Hamburg consists of seven heterogeneously developed districts, divided into 104 neighbourhoods or quarters (*Stadtteile*), which are homogenous in regard to the rural/semi-urban/urban categories. Overlapping this administrative map with the one of the city's 119 public secondary schools showed only two schools in rural locations. However, both schools declined participation. The second choice was then to approach one of the secondary schools located on the city's borders, which also serve surrounding rural areas of the neighbouring federal states of Schleswig-Holstein or Lower Saxony. With the help of personal contacts, one such school (school R) reluctantly agreed to participation (more details on schools are provided in the Appendix, Tables A4-A6). This school has two semi-independent locations – for pupils in grades 5-10 and in grades 11-13 – and only the latter consented. Therefore, the sample of students from school R ranges only between the ages of 17 and 19.

Provided that nearly half of all secondary schools in Hamburg are academic secondary schools (*Gymnasien*), one of these had to be present among the selected schools. Furthermore, income, ethnic, religious and migration diversity had to be captured in the sample. After we had approached a few schools that matched our criteria, two of them expressed interest. School U is a *Gymnasium* in a historical quarter with a rich cultural infrastructure as well as an economically and otherwise diverse population. Due to its specific profile with emphasis on art and culture, this school attracts students from all over the city. The headmaster initially had reservations, stating that the school receives too many research requests, which interfere with the school routine. It was the project's focus on cultural literacy and cultural education, along with the prospect of future cooperation with the research group that convinced her in the end.

School S is a district secondary school in a major social housing project erected during the 1960-1970's, economically disadvantaged and cut off from the city's underground network. Most students live in the housing project that has a negative reputation in the city. The school



also serves a few students from very wealthy sub-urban neighbourhoods in the vicinity. The intercultural coordinator<sup>28</sup> of the school was initially sceptical whether her students, which she described as disadvantaged, would benefit from participating. It was possible to convince her by promising that (1) the interviews would focus on the students, their experiences and opinions, and (2) an interviewer of colour would conduct the interviews, in order to create a more comfortable space for the many students of colour to talk about culture, because of their experience of racism in white German spaces. This interviewer would also be a ‘role model’ for the disadvantaged youth.

During fieldwork, the two schools which negotiated conditions for their participation (schools U and S) proved to be much more committed than school R which agreed reluctantly as a personal favour.

Fieldwork was carried out during the second term of the 2018/2019 academic year by three interviewers. Twenty students were interviewed at each school, three teachers at school U and four teachers each at schools S and R. All interviews were conducted in German. After each interview, researchers filled out participant notes with socio-demographic information and relevant reflections on interview context and process. One researcher interviewed all eleven teachers, one research assistant interviewed students at schools U and R, while the second research assistant interviewed students at school S. Dates of fieldwork are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Fieldwork dates by school, Hamburg

school U	school S	school R
08.04.-30.04.2019	29.05.-20.06.2019	03.06.-21.06.2019

The headmaster at school U and the intercultural coordinator at school S recruited the teachers, who then recruited the students. Interview dates were coordinated via email or phone, which made the organisational part run smoothly. The situation was different at school R, where the researchers visited several times to do recruitment on their own, approaching teachers and students individually during breaks. Rescheduling, last minute cancellations and even no-shows were common at this school. The level of commitment was also reflected in the respondents’ attitudes towards the interviews. At schools U and S, most students and especially teachers were engaged with the interview and the topic. Rapport was often easily established between interviewers and respondents. At school R, however,

<sup>28</sup> Intercultural coordinators are teachers who have participated in special voluntary training organized by the State Institute for Teacher Education and School Development, which “prepares Hamburg teachers in a period of two years for their commitment as ‘change actors’ who initiate and support intercultural school development processes” (<https://li.hamburg.de/iko/>).



students seemed sometimes to be annoyed by certain questions or gave brief replies and teachers were often in a hurry. However, most respondents were open to and interested in at least some of the questions.

Before each interview, participants and the researcher signed the informed consent forms. Respondents under 16 years of age had their caregivers sign an additional consent form. Interviews took place on school premises, mostly in empty classrooms or the library, during school time. The participants were introduced to the aims of the study and asked to choose a pseudonym to protect their identity. Interviews lasted between 12 and 102 minutes.

There were no recently arrived migrants among study participants.

The same interview schedule was used in all nine CHIEF partner countries, except for the last section of country-specific questions. In the German case, these questions were about German history in general and, in particular, about the colonial history and the Nazi regime. These questions aimed to understand how the German culture of remembrance, which was found an important pillar of German identity in official discourses (Seukwa, Marmer & Sylla, 2018; Sylla, Marmer & Seukwa, 2019), is practiced and implemented within the formal education.

### **4.3 Data analysis**

All interviews were transcribed and coding of interviews and participant notes was done using NVivo12 software. Initially, three interviews, one from each school, one teacher and two students, were selected at random and inductively coded line by line by two researchers (who were both also interviewers) parallel and independently. They then discussed their preliminary findings to agree on a common coding tree. After the coding tree was developed, the same two researchers coded the rest of the interviews. Emerging ideas, discovered relations and up-coming questions were subsequently documented in the form of memos. Researchers met weekly to discuss their findings, exchange memos and adjust the coding tree. Due to the large amount of data the coding took over five weeks. Afterwards all NVivo files were merged into one. The data produced rich and dense information, however, a selection of the most prominent topics addressing our research questions had to be made. Each relevant category was then analysed, seeking out common tendencies, controversies and contradictions as well as relations between the categories. Though all interviews with teachers and students from all three schools were coded together, differences and connections within and between schools were explored whenever they appeared relevant. Information about the respondents like gender, parents' occupation (in case of students), citizenship or languages spoken (see Appendix, Tables A1, A2) was used for interpretation when deemed



appropriate. Suitable quotes were selected to illustrate the findings and translated into English by the authors.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Concepts of culture

This section summarises the underlining ideas and attitudes young people and teachers have about ‘culture’ and what they see as ‘cultural’.

#### 5.1.1 Culture as a ‘place of origin’ (*Herkunft*)

Students and teachers alike often struggle to define culture.

Students often refer to customs, traditions, norms and values, but also ‘*mentality*’ and temper shared by a certain group, with a strong focus on ethno-national interpretations. Here, the geographic ‘place of origin’ (*Herkunft*) of the group seems decisive, mostly referring to a nation-state. According to the students, it is where someone comes from that determines their culture: “*Actually, when I think about culture, I always think about the origin*” (*Ali, m, student, school S*). ‘Place of origin’ and ‘nationality’ are also often used synonymously. For example, when asked about his friends’ culture, Lars (*m, student, school R, Germany*) replies, “*It always depends on nationality, where they come from.*” Both terms are used for what is otherwise known as ‘ethnicity’ (more about this in the section *Cultural identities*). ‘Ethnicity’ as a category is only applied when speaking about ethnic minorities in the ‘countries of origin’ (e.g. Kurds in Turkey, Catalans in Spain, etc.).

Religious practices, festivities, languages, traditions, food and dance are listed and described as main cultural ‘attributes’ which also determine cultural differences. These practices are mostly carried out with the family, which often occupies a central space in learning about and enacting culture. Participants often ethnicitise ideas of upbringing, norms and values set by the family, and cultural differences are thus explicitly produced along ethno-national categories.

Students name two main sources of cultural knowledge: at home (sometimes in their community), where they learn ‘their own culture’, and friends and schoolmates, where they learn the ‘culture of the others’ through social interactions at school or during spare time activities.

Teachers’ interpretation and their answers are usually more careful and elaborated as they include different layers and facets. However, most of the interviewed teachers explicitly or



implicitly associate culture with a ‘place of origin’ as well, even, like in the following example, in a contradictory way:

*I mean, from my own biography I can give examples that... it is not exclusively the origin that necessarily constitutes culture. But [culture] is also related to the origin. (David, m, teacher, school S)*

Even if teachers’ definitions seem more elaborated and diffuse, ‘culture’ is often locked in closed geographical space, usually a nation-state (Irish, French, Canadian cultures are used as examples).

There is only one teacher who explicitly deconstructs this view:

*The extended definition of culture is for me obviously... that as humans we are universally connected. [...] And then we socialise in different groups, in family, in peer-groups. At school as well. [...] And there are many parts of this puzzle in which I navigate and collect cultural experiences, in these different groups. (Hülya, f, teacher, school S)*

The dominant framing of culture and cultural differences is inconsistent and often fractured by participants, even within the same interview. For example, when asked about culture, Amina postulates cultural differences with certainty:

*Every country has its own culture. The customs and how people act is always very different from other countries. (Amina, f, student, school R)*

Such rigid differentiation by ‘place of origin’ is no longer valid when it comes to her friends:

*I have a friend from the Balkan and two from Asia. And when we compare ourselves we realise how similar we are, (Amina, f, student, school R).*

Amina then emphasises on values that seem equally important independent of her and her friends’ different ‘places of origin’, hereby dismantling her initial concept of cultural difference.

Such disruptions and fractures of constructed cultural difference lines were often observed, especially when migrantised<sup>29</sup> respondents spoke about ‘their own culture’.

<sup>29</sup> El-Tayeb (2015:p.15) calls it migrantisation, when certain groups of people are denied German identity and belonging by the white majority (see more in the State of the Art section).



### 5.1.2 Cultural identities

In the context of cultural identity, the most commonly raised issue – explicitly or implicitly – by students and teachers alike, is the definition of ‘being German’. What do ‘German’ and ‘not-German’ refer to in statements like “*I am the only German in my class*” or “*In my class, we are all foreigners*”, when nearly all interviewed students are German nationals (with some having an additional citizenship)? Only one teacher, himself migrantised, claims to be challenging this notion of ‘being German’ obviously not based on one’s nationality in his class:

*I am also perceived as a foreigner. What is German? Well, I sometimes feel more German than someone who [...] Unfortunately I experienced it once again recently in East Germany; someone who harassed and then racially offended me. I feel more German than him. But what is German? (David, m, teacher, school S).*

*I try to create fractions in their [students’] [German] identity to make them think. To break it up in order to open them up for this question: What is German? (ibid.).*

Sophie (f, teacher, school R), on the contrary, actively constructs the ‘German-not German’ dichotomy by saying that in the schoolyard “*Germans and non-Germans are at loggerheads with each other*”. Sophie actively migrantises students she perceives as ‘non-Germans’ and blames them for insisting on

*an artificially knitted identity based on their parents’ history, which they assign to themselves in order to distance themselves from the place where they live. Like, ‘I live here, but I am not a German. Have nothing to do with Germany. Stupid country. Potatoes<sup>30</sup> everyone.’ That’s what you often hear in the school yard with an aggression in their voices, (Sophie, f, teacher, school R).*

Students’ interviews often reflect this exclusivist discourse on ‘being German’. Those who unquestionably identify themselves as ‘German’ usually describe their own culture as ‘normal’, ‘typical’, ‘standard’ and ‘classic’ and have difficulties adding anything else. In their understanding, the term ‘cultural’ refers to a ‘place of origin’ and describes something that differs from the dominant ‘German’ norm (similar to the English use of the word ‘ethnic’).

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<sup>30</sup> Potato (Kartoffel) is a common pejorative nickname for white majority Germans from a perspective of migrantised Germans.



Some assign being German to being ‘*blonde and blue-eyed*’, being silent or being uptight. One main topic is the German past and the associated loss of national pride. Quite a few of the young participants regret that Germans cannot show their national pride or even say where they come from when travelling abroad without being judged for the country’s past.

*I believe we Germans lost the national pride a little bit. I have noticed that. For example, if I called myself a proud German, others would call me a Nazi, (Grimm, m, student, school R).*

Meanwhile teachers, when asked about their students’ cultural identity, seem to be pre-occupied with identities of migrantised youth, problematising them in many different ways. These students, however, see their identity as problematic only when dealing with migrantisation:

*I was born here. Only, I have black hair and brown eyes. I don’t look like a German, but I actually am one, (Amira, f, student, school S).*

Saying that she doesn’t look like a German reflects what Amira is being told, and the need to insist that she ‘*actually is one*’ is something white students do not need to do. In the course of the interviews, migrantised respondents often construct their cultural identities in a fluid and dynamic way as ‘in between’, ‘multiple’, ‘mixed’ or ‘unique’, and a combination of these. The following are some examples:

*Someone can belong to many cultures (Minnie, f, student, school U).*

*My culture is somewhere in between (Elsa, f, student, school U).*

*I am half Asian, half European. But I don’t want to be European, I want to be Asian (Sel, f, student, school S).*

*My own culture is a bit mixed (Max, m, student, school R).*

*Because I live here, that’s why I cannot elude this culture, whether I love it or hate it (Ilhan, m, student, school U).*

*I am a Hamburger Kurd and that’s it. I am from Hamburg (Emre, m, student, school S).*

*You should do what your ancestors did, what your parents taught you. That should impact you. But you should try to be unique (Ali, m, student, school S).*

*I see myself as European. However actually I would rather say Asian, but not really. I would say both. But I would say rather European, because not really German. However, Germany is my home (Asli, f, student, school S).*



*Some of my ways of thinking have a touch of Iranian, but otherwise I am quite German (Azita, f, student, school S).*

### 5.1.3 Cultural diversity

Often the question about diversity in the classroom prompts answers about the perceived ‘ratio’ between ‘Germans’ and people with a ‘migration background’ or ‘foreigners’, as these terms are used interchangeably (and as noted above, this distinction cannot be citizenship-related). Thus diversity is understood as a ‘mixture’ of two different groups:

*My class is really quite diverse, also in terms of, for example (...) how do I say that? (...) Well, we have quite many foreigners, we have a good ratio, I mean a mixing ratio, foreigners, Germans. And we are in great harmony with each other, therefore my class is great (Inis, m, student, school R).*

Several breaks (...) taken by Inis in order to think of his phrasing indicate an uneasy sense about the use of these terms.

‘Place of origin’, often paired with religion, is the common departing point when speaking about diversity, but then students often broaden the narrow definition of culture as determined by place of origin to expand to more categories:

*Uh, of course we have many people from different nations. We are also very diverse in our interests and simply different personalities. Everyone is different, some [are] a bit loud, some – a bit shy (Asli, f, student, school S).*

Sometimes talking about ‘diversity’ even fractures the otherwise rather monolithic concept of ethno-national origin-oriented cultures/religions:

*We have children from many different countries and many different religions and such. That’s why I would say, that we are diverse. And we have different opinions on different topics. [...] People from different cultures can also have the same opinion (Yasemin, f, student, school S).*

Some students understand ‘diversity’ completely outside the ethno-national sphere:

*We have people who can draw, others are great at sports, or have a talent for languages or math. And then if you need help you can always ask someone, and they can explain it all to you very well (Mia, f, student, school S).*



Only after the interviewer insists on different meanings, do countries of origin come into play:

*Int.: Can you think of other things which make them diverse? I mean something other than talents?*

*Mia: Uh, the countries of origin, I guess. Yes, we have different countries. I am not sure which ones but it is also quite interesting (Mia, f, student, school S).*

Though an ‘interesting’ aspect, ‘place of origin’ seems not to be central to Mia’s understanding of diversity.

Without being asked, students overwhelmingly evaluate diversity as positive, mostly emphasising benefits of mutual exchange and also the benefits of being able to get along well despite being different:

*And we learn a lot, [...] sometimes we sit in a circle in class and we talk about things we do. [...] And I believe we need this kind of learning. Because we ( ...) are a bit limited in our culture. We think our culture is the best culture. [...] But I believe, talking to others makes one think. Why is it like this in my culture? There can be something I would like to change. It can become like a vision“, (Zara, f, student, school S).*

*Everyone is unique in their own way. We are all very different. That’s what I have noticed. And for being so different, we get along quite well. That is something very positive (Amina, f, student, School R).*

However, some white German students position themselves outside this ‘diversity’. Both classism and racism speak from an interview with a student from an affluent neighbourhood in the vicinity of the deprived one, where school S is located:

*[My class is diverse in terms of h]ow they live their lives, [...], for instance [in regard to] hobbies. I do horse riding, and it keeps me busy every day. But them, they go home, do some homework and go to sleep and then come back to school the next day. Personally my impression is that they actually don’t have a proper life (Marie, f, student, school S).*

By enforcing a solid line between ‘me’ and ‘them’, ‘their’ life is imagined as not being ‘proper’ because of a lack of typical white upper middle class hobbies like horse riding, which also run in families as she later explains. Despite perceiving ‘them’ as a homogenous group in terms of a lack of cultural activities, she nevertheless acknowledges lessons learned



from that very group as ‘*exciting*’ and personally beneficial and in a positive contrast to the former homogenously white German school:

*I am this kind of person, I can imagine going on a world trip in order to get to know other cultures and other people. [...] This is very exciting. That’s why it is so cool here, because in my old school, there were ONLY Germans. And there were no such conversations [about culture]. [...] That’s truly exciting. That’s something that I actually personally profited from (Marie, f, student, school S).*

This case, in a stark contrast with most other interviews, exemplifies how ‘diversity’ can cohabit with segregation at the intersection of classism and racism (see *Barriers and inequalities*).

#### **5.1.4 Culture beyond ethno-national origin**

While the ethno-national origin seems to be the main framing of culture for most of the interviewed students across schools, significant differences between schools can be noticed: At school U, it is much more often complemented with various other concepts. Some, for example, refer to local micro-cultures within different neighbourhoods of the city. There are also more general concepts of culture like “*everything that enriches you*” (Alex, m, school U) or “*whatever makes a person unique*” (Ilhan, m, student, school U). School U students much more frequently mention art, theatre, film, music and sports or digital culture:

*I post photos on Instagram. But in those discussions where there is always hate... I never comment at all. I am staying out of it. And I read it but ... for me personally I have decided not to be a part of this culture“, (Ella, f, student, school U).*

Consequently, students from school U often classify their free time activities as cultural practices:

*I live my culture through my hobbies... because I enjoy them and can share with other people (Luna, f, student, school U).*

In the two other schools, however, students rarely regard their hobbies or free time activities as ‘cultural’ outside religious or family activities classified as ‘origin related’ and ethnitisised (food, celebrations, up-bringing etc.).



## 5.2 Cultural participation

Although most of the interviewed teachers mention several cultural activities they undertake with students, this does not always resonate on the students' part. The only cultural activities at school that nearly all of the students mention are annual cultural events, which take place at each school, albeit there are significant differences. The one at school U is obligatory and the whole school prepares for this event and participates in it collectively. Even months after the event, when the CHIEF interviews were conducted, traces in form of decoration and symbols were clearly visible in the halls and recreational area. But the event at school R mainly involves students who study arts, music or theatre as one of their subjects, which pertained to only a few students in our sample.

In terms of participation in cultural activities, there is an obvious difference between the students of different schools. Due to its artistic profile, school U actively introduces students to 'high culture' as a part of the curriculum; in addition, many of the participants say they visit the theatre or concerts with family and friends. It is likely that families with a certain interest in arts prefer to send their children to school U since its students hail from all over the city. Various curricular activities take place at school in the afternoon, offering different interest groups, clubs, choirs, orchestras, theatre, etc. Many school U students seem to have a family background that offers them the opportunity to engage in a broad choice of cultural practices in and outside the school – most of the parents have university degrees. Many are members of sports clubs, play a musical instrument or participate in an interest group. Only at this school did some of the students say they volunteered, and many take part in international student exchange programmes.

The situation is quite different at the two other schools. Being a senior high school, school R does not offer many optional courses or clubs for students probably because it is mainly aimed at getting the students through the *Abitur* (A-Levels) and less at giving them opportunities to participate in creative activities. Although information about afternoon clubs and activities can be found on the website of school S, students interviewed at this school did not mention them at all. Most of the students interviewed at schools R and S might not have the financial possibilities to benefit from cultural offers outside school, as can be assumed by the parents' occupation (mainly working class). Many of the students also work after school to support their needs; only two students from these schools, both from economically privileged backgrounds, mentioned participating in international exchange programmes.

But Brooke finds a loophole and uses the necessity to earn money as a chance to pursue her own cultural practise:



*I work at a bookstore and I need to have a broad knowledge for this and therefore I need to learn a lot. And to be open-minded in this regard. And yes, I also write books myself“*, (Brooke, f, student, school R).

Volunteering is an unfamiliar concept to most students at schools R and S, except for Can (*m, student, school S*) who offers his own definition by explaining that helping his mother in the shop for free is the kind of volunteering he does. For school S students, the isolated location of the neighbourhood presents an additional obstacle to participation in Hamburg’s rich cultural life.

Asked about their hobbies and talents, many students at schools R and S also mention playing musical instruments, sports, writing, digital activities, handcraft, languages and other skills or activities they participate in, either individually or in an informal group of friends, less so in non-formal educational settings when compared to school U. They also talk about artistic and aesthetic consumption in the form of music, films (TV series) or digital culture (Youtube, Instagram etc). However, unlike at school U, they often do not comprehend activities that fall outside the ethno-national categories as ‘cultural’ or a part of ‘their own culture’. For example, Sel talks about her hobbies:

*I love singing. And acting. Sometimes I write songs. I love reading. I also write stories. I listen to music. I watch series. Sometimes I go outside with my cousin. Talents? I can draw, sing and act. I am good with people. I am very empathic, for example* (Sel, f, student, school S).

But later in the interview when explicitly asked how she practises *her culture*, she replies:

*Honestly speaking, I do not practise my culture. Because in my culture, let’s say (...) I don’t know much about culture. [...]. I just know that we (...) for example, only Ramadan. And how do you say in German? The Festival of Sacrifices. I know that we have these things. But other things that we have, I don’t even know them. I don’t know much about our culture, nor about dress or food* (Sel, f, student, school S).

Despite having a broad range of interests and talents, Sel presents herself as ‘not practising her culture’ just because she is not familiar with religious and ethno-national cultural practices that constitute what she calls ‘*our culture*’. Students often adapt the mainstream discourse that reduces ‘cultural’ to being different from the white majority Germans, while other activities are not considered as ‘cultural’. Discursive barriers to participation such as



this inhibit some of the young people from recognising their own contribution to culture outside the ethno-national.

### **5.2.1 Barriers and inequalities**

Discursive and tangible barriers to participation in society limit access to cultural participation; at the same time, not all cultural practices receive equal recognition. In the German cultural policy documents as well as in the Hamburg curricula (Seukwa, Marmer & Sylla, 2018; Sylla, Marmer & Seukwa, 2019) ‘participation for all’ is a declared priority. In this context it is important to know, how various kinds of barriers are addressed and/or experienced by teachers and students.

#### **5.2.1.3 Gender and sexual orientation**

Only female respondents raise the issue of gender inequality, saying that gender discrimination in the family and/or society is discussed at school and among friends, while few are also engaged in feminist cultural activities. The role assigned to mothers, sometimes praised as feminist role models, is especially remarkable:

*I think my culture is closely related to that of my mother [...] I have this European-Pakistani mentality [...] My culture is equality. This (...) equality between men and women (Zara, f, student, school S).*

Sometimes, mothers are criticised for perpetuating gender discrimination:

*They do not understand that if you lock up a girl so much, I would say, it is like locking up a bird for a long time. And when the door suddenly opens, the bird will fly away. You know? (Amira, f, student, school S)*

Sexual orientation is explicitly mentioned by one student who self-identifies as homosexual, while another one says she is at the age of confusion in terms of her sexual orientation and finds support in reading novels related to the topic. Hülya (*f, teacher, school S*) is the only teacher who touches upon how both gender and sexual orientation are reflected in her teaching practice.

#### **5.2.1.4 Ableism**

When teachers speak of discrimination, there are no references to ableism at all. David (*m, teacher, school S*) complains of a lack of staff to cater for students with special needs, nicknaming them according to their official status (which determines whether the school receives additional resources to accommodate their needs). Dinovefa (*f, teacher, school S*)



mentions difficulties faced by a student with autism; while Layla (*f, teacher, school U*) is ‘*fascinated*’ by the inclusive way her students treat their peer labelled as ‘disabled’. Although inclusion of children with special needs has been prioritised for years on the educational political agenda, it is not reflected in the interviews conducted with students. None of them claimed to be affected by ableism; those who are were probably not a part of the sample.

### 5.2.1.1 Socio-economic status

Socio-economic background is much more of an issue, especially at school S, which is located in a deprived community. People living here are often characterised by teachers (who do not live here) and some of the students from affluent nearby suburbs as badly articulated, as being verbally abusive and disrespectful, having to deal with precarious living conditions, affected by domestic violence, being neglected, not having books at home, coming from families lacking educational aspirations. When speaking about economic barriers their students face, school S teachers also mention the intersection with racist discrimination. According to David (*m, teacher, school S*) students face discrimination when applying for jobs due to a combination of ‘*a photo with a hijab*’, ‘*a foreign sounding name*’ and ‘*the address*’. He claims that this intersectional discrimination produces frustration and contributes to ‘*fractioned identities*’, which according to him has led to radicalization by the IS in the past.

### 5.2.1.2 Racism and antisemitism<sup>31</sup>

Racism is an important topic in the interviews conducted at school S, predominantly raised by migrantised teachers and students. Though taking an active stance against racism, here (just like at the other schools) teachers sometimes reproduce racist language during the interview. Many participants speak about their own experiences with racist discrimination and exclusion, either direct or subtle, or about racism in Germany, sometimes making connections to the German past and/or expressing their concern about the future. One young woman even breaks down crying when recalling discrimination she experienced at primary school. The fact that an interviewer of colour conducted the student interviews at school S may have created a safer space to speak about racist experiences.

Racism, however, is not so much of a topic at school U interviews. Only Bert (*m, teacher, school U*) expresses his criticism of racist reproductions in textbooks and curricula and the

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<sup>31</sup> Antisemitism is not spelled out “anti-Semitism” – following the recommendation of The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA): “IHRA’s concern is that the hyphenated spelling allows for the possibility of something called ‘Semitism’, which not only legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology, but also divides the term, stripping it from its meaning of opposition and hatred toward Jews.”

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/spelling-antisemitism>



colonial heritage of geography as a discipline. Bert further recalls an incident which is also mentioned by Jorja about an anti-racist banner created by students as a form of protest against the invitation of a politician from the extreme right AfD party to the school. However, while Bert only expressed his support of the action, Jorja states her disappointment in the lack of support by the school authority:

*After all, it is in the constitution, that being racist is not ok. But the headmaster said to take [the banner] down. I would actually wish there was more support here (Jorja, f, student, school U).*

It seems that despite his commitment, teacher Bert was not aware of the ban on students' anti-racist activism. The headmaster does not mention the incident in her interview at all. It can be speculated that the fear of being denounced on the AfD webpage and having to deal with education authorities (see *Methodology*) contributed to her decision to take down the banner.

At school R two teachers, both white, see themselves as victims of racism. While Sophia (*f, teacher, school R*) laments the aggressive behaviour of 'non-Germans' calling white Germans 'potatoes' (see 5.1.2 *Cultural identities*), Lehrer (*m, teacher, school R*) claims:

*The Muslims among my students take it for granted that they build mosques and then pray when they want. But they would never consider a Jew or a Hindu or a Christian who might also want to exercise his right. And that's a fact, and when you say something like that, you are quickly accused of being anti-Islam or reactionary or even racist by both students and left-wing intellectuals (Lehrer, m, teacher, school R).*

It is a paradox for white people in power to feel racially discriminated, especially when they use racist language and express racist views.

Only two school R students, both white, speak about racism: Grimm (*m, student, school R*), like the two teachers, complains that "Germans are often accused of racism" while he never witnessed that teachers or the school system "erected barriers". Contrary to their views, Leonie (*f, students, school R*) points out that "racism is sometimes, like, subconscious" and sees a need to tackle subtle racism and to study this topic more profoundly.

Unlike racism, none of the participants claim to be affected by antisemitism. They mostly mention antisemitism in relation to German history (see more in the section *Country specific*



questions). Two school U students speak affectionately about their former Jewish history teacher and his commitment to combating antisemitism. For example, Emilie, who travelled to Israel last year with her history class to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Centre as a curricular activity, says that this visit left a long lasting impression on her:

*It was very emotional and we have never been that quiet ever before. Really, people who always chat in class were completely silent (Emilie, f, student, school U).*

David is also engaged in anti-antisemitism pedagogy, but his focus is the antisemitism of his students:

*I ask them a few questions: Who believes Jews rule the global capital? Who believes we are remotely controlled? And there we get several partly open, partly subtle antisemitic opinions. [...] That made the students think about to what extent antisemitism might be a problem in their own circles (David, m, teacher, school S).*

He further admits to seeing Nazi symbols at every school he ever taught, ironically remarking that the AfD should be more concerned with those than with antifascist stickers.

In terms of antisemitic expressions, association of Jews and money is apparent in one student's interview. In another one, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is surprisingly used to justify Jews as the personal enemy, when speaking about the Shoah:

*Yes, it was a terrible time. And if I had lived then, I would surely have ended up in a concentration camp, or I would have had to leave the country. And, yes, it is sad. I want to be sincere. If I see a Jew somewhere, I wouldn't do anything, but I would be always thinking: We can never be friends, because I saw this conflict between Palestine and Israel. [...] So I guess I could never speak to a Jew (Amira, f, student, school S)*

### **5.3 Country specific questions: The German culture of remembrance**

As mentioned above, antisemitism came up mostly when addressing questions about German history. In terms of the post-National Socialism remembrance culture, two of the schools, S and U, have fixed annual commemoration rituals. Students of all three schools said they have visited a concentration camp with their teachers. Hitler, Nazis, the Holocaust and WW2 are always mentioned when talking about German history. Much is said about how this history



affected Germany's image in the world. Many participants believe that the past should not be 'transferred' to the present, because they themselves did not have anything to do with it. While some point out that Germany has a certain responsibility '*not to repeat the history*', they mostly speak defensively about feelings of guilt and shame:

*I would not say that I should feel guilty or, um, in any way, or that I should show penitence for anything (Johann, m, student, school U).*

And while some migrantised students adapt the 'guilt' discourse as a part of their German identity, others clearly distance themselves:

*I think it is good that they [Germans] are ashamed, because it will prevent them from doing other horrible things to other cultures or religions or minorities. Because now they know how other countries hated Germans as a result (Zara, f, student, school S).*

Lina is the only person who claims her grandparents were affected by the Nazis, although she does not know the details of what happened. She speaks at length about the lack of awareness among her peers of the horrors that happened in the past. According to her,

*The topic is being suppressed here at school. ... [B]ecause many do not (...) I mean, they know it happened and sometimes they make little jokes about it, but (...). But many don't realise (...) that it ACTUALLY happened and it was REAL and it was not good and it should have NEVER happened (Lina, f, student, school U).*

But when it comes to colonialism, it turns out that the topic is largely unheard of; at most it is something that is barely remembered from a distant school lesson. If anything, students recall that Germany was "*quite a minor colonial power, not as extreme as England, France or Spain*", (Sakura, f, student, school R). It is significant that only one student – the one who identifies as Gambian following her father's country of origin (Yasemin, f, student, school S) – comes to speak of colonialism and its impacts even before the question pops up, naming her family as the main source of knowledge about the issue. David (m, student, school U) also seems to be exceptionally well informed about Germany's colonial past. He says, however, that in his history class "*colonialism was not even touched*". Two students from the same school, who had a different teacher, report to have just attended a post-colonial city walk with their history class. They talk quite passionately about colonial traces in the city and how the colonial past impacts the present. But such lessons seem to be an exception and depend on the individual teacher's engagement.



This situation is also reflected in teachers' interviews as most admit that German colonial legacy is not a part of their teaching practice. School U's head master seems to be aware of German colonialism, but says the curricula of her subjects (art and literature) are too overloaded already for the topic to be included. She assumes that there is some postcolonial content in history lessons. David (*teacher, school S*) claims that colonialism and post-colonialism are part of his teaching, but speaking about it he uncritically uses the term '*discovery*', connoting the violent colonial expansion in a progressive and positive way, a practice widely known from German textbooks (Marmer & Sow, 2015). The head master at school R (who teaches literature) admits that he would not be able to teach this topic as he himself has no knowledge of it.

However, even without having much knowledge on colonialism in general and on the German colonial past in particular, several students spontaneously reply that colonialism may have well paved the ideological ground for the Nazi regime.



## 5.4 Europe

When asked about Europe, students mostly mention western European countries, often associating Europe with the West and with Christianity, but also with ancient Greece and Rome. To many, Europe means unity and cooperation, often combined with remarks that this is a result of a history of wars. ‘Europe’ is often used synonymously with the EU; Brexit and elections to the EU Parliament are also mentioned several times.

Opinions are divided between those who say that diversity, openness and ‘*tolerance toward different cultures*’ are what makes the European culture and those who say there is no such thing as European culture because of that very diversity of the individual countries’ cultures:

*[B]ecause it makes a big difference, if you are born in Germany or in Spain, for instance. A huge difference (Dominik, f, student, school R).*

Along with unity and cooperation, open borders and solidarity with the neighbouring countries are often seen as a part of European culture. It is also described as a culture of order, functionality and regulation, democracy, hard work, modernity, freedom, peace, security and prosperity. Some consider it a privilege to be born in Europe.

Very few are critical of such glorification of anything European. David (*m, student, school U*) says that what Europeans have in common is the history of intolerance towards everything non-European and non-Christian, adding that this “*wouldn’t be a good basis for a common culture*“. Yasmin (*f, student, school S*) believes that European culture is related to “*slavery, because Europeans went to Africa to colonise*“. Amina (*f, student, school S*) says that European culture is a culture of narrow-mindedness and isolation, while Amira (*f, student, school S*) criticises European migration politics, closed borders and the deportation of refugees.

Being European is mostly understood as being born in Europe and/or feeling at home in Europe. But some associate being European with being blond and white. Asked if he sees himself as European, Marat (*m, student, school S*) replies,

*I do somehow identify with Europe. But sometimes I think, yes, it is fine that I am European, but in Germany [...] I am still considered a foreigner and not European.*

In a similar vein, some migrantised students do not consider themselves European, while



others resist any labelling, saying that they want to see themselves simply as human beings.

## 6. Discussion

The most prominent feature in the data collected in the three Hamburg schools is the prevailing reductionist discourse that narrows the meaning of culture to ‘ethno-national origin’. Constructing culture and cultural difference in this way has several implications. First of all, due to the fact that ‘nation’ is confined by physical borders while ‘ethnicity’ is often constructed in relation to kin and thus physically confined as well, ‘ethno-national’ framing produces a rigid understanding of culture with fixed rules of exclusion and inclusion. Secondly, each particular ‘ethno-national culture’ is imagined to be rather homogenous. Thirdly, the emphasis on ‘origin’ constructs culture (and belonging) as primarily associated with a geographical place that was once home to one’s ancestors, rather than the place where one actually lives.

The central role that ‘origin’ plays in defining and perceiving culture marks processes of inclusion and exclusion according to dominant German narratives of migration, which tend to migrantise (El-Tayeb, 2015) certain groups of people in this country, irrespectively of their actual experience with migration. Nearly all interviewees were born and raised in Germany and hold German citizenship. Nevertheless, migrantised students and teachers are not perceived (and often do not perceive themselves) as German; they are constantly addressed as the ‘ethno-nationally-culturally other’ (Mecheril, 2015). When taking into consideration historical and current ethno-national-cultural power relations (ibid), but also the apparent lack of recognition that migratory processes have continuously shaped and still shape ‘German cultural space’, it becomes clear that the reductionist understanding of culture serves to reinforce the status quo rather than to induce a change towards more equality and inclusion. Despite this, some students are involved in cultural practices in and outside the school that actively tackle inequalities, like the (failed) anti-racist activism at school U, participation of young women in feminist cultural groups, or the way Brooke uses her job in a bookstore as a source of literature and writing.

The dominant discourse is replicated but also fractured multiple times by respondents – students and teachers alike – who feel the limits of such a reductionist approach especially when defining ‘their own culture’. Nevertheless, ethno-national framing remains dominant. In constructing their cultural identities, nationalistic and exclusionist tendencies can often be observed in the case of students who self-identify as German on the one hand, and the struggle to define their place in this society of those who are excluded on the other. Most of the interviewed teachers, however, seem to be pre-occupied with cultural identities of the



‘ethno-nationally-culturally others’ rather than of all students. The so-called ‘self-ethnisation’, “the insistence on ethnic difference on the part of migrant children who grew up here [in Germany, which] is a response to the everyday racist experience and the impossibility of belonging to the mainstream society” (Soufiane Akka, 2007:p.197), is not recognised by them as a reaction to exclusion but rather interpreted as unwillingness to belong.

The next interesting finding is that among those students whose understanding of culture goes beyond the ethno-national, most are from the school U. To theorise this further, one could say that this rather broad concept corresponds with Appiah’s idea of ‘mobile’ cultural practices and objects, which are ‘creations of intermixture’ (Appiah, 2018:p.207). The narrow ‘ethno-national-origin’ concept of culture matches the ‘intercultural culture’ notion in the Hamburg cultural policy and the ‘diversity approach’ by Liebau (2014), conceived as opposed to ‘high culture’ for “cultivation and promotion of cultural traditions of immigrants” (ibid:p.22). While students at school U are encouraged to participate in a broad range of cultural activities by their school and families, at schools S and R students often lack the cultural and financial capital and infrastructure to enable them to participate. Additionally, there are discursive barriers that confine many of the migrantised S and R school students to ‘intercultural culture’.

Based on different familial and environmental socio-economic, educational and cultural resources and infrastructures, to which the unequal distribution of the selective school system has obviously contributed, each school seems to have developed its own school culture. Institutional, personnel and individual decisions have influenced the school culture and vice versa, as was reflected for example in the interviewed teachers’ attitudes towards their students: As has been observed since the first contact and through teachers’ interviews, emphasis at school S is put on empowering young people. While acknowledging the vulnerable situations of most young people living in the neighbourhood where the school is located, teachers emphasise their students’ resilience and solidarity as compared to students’ engagement and self-esteem praised by school U teachers. Empowering students is not found to be the priority of interviewed teachers at school R. They emphasise academic achievement, but are often judgemental about their students, make negative comments about them and, in some cases, have derogatory and racist attitudes toward migrantised youth. Despite the fact that school R is a part of the network Schools without Racism (*Schule ohne Rassismus*)<sup>32</sup>, openly racist comments from teachers seem to be tolerated by the school culture.

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<sup>32</sup> <https://m.schule-ohne-rassismus.org/startseite/>



However, these assumptions about school culture should be taken with caution considering the recruitment process: school culture deducted from the interviews at schools S and U could correspond with how these schools wished to represent themselves, while at school R the interviewees have been selected much more at random.

In each of the selected schools, a culture of remembrance which “developed into a fundamental element of the country’s self-image and international representation after 1990” (Messerschmidt, 2015:n.p.) is practiced as a part of school culture. As a result, when speaking about German history, the Nazi past, the need to learn from history, or Germany’s responsibility for ‘never again’<sup>33</sup> are often the first associations that come to participants’ mind. But the damage caused to Germany’s image and an aversion against feelings of guilt seem to be more relevant for many, especially those who identify themselves as German. Speaking about Nazi history often prompts praises of contemporary Germany. And while antisemitism is commonly discussed in the historical context of the Holocaust, only at school S, which is predominantly attended by migrantised young people, is it tackled as students’ contemporary ‘worldview’. Such “singling out immigrants and specifically Muslims” as “the main contemporary antisemites” as observed by Özyürek (2019:p.42) is also mirrored in some of the political educational programmes (Seukwa, Marmer & Sylla, 2018). Placing antisemitism outside the mainstream contemporary society creates an image of “a new Germany that has fully liberated itself from any anti-democratic tendencies surviving from its Nazi past” and “obscures connections between anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism, both of which are active forces in mainstream German society” (Özyürek, 2019:p.42).

The culture of remembrance as practised in formal education does not extend to the horrors of colonialism and its continuities. Interviewees are largely ignorant about issues of the German colonial legacy that still defines and affects today’s discourses and practises, especially in regard to racism and migration (Kilomba, 2016; Eggers et al., 2005). This is not at all surprising, as the colonial past has been long erased from the white German collective memory (Zimmerer, 2015). Despite some recent political attempts to establish the post-colonial approaches to commemoration culture within Hamburg museums, academia and, most recently, at the ministry level<sup>34</sup>, this is not reflected in formal education. On the contrary, racist-colonial narratives of ‘discovery’ and derogatory representation of Black people, for example, are still present in textbooks and curricula. Messerschmidt (2008:p.45) argues that this collective amnesia in regard to colonialism has a double effect: It declares German colonial history as irrelevant and, at the same time, it fails to recognise the role of the

<sup>33</sup> Historical responsibility for the ‘never again Auschwitz’ – through raising of awareness and prevention of nationalistic tendencies – is the cornerstone of the concept ‘Education after Auschwitz’, introduced by Adorno (1966/2005).

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.hamburg.de/bkm/koloniales-erbe/>



continuation of colonial practices under the National Socialism. In rare cases, students seem sincerely involved in those topics, usually encouraged by individual teachers committed to anti-racism and anti-antisemitism rather than institutional commitment by the school. True emotional engagement with Germany's historical legacy is also obvious in cases of students from affected families. As Messerschmidt remarks, “[f]or the descendants of the colonised this option [to ignore historical crimes] does not exist, because for them colonialism is a much deeper cut in their history, culture, their self-image and their position in the world” (Messerschmidt, 2006:p.1). It is striking that although most of the interviewed pupils have only a faint inkling of the colonial past, they are usually able to make an intuitive connection between the colonial and Nazi ideologies when asked about it. It looks like a closer scrutiny of these ideologies and their continuities in contemporary Germany would be a more inclusive – in the sense of who is addressed as well as who is commemorated – approach to commemoration culture.

When discussing the findings, it is important to reflect on the impact of the recruitment process, the interviewers' and the researchers' choices: As mentioned above, a difference in responses to an interviewer of colour and a white interviewer is possible. The way the three interviewers formulated their questions might have led to answers that seemed socially more desirable, while different recruitment procedures in the three schools could have also influenced the results. Altogether, much more data was collected than could ever be included in this report, and it was not always to decide what should or should not be considered. Last but not least, in terms of the *school culture*, observations during lessons, during recess and in the staff room would have provided deeper insight.

## 7. Conclusion

The analysis of German policy (Seukwa, Marmer & Sylla, 2018) and Hamburg curricula (Sylla, Marmer & Seukwa, 2019) has shown how the top-down definitions of culture create barriers to cultural participation, which can be confirmed by the empirical findings obtained from data collected in three Hamburg schools and presented in this report.

Culture has an interesting double meaning: On the one hand, it is interpreted as related to the place of origin (of the 'other') and as a deviation from the 'German' norm. In this sense, 'cultural' is used similarly to the English 'ethnic'. It refers to ethnicised norms, values, family relations, up-bringing, character and behaviour, as well as food, clothes and celebrations, often combined with religion. This representation of culture constructs solid lines of difference defining belonging. On the other hand, culture is also connoted with creativity, artistic production and consumption, hobbies, social and political engagement, digital culture,



communication, something that could potentially be more inclusive but with access restricted based on socio-economic and educational capital.

The concept of commemoration culture has the potential to scrutinise ideologies that support nationalisation, essentialisation, culturalisation and exclusion and their impact on contemporary German society as well as on the European self-conception. Currently, however, it is not fulfilling its potential but is often used to affirm the progressive and democratic state of contemporary German society. The mechanisms of exclusion (racism, antisemitism, classism, as well as sexism, ableism, hetero-normativity, etc.) are not systematically assessed and challenged in formal education.

Similar to policy and curricula, where isolated attempts to break out of the reductionist discourse have been made to consider more inclusive notions of culture, hegemonic discourses are fractured by students and teachers alike.

Each school can be characterised by its own *school culture*, based on institutional and political decisions and various input from staff and students, and confined by the socio-economic school environment. This school culture, in turn, seems to have an impact on students' cultural participation, where the lines of exclusion are sometimes manifested.

Most of the participants seemed to be interested in the interview topics and enjoyed the fact that the questions made them re-think some otherwise unchallenged concepts. They were actively involved in the production of meanings in the course of the interview and often expressed their eagerness to learn. Interviewed young people assess diversity positively and understand it as normality, contrary to Hamburg curricula, which often problematise it in the context of conflict. They especially point out how they can learn from each other, and thus, informal social interactions often seem more important for cultural education than the actual lessons and curricula. 'Cultural knowledge' is mostly interpreted by the interviewed students in ethno-national terms and refers to the 'place of origin'. This kind of cultural literacy seems to help young people navigate in the pluralistic society. For many interviewed students, knowing how others celebrate, worship, eat and interact within the family, but also the amount of freedom or restrictions others possess as compared to oneself, constitutes basic everyday cultural literacy, as they speak from within their 'ethnically' diverse school environment in all three schools and their immediate communities.

The expressed wish to learn more about other cultures, however, is often paired with creating and reinforcing differences through locating these cultures at distant places and exoticising the unknown. Believing that something is located far away and is 'exotic' makes it look



vastly different instead of similar. A curricular approach to cultural literacy that questions and deconstructs differences produced by historic power relations colonial and Nazi ideologies could offer a helpful framework for more inclusive cultural education.



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**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

	Pseudonym school	Age	Gender	Languages fluently	Languages growing up	Languages at home	Languages with friends	People in household	Parent's occupation	Religion	Citizenship(s)	School Area
1.	Amira_S	15	f	German, Dari, English, Arabic	Dari, German	Dari	German, Dari	Parents, older brother	n.a.	Islam	Germany	Sub-urban
2.	Mia_S	16	f	German, Russian, English	German, Russian	German, Russian	German	Mother, two siblings	Mother: owns a massage saloon, father unemployed	Catholic	Germany	Sub-urban
3.	Sel_S	16	f	Turkish, German, English	Turkish, German	Turkish, German	German, English	Mother, brother	Father: tailor, mother: Sales (marketing from home)	Islam	Germany	Sub-urban
4.	Eda_S	16	f	German, Turkish, English	Turkish	German	German	Parents, younger brother	Father: taxi driver, mother: cleaner in an elderly home	Alevism, as a world view rather than religion	Germany	Sub-urban
5.	Yasmin_S	16	f	English, German	English, German	English	German	Father	Mother: early retirement, father: unemployed	Islam	Germany	Sub-urban
6.	Amina_S	16	f	German	Russian	German, Russian	German, English	Mother	Both parents own a washery	Spiritual	Germany	Sub-urban
7.	Linda_S	16	f	German, English	German, Polish	German, Polish (mother)	German	Parents, older brother	Father: construction worker, mother care worker	-	Germany, Poland	Sub-urban
8.	Tim_S	16	m	German	German	German	German	Parents, sister, dog	Father: construction manager,	Protestant	Germany	Sub-urban



	Pseudonym_school	Age	Gender	Language s fluently	Languages growing up	Language s at home	Languages with friends	People in household	Parent's occupation	Religion	Citizenship(s)	School Area
									mother: management (industry)			
9.	Marat_S	16	m	German, English	Italian, German	German	German	Mother, grand father, two sisters	Mother: clerk at a company	Catholic	Germany	Sub-urban
10.	Can_S	16	m	German, English, Turkish	German, Turkish	German	German	Mother, sister	Mother owns a bakery, father: track driver	Islam	Germany	Sub-urban
11.	Su_S	18	f	German, Turkish	German	German, Turkish	German	Mother	Mother: cook	Alevism	Germany	Sub-urban
12.	Zara_S	18	f	English, German, Urdu, Hindi	German, English	Urdu	German, English	Parents, two siblings	Mother: driving teacher, father: driver	Islam	Germany	Sub-urban
13.	Eylul_S	18	f	German, Turkish, English	Türkisch	German, Turkish	German	Parents, sister	Mother: dental assistant, father: production manager	Islam	Germany, Turkey	Sub-urban
14.	Marie_S	18	f	German, English	German	German	German	Parents	Mother: real estate agent, father: developer	-	Germany	Sub-urban
15.	Emre_S	18	m	Kurdish, Turkish, German	German, Kurdish	German, Kurdish, Turkish	German, Turkish	Parents, three siblings	Both: horticulturist, self employed	Islam	Germany, Turkey	Sub-urban
16.	Maxim_S	18	m	Russian, German	Russian	Russian, German	German	Parents, two siblings	Father: truck driver, mother: housewife	Christian	Germany	Sub-urban
17.	Maria_S	19	f	German, English, Russian	German, Russian	German, Russian	German	Parents, brother	Father: car mechanic, mother: housekeeping management in a home	Protestant	Germany	Sub-urban



	<b>Pseudonym_school</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Languages fluently</b>	<b>Languages growing up</b>	<b>Languages at home</b>	<b>Languages with friends</b>	<b>People in household</b>	<b>Parent's occupation</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Citizenship(s)</b>	<b>School Area</b>
18.	Azita_S	19	f	German, Farsi, English	Farsi, German	Farsi	German	Mother	Mother: employed in an import-export company, father died	-	Germany, Iran	Sub-urban
19.	Asli_S	19	f	German, English	Turkish, German	German, Turkish	German, English	Parents	Both: gardening	Islam	Germany	Sub-urban
20.	Ali_S	19	m	German, Turkish, English	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German, less Turkish	Parents	Both: grocery store	Islam	Germany	Sub-urban
21.	Marie_R	17	f	German, English, French	German	German	German, English, French	Parents, dogs	Father: programmer in advertisement agency, mother: osteopath, self employed	-	Germany	Rural
22.	Sakura_R	17	f	German, Dutch, Low German, English	Low German, German, Dutch	Low German	German	Mother	Mother: building management	-	Germany	Rural
23.	Luna_R	17	f	German, English	German, Low German	German	German, English	Parents, brother and his girlfriend, soon maybe boyfriend	Mother: assistant in the pharmacy, father: worker at logistics and cleaner	Tendency to Buddhism	Germany	Rural
24.	Anna_R	17	f	English, German, Spanish	German	German	English, German, Spanish	Parents	Both: medical doctors	Protestant	Germany	Rural
25.	Mare_R	17	f	German, Low German	German, Low German	German, Low German	German	Parents, younger sister	Mother: works at university, father: works at computer company	Protestant	Germany	Rural



	<b>Pseudonym school</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Languages fluently</b>	<b>Languages growing up</b>	<b>Languages at home</b>	<b>Languages with friends</b>	<b>People in household</b>	<b>Parent's occupation</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Citizenship(s)</b>	<b>School Area</b>
26.	Max_R	17	m	German, English	German	German	German	Mother, brother	Mother: unable to work due to health problems	Christian	Germany	Rural
27.	Dominik_R	18	f	German, English	German	German	German, English, French	Parents	Father: social worker, mother: works with people with disabilities	-	Germany	Rural
28.	Kathleen_R	17	f	German, English	German	German	German, English	Parents, sister	Father: freelancer, mother: cashier	Christian	Germany	Rural
29.	Luka_R	17	m	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German	Parents, sister	Mother: works in an office, father: building cleaner	Islam	Germany, Turkey	Rural
30.	Grimm_R	17	m	German, English	German	German	German, English	Two household: Mother or father with new partner	Father: early-retired, mother: retail saleswoman	-	Germany	Rural
31.	Joram_R	17	m	German, English	German	German	German	Parents, little brother	Father: training supervisor, mother: optician	Christian	Germany	Rural
32.	Leonie_R	18	f	German, English	German	German	German	Parents, brother, dog	Both: engineers	-	Germany	Rural
33.	Amina_R	18	f	German, English, Albanian, Spanish	Albanian	Albanian, German	German	Parents, sister, brother	Father: busdriver, mother: housewife	Islam	Germany	Rural
34.	Henry_R	18	m	German	German	German	German	Parents and brothers	Father: worker	-	Germany	Rural
35.	Lars_R	18	m	German, Turkish, English	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German	Brother, parents	Both: work in an office	Christian	Germany	Rural
36.	Peter_R	18	m	German,	German	German	German	Parents	Mother:	Yes	Germany	Rural



	Pseudonym_school	Age	Gender	Languages fluently	Languages growing up	Languages at home	Languages with friends	People in household	Parent's occupation	Religion	Citizenship(s)	School Area
				English					accountant, father: plumber			
37.	Christian_R	18	m	German, English, Persian	German, Persian	Persian, German	German, Persian	Parents, older sister and brother	Father: cook, mother: unemployed	Islam	Germany	Rural
38.	Inis_R	18	m	German, English	German	German	German	Mother	Mother: kindergarten manager	Christian	Germany	Rural
39.	Richard_R	18	m	German, English	German	German	German	Parents, sister	Mother: works in insurance, father: craftsman	-	Germany	Rural
40.	Brooke_R	19	f	German, English	German	German	German, English	Mother, older sister	Mother: child care worker	-	Germany	Rural
41.	Ben_U	14	m	Arabic, German	Arabic, German	Arabic	German	Parents, brother	Father: graphic designer, mother: child care worker	Islam	Germany	Urban
42.	Batman_U	14	m	Bosnian, German, Croatian, Serbian	Bosnian, Croatian	Bosnian, German	German, Serbian	Mother, half sister	Mother: works in sales, trained floristic	Islam	Germany, Bosnia	Urban
43.	Ilhan_U	14	m	German, Turkish, English	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	Parents, little brother	Father: sick, mother works in a cafe	Islam	Germany, Turkey	Urban
44.	Lina_U	15	f	German, Polish, English	Polish, German	German	German	Parents, younger brothers (twins) and older sister	Father: dentist, mother: nurse	-	Germany	Urban
45.	Lisa_U	15	f	German	German	German	German	Parents, brother	Father: physics and math teacher, mother: social worker	Protestant	Germany	Urban
46.	Lilli_U	15	f	German,	German	German	German	Parents	Mother:	-	Germany	Urban



	Pseudonym_school	Age	Gender	Languages fluently	Languages growing up	Languages at home	Languages with friends	People in household	Parent's occupation	Religion	Citizenship(s)	School Area
				English					psychologist and coach, father: social worker			
47.	Alex_U	15	m	German, English	German	German	German	Parents	Father: freelancer, construction manager and entrepreneur, mother: city guide	-	Germany	Urban
48.	Lynn_U	16	f	German, English, Catalan, Spanish	German, Catalan	German, Catalan	German, Catalan	Parents, sister, brother	Both: architects	Catholic	Germany	Urban
49.	Alpha_U	16	m	German, Turkish, English	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German	Parents	Mother: works in food service in hospital, father: works in a warehouse	-	Germany	Urban
50.	Tom_U	16	m	German, English	German	German	German	Parents, sister, half brother at father's	Father: works in business, mother: social worker, studies to become teacher at vocational school	Protestant	Germany	Urban
51.	Ella_U	17	f	Spanish, German, English	German	German	German, English	Parents, little sister	Mother: pharmacist, father: owns organic grocery store	-	Germany and Iran	Urban
52.	Minnie_U	17	f	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German, mostly	German	Parents, three brothers	Father: graphic designer, owns a	Islam	Germany	Urban



	Pseudonym_school	Age	Gender	Languages fluently	Languages growing up	Languages at home	Languages with friends	People in household	Parent's occupation	Religion	Citizenship(s)	School Area
						Turkish			printery, mother: nurse			
53.	Lena_U	17	f	German, English	German	German	German	Parents	Father: architect, mother: lifecoach	Protestant	Germany	Urban
54.	Jotja_U	17	f	German, English, Spanish	German	German	German, Spanish	Mother, two cats	Mother: manager at a theater, father: banker	-	Germany	Urban
55.	Grace_U	17	f	German, English	German, English	English	German, English	Father, mother, dog	Mother: English teacher, father: physicist	-	Germany and USA	Urban
56.	Johann_U	17	m	German, English	German	German	German	Parents, brother and a dog	Mother: university professor, father: director of another university	Protestant	Germany	Urban
57.	David_U	17	m	German, English	German	German	German	Parents, two siblings, fish	Father: architect, mother: jurist	-	Germany	Urban
58.	Elsa_U	18	f	Russian, German, English	Russian, German	Russian	German	Mother and stepfather or father	Father: med. doctor, mother: fitness coach	-	Germany	Urban
59.	Emilie_U	18	f	German, English	German	German	German, English	Parents, sister	Father: accountant, mother: runs a voluntary project for women poor money	Protestant	Germany	Urban
60.	Flash_U	19	m	Dutch, German, English	Dutch	Dutch	German, English	Stepfather, mother, twin brother, little	Parents: self-employed, mother: sells	-	Dutch	Urban



	Pseudonym school	Age	Gender	Languages fluently	Languages growing up	Languages at home	Languages with friends	People in household	Parent's occupation	Religion	Citizenship(s)	School Area
								brother	bags online, father: owns IT company for checkouts			

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

	Pseudonym school	Age	Gender	years of experience	Subjects	Languages home	Languages growing up	Languages fluent	Religion	Citizenship(s)	School area
1.	Anne S	36-40	f	6	English, History, Politics	German	German	German, English	Non	German	Sub-urban
2.	David S	31-35	m	10	Geography, History, Politics, Theater	German	German, (Farsi)	German, English	Non	German	Sub-urban
3.	Dinovefa S	36-40	f	10	German, English	German	Polish, German	German, English, Polish	Catholic	German	Sub-urban
4.	Hülya S	56-60	f	25	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German, Turkish, English	Non	German	Sub-urban
5.	Lehrer R	51-55	m	21	Philosophie, English, German, Religion, French	German	German, Lower German	German, English, French, Lower German	Humanist	German	Rural
6.	Erasmus R	36-40	m	10	German	German	German	German	Protestant	German	Rural
7.	Sophie R	31-35	f	4	German, Philology	German	German	German	Non	German	Rural



	<b>Pseudonym school</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>years of experience</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Language s home</b>	<b>Languages growing up</b>	<b>Languages fluent</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Citizenship(s)</b>	<b>School area</b>
8.	Tinka R	41-50	f	10	English, Mathematics	German	German	German, English, French	Catholic	German	Rural
9.	Bert U	26-30	m	2	English, Geography	German, English	German	German, English, Spanish	Non	German	Urban
10.	Layla U	31-35	f	4	English, French	German, Turkish	German, Turkish	German, Turkish, English, French	Not really	German	Urban
11.	Leitung U	61-65	f	29	German, Arts	German	German	German, English, Dutch	Non	German	Urban



**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

#	area	'migration'/ 'ethnic diversity'	income diversity	median income	deprivation (unemployment)	Cultural capital (% of children attending academic high school)	regional political indicator (% received by AfD party in the 2017 elections)
1.	<b>urban</b>	average	average	average	average	high	low
2.	<b>semi-urban</b>	high	high	average	high	low	average
3.	<b>rural*</b>	average	low	low	average	average	high

\*sub-urban neighbourhood on city's border, school servicing neighbouring rural communities

**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school)**

#1 School description		Urban (school U)
School type		Academic secondary school, grades 5-12
School size	# students	ca. 1000
	# teachers	81
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		Arts and Culture are in the school's profile; students from all over the city. Students mostly from middle-class families, many parents with academic degrees.



**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Sub-urban school)**

#2 School description		Sub-urban (school S)
School type		District secondary school, grades 5-13
School size	# students	670
	# teachers	n.a.
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context		School is located in a deprived social housing settlement, most students from low-income families, few students from very wealthy neighboring quarters

**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Rural school)**

#3 School description		Rural (school R)
School type		High school department of a District secondary school, grades 11-13
School size	# students	ca. 400
	# teachers	70
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context		School located in a sub-rural area servicing neighboring rural communities



## **Cultural Literacy Practices in Formal Education (India)**

**Chandrani Chatterjee, Swati Dyahadroy, Neha Ghatpande**

### **1. Executive summary**

The present report is the culmination of a study conducted in three schools in the state of Maharashtra in India, to understand the ways in which culture is perceived by young people and the role that institutional and family set ups play in shaping the perception and understanding of culture. In the process not only does one get an inkling into the young people's understanding of culture but also how elders – both teachers and elders in the family – help shape, directly or indirectly, this understanding of culture among young people. The data collected through interviews and observation helps reiterate the complex and nuanced nature of culture and how one particularly grapples with such a concept in a country like India.

We started off with three reference points as far as the idea of culture in the Indian context is understood and practiced. One, the idea that there is a long tradition of Indian culture; two, that there are contestations as to what is 'Indian' culture, because there are competing claims to what the Indian culture actually represents; and three, that the post-independence nation-state may have set off the process of shaping contemporary Indian culture. It is not easy to either cull out, or conceptualise afresh a definition of Indian culture, primarily because of its heterogeneity, amidst the confusion and contestations that already form a part of the discourse around culture and the varying points of departure.

The interviews revealed that the confusion and contestations around the discourse of culture is sketched on to young people's minds at a rather early age. While some informants seemed to acknowledge this confusion, others seemed to be carrying with them the idea of culture as inheritance –which could not be altered or changed. This idea of culture having a permanent and thus unitary nature may be indicative of a tendency towards homogenisation of culture which thwarts the claim to plurality and diversity.

Both in its legal institutional structure and its ideological positioning, the Indian nation-state adopted a substantially inclusive approach. The practice of culture often also tends to accommodate tendencies of exclusion. This co-existence of institutional and ideological inclusivity and spaces of exclusion in practice make the Indian case both challenging and interesting. The interviews conducted in the schools helped us to examine the nuanced nature of the perceptions as well as genesis of culture in young people and the large trajectory that



culture travels. In this specific case, culture can be described perhaps best as one always in the making. The ambivalences with regard to an assessment of culture and cultural heritage along with confusions that pertain to young peoples' understanding of Europe, as our data exhibits, creates an interesting case.

Finally, given the diversity and continental expanse of society and the nation state, India stands as a good point of comparison to Europe, wherein the former looks upon the state as an instrument of cultural inclusion while the latter is perhaps sceptical about it. These varied concerns and starting points allow us to grapple with post-colonial theory and cultural studies but at the same time to locate our study in contemporary social and political theory and the interface of these discourses suggesting a need for understanding what happens in the in-between spaces of negotiation and exchange that shape ideas of culture and heritage. The questions of caste, religion, gender, and linguistic identities all contribute to a curious diversity where concerns of plurality and homogenisation are contested repeatedly.

We felt that it was important to underline that the school interviews proved it difficult to define the concept of culture in any clear way. In the Indian context, the space of school has become both where plurality can be highlighted as well as can map the ways in which culture has been mobilised. The most difficult challenge in India is how do we conceptualise plurality, do we celebrate plural histories, ways of life or take critical review of ways in which plurality is addressed and document efforts to address inequalities generated because of it and efforts to hegemonies Hindu culture.

This has led to exclusion of some and inclusion of those who were marginalised in predominant Hindu discourse. Through the interviews of both teachers and students across three schools it became clear that the interviewed students from various class, caste and religious backgrounds are mainly participating in the mainstream Hindu festivals celebrated publicly and the rites and rituals they celebrate at home.

## 2. Introduction

As a nation-state still emerging from its colonial past and making its mark in the trajectory of global politics, India stands as a unique case compared to the other countries of the CHIEF consortium. This uniqueness has been furthered in the ways in which the country's status as the largest democracy in the world and a plural society with inequalities of many kinds is at loggerheads with a primarily right-wing politics of the recent past. While the spread of right-wing politics is a global phenomenon, India's case is distinct in the way this largest



democracy still manages a lot of inclusion, be it in terms of caste, religion, language— thus, varied cultural aspects, a process which is perhaps non-comparable to Europe. A lot has been written already on the post-colonial condition and the ways in which this narrative is often imbued in an easy linearity with the hegemonic discourse being necessarily highlighted. Such an approach tends to overlook and often reduce the plural articulations and even out possibilities of heterogeneous existences and negotiations of individuals and communities, in an attempt to produce a homogeneous understanding of the nation-state and its culture. Contrary to such an understanding, our attempt here is to rather harp on the plurality of Indian cultures and to suggest its dialogic nature.

This ‘dialogism’, borrowing a Bakhtinian<sup>35</sup> concept, plays a vital role in the ways in which cultures keep reshaping and renewing themselves. This rather fluid understanding of culture enables us to move beyond generic definitions and situate culture as an entity always in the making. Once we move beyond the closure of definitions, it also becomes possible to locate the various entities that become interlocutors in this process. Education, undeniably, may be identified as an important player in facilitating the dialogism, essential in the making of cultures. Education often initiates a process of socialisation that plays a vital role in the ways in which cultures are understood and played out. Education also facilitates a dialogue between the past and the present and often is reflected in the ways in which readings of the past have been shaped and reshaped to inform our understanding of history.

The interviews conducted for this report help to reiterate the rather complex and intricate nature of connections that one can trace between formal education and the shaping of an idea of culture, that in turn feeds into the making of a nation-state. What we have also tried to indicate are the many ways in which issues of diversity and plurality are often simultaneously played out in the narrative of homogeneity that becomes the hallmark of the nation. These rather curious juxtapositions are perhaps also indicative of the agency of the consumers of culture and education (young people, teachers, family members) and the way they participate in the making and renewing of the idea of cultures. We felt the need to emphasise this two-way movement and exchange in the making of cultures and their circulation and consumption in the Indian context. The present report studies western India, the state of Maharashtra and further narrows the focus by having chosen schools in Pune city and in semi-urban settings in the vicinity. Given the sheer geographical expanse of India and its diversity, it would be incorrect to assume that this report could be regarded as a prototype for India in general. However, some patterns and tendencies emerging from the interviews conducted in Pune

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<sup>35</sup> A Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) developed a philosophy of language and a social theory.



maybe seen in other parts of India as well. So, though not indicative for the entire country, this report will provide a glimpse of the diversity of India.

### 3. State of the Art

Building on the cultural policies and academic literature review performed for the CHIEF project's Work package 1, the present report takes the argument forward in highlighting the diverse and plural nature of cultures in the Indian context. India, ever since its independence from British rule in 1947, has harboured a rather unproblematic vision of culture as a homogenous 'national culture' and most of policies related to culture have propagated the same idea of a legitimate culture being that which contributes to the idea of nation-building (WorldCP, 2013). No wonder, the idea of the nation projected in such discourses is necessarily homogenised. However, in the Indian case there has been no single coherent cultural policy. Rather, its aspects were scattered through various ministries and government organisations. The debate that India should have a National cultural policy has been prevalent for a while now, but it has been widely rejected on account of the sheer heterogeneity and diversity of Indian culture and the complexity in classifying the many art forms. In the absence of a clear understanding of India's cultural policy, the job of preserving and promoting India's tangible and intangible cultural heritage is under the purview of India's Ministry of Culture. While the constitution of the Ministry itself has undergone changes over time, the work of cultural preservation rests in the hands of its many institutions and their bureaucratic machinery. As the 2014 High Powered Committee Report, drawn under the Ministry of Culture (Government of India, 2014) suggests, the rigid structures of these institutions run against the essence of the creative arts. The recommendations include transferring power from clerical administration to creative persons who can be actually responsible for practising and teaching arts and infuse young people and their approaches in these institutions, among others. Calls for more budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Culture (the spending on culture out of the total government budget is dismal) and treating it as a core sector, not marginal to other sectors, have also been made. The various policy documents that have been annotated in Review of Making of Cultural Policy, India (Chatterjee & Dyahadroy, 2018) also reveal the viewing of the Ministry of Culture in isolation, and not as an intrinsic component of development.

While technology and digitisation have been very talked about in Ministry of Culture's annual reports, there seems to be no clear path envisaged towards an engagement of youth in cultural life. Independent, privately funded cultural initiatives seem to be attracting more youth than government-supported projects.



Public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships and corporate social responsibility make their presence felt in post-globalisation heritage conservation policies, with the state acting merely as a catalyst, a far cry from the Nehruvian era when the state actively shaped cultural agenda. At the same time, the revival of ‘cultural nationalism’ as seen in the Ministry of Culture’s annual reports, with a thrust on the Hindu past, brings back the intertwining of politics and culture in contemporary India. Artists, intellectuals, civil society actors strongly urge for a shift from ‘cultural nationalism’ to ‘cultural diversity’ (Chatterjee & Dyahadroy, 2018).

As policy advisors feel, it is in encouraging and facilitating this hierarchy that the change in the school curriculum may provide an important starting point. Cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness have to become cornerstones of school life to truly achieve the transformative potential of education towards shaping a secular, tolerant, plural society (Government of India, 2005). It is through reaching out to schools and colleges that cultural literacy, i.e. the competence to understand cultural references and actively participate in a plural society can be achieved.

This aspiration towards a plural and inclusive society is also the cornerstone of India’s 2019 Draft National Education Policy (henceforth DNEP, Government of India, 2019). The draft has been in the public domain for some months now, and there have been discussions and deliberations about its significance and relevance. A sophisticated document, DNEP calls for the dissemination of democratic values and equality. The lens of intersectionalities help in examining the implications in terms of working towards democratisation and inclusivity in terms of class, caste, gender, sexual orientation, disability, communal and regional identities. The possibility of envisaging alternatives rests in reiterating our constitutional values. Some of these receive recognition in the DNEP. These include: democratic outlook and commitment to liberty and freedom; equality, justice, and fairness, embracing diversity, plurality, and inclusion; humaneness and fraternal spirit; social responsibility and the spirit of service; ethics of integrity and honesty, scientific temper and commitment to rational and public dialogue; peace; social action through Constitutional means; unity and integrity of the nation, and a true rootedness and pride in India with a forward-looking spirit to continuously improve as a nation (ibid, p.96, p.201, p.202, p.231).

However, while at the policy level, the idea of cultural diversity seems to be an accepted, a closer look often points towards the fractures, dilemma and anxieties within. The interviews conducted with students and teachers point towards a reality imbued in a state of confusion and lack of clarity about both the definition of culture and its requirement thereof in the curriculum. The complexity of a concept like ‘culture’ notwithstanding, the often sweeping



generic conclusions without the desire to probe further into what may be regarded the nuances therein, may be thought of as being indicative of a constant attempt at homogenisation despite the facade of plurality and diversity. While we feel this is a larger global trend, India's participation and rapid erasure of attributes of plurality and diversity is alarming. However, this proclivity to homogenisation, both globally and domestically, cannot be understood without the crucial role of capitalism in encouraging and in fact necessitating it. Modern right wingers (both in the Indian sense and in a more general western sense) draw their power from this process of homogenisation resulting from the expansion of capitalism.

The schools as sites for harbouring such feelings are on a steady rise and there is a need to understand the larger socio-cultural politics at work here. However, it would be rather reductive to ascribe the socio-cultural transitions to a straightforward linkage between the rise of a right wing government and the unleashing of a particular ideology. While this cannot be overlooked either, we also observe other emerging patterns that are indicative of a more nuanced process at work both in the formation and in the dissemination of the notion of culture and its specificities, the circulation of notions of culture and their consumption and appropriation by different sections of society. Moreover, one also cannot dismiss the fact that within our overall heritage, history and political evolution, there always has been an element of homogenisation. This is seen historically, in the Brahmanical project<sup>36</sup> and continues to manifest itself in the modern capitalist social formations that seem to uphold a tendency toward homogenisation in the formation of a modern elite and the penetration of capitalist mores that lead to homogenisation of norms, cultures and behaviours.

Needless to say, in India, the history of colonialism is instrumental in shaping the complex relationship that the region has with culture especially as concerns the loosely defined category of 'youth'. In review of literature on academic work on culture by Indian scholars (Chatterjee & Dyahadroy, 2018), we had to engage not only with a colonial and post-colonial discourse but also with notions of globalisation, alternative modernities, migration, consumerism, gender, the politics of the nation-state and counter ideologies of grassroots movements. To understand the place of culture in Indian social and political life we found it rather difficult to fit into any neat model or structure. Our reference points to approaching culture were neither singular nor homogenous. We at least identified three modes of talking about culture: a) the accepted notion of a long and ancient tradition of Indian culture; b) that there are contestations as to what is 'Indian' culture because there are competing claims to that title and c) that the post independence nation-state may have set off the process of

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<sup>36</sup> Brahmanical project refers to a set of practices bound by the principle of purity and pollution, which allow for the continued hegemony of the Brahmin.



shaping contemporary Indian culture. It is not easy to either cull out, or conceptualise afresh a definition of 'Indian culture', amidst the confusion and contestations that already form a part of the discourse around 'culture' and the varying points of departure.

We initially located our argument on culture in an already established post-colonial discourse. The works of Arjun Appadurai (2013), Dipesh Chakrabarty (2008) and others informed our study. However, we also felt the need to go beyond post-coloniality to a more contemporary understanding of 'India' as a nation-state and 'Indian' culture as a corollary. Both nationalism (as practiced during the anti-colonial movement and subsequently as practiced in independent/post-colonial India after 1947) and the Indian state as a legatee of the colonial state yet wanting to carve out new paths of statecraft, have been shaping India's contemporary culture and approach to culture.

The other obstacle that we faced, which of course further substantiates our claim to diversity, was regarding the idea of 'youth' and 'young people.' Though most nations use age group to categorise the youth, this categorisation proved less than adequate for us, because for the age group, demarcation often does not take into account the diverse nature of the Indian youth, nor their changing aspirations across wide social and economic divides. However, we were able to look at the relationship of the youth and nation-state (how the youth was viewed by the state and how the young people themselves defined their relationship with the state, their position as rights-bearing engaged citizens and how they negotiate spaces of consumption post-liberalisation. Through ethnographic work by scholars Ritty Lukose (2009) and Arjun Appadurai (2013), it became possible for us to disrupt the category of youth as we understood it and see them as 'children of liberalisation' who navigate complex genderscapes, institutions and environments in their exploration of culture, cultural practice and identity. Thus, as consumers of culture they can in no way be ascribed a passive position.

It is in thus grappling with the manifold nature of competing cultures and their carriers (primarily young people in this case) we thought it advisable to abstain from defining culture. Rather, what turned out to be a more meaningful exercise was the possibility of engagements at interfaces and interstices of encounters and observing the unfolding of different kinds of cultures through negotiations and dialogues. So, while we did streamline our data and tried to categorise it, we thought it would be more rewarding to gesture towards the idea of cultures in the making in our case. This was primarily possible because our data was so diverse and not categorisable into neat units. This urged us to revisit set notions of culture in the Indian context and not erase the nuances in the attempt to reach a definition of some kind. We allowed our data, the interviews with students and teachers, from different schools, to talk to each other and played it against more established and conventional understandings of culture.



In the process, we began by taking a note of some key contributions to the field of cultural studies from Indian scholars. Their particular disciplinary locations as well as their geo-political location provided us with some foundational arguments, concerning cultural literacy and cultural studies. We were able to place these arguments within a larger global context against and alongside scholarship that emerged from the West. This rich body of scholarship that focused on multiple areas and sites of Indian life, also threw light on how culture is understood in the mainstream Indian context and how often this construction of culture falls under the weight of its own dissonances and contradictions. Discourse around culture in India is often a response to powerful ideologies and agendas of the conservative Right that positions culture as static, unchanging and emerging from a ‘glorious’ Vedic past. We emphasise the need to view culture as fluid and dynamic and the dissonances within its traditions and practices as enabling rather than disruptive.

Thus both the review of policies related to culture and academic literature on culture had underlined the challenges in homogenisation of culture in the Indian context where ethos is plural and heterogeneous and thus also produces conditions of inequality and exploitation for many. The cultural policy reviews and academic literature review helped us in situating our interviews in a context of contestations and plurality, urging us to abstain from any easy definitional categorisation of culture that we may have been lured into while conducting the interviews.

## 4. Methodology

The second phase of the research under CHIEF project’s Work package 2 (Qualitative research in formal educational settings) was to conduct semi-structured interviews with school teachers and students from the age group from 14 to 18. Three schools were selected, two in an urban area and one in a semi-urban area.<sup>37</sup> All three schools are in the vicinity of the two heritage sites selected by the Indian team at SPPU (Pune) for research in CHIEF’s Work package 6 (Qualitative research in heritage sites).

The two urban schools were selected in the old part of the Pune city, as this area represents caste diversity and is also considered a hub for cultural activities. Here is a substantial socio-

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<sup>37</sup> In Maharashtra, it is not common to find high schools in the rural areas. Most of the rural students migrate or travel long distances daily to continue their secondary or high school education in semi-urban as well as urban schools. That is why no rural school has been selected for the CHIEF fieldwork.



economic diversity among students and teachers. The language of instruction in the two urban school is regional, i.e. Marathi.<sup>38</sup>

The semi-urban school is based in Lonavala.<sup>39</sup> This location was not only logistically approachable but also provided the possibility to work with students from diverse backgrounds who attend this school from neighbouring villages. The language of instruction in this school is English.

In the beginning of 2019, India's SPPU team representatives visited each of the selected urban schools three times, and the semi-urban school twice. During these visits, school staff were briefed about the project and its significance. Also, the emphasis was made on how the schools' participation would not take any extra hours from the staff's schedule. This approach helped the team to gain the trust of the school management and all three schools gave official consent in February 2019.

These visits also helped the SPPU team to chart informants' recruitment strategy with the help of school staff. The criteria for selecting students were to maintain age, gender, caste, class balance and to ensure representation of students belonging to all socio-economic backgrounds. As most of the interviews were conducted with minors, the information sheet about the project and consent form were handed to parents of the pre-selected students in each school. Once parents approved their children's participation, a day and time was allotted to conduct the interviews.

The interviews started on February 21, 2019 and were concluded on April 4, 2019. A total of 69 interviews were conducted in three schools by 4 interviewers. Out of these, 60 interviews were conducted in Marathi, 3 were in English while the remaining 6 were in multiple languages like Hindi and English. All informants were Indian citizens.<sup>40</sup> The average length of the interviews with students was 25 to 35 minutes.

#### 4.1 Description of the selected schools

**Urban school 1** is one of the oldest girl's high schools in Pune. It was established when India was under the British rule and the concept of school for girls was not common. This school's historical connection to the colonial era was another motive for its selection. The

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<sup>38</sup> In Maharashtra, the language of instruction in schools can be both English and Marathi, along with a few examples of other languages. But Marathi, being the main language of the region, is generally the language of instruction in most of the schools in Maharashtra.

<sup>39</sup> Lonavala is a semi-urban area located between Pune and Mumbai.

<sup>40</sup> Detailed information about the informants is provided in the Appendices (Tables A1 and A2).



establishment of this school was considered as one of the vital steps in the social reform movement in Maharashtra.

The neighborhood where the school is located is predominantly populated by the representatives of the upper castes. Currently, the school offers a full range of education in Marathi language, from pre-primary to high school and junior college. There are 2,227 students in the high school and 1,294 students attending the junior college. Anyone could be admitted to this school, there is no specific criteria implied. The school has sports grounds in the premises. The premises also include a girl's hostel for students coming from rural areas of Maharashtra. This school employs only female teachers. The presence of men in the premises is among security personnel and helping staff for the school. Students who are advanced athletes at the state or national level receive coaching from male coaches after school hours.

All interviews, except that with the head teacher, were conducted in the library of the school. The building was old and built in the pre-independence era. The head teacher's interview was conducted in her office, where one could observe several structural and other elements of historical significance such as portraits of all the past head teachers and the founders' images and messages. The school was started under the British rule, and was dominated by the Brahmin community; in the post-independence period it gradually became a space for students and teachers from Bahujan community.<sup>41</sup> In the era of globalisation, the regional schools have a smaller number of students from the upper class and caste communities.

During the visits and the fieldwork, a sense of pride about the history of the school in students and teachers could be observed. The school authorities' attempt at maintaining a certain sense of unity was perhaps instrumental in blurring of the plurality and diversity of the students who came from different class and caste backgrounds to study here.

**Urban School 2** is located in the same locality as the Urban school 1, but there is more socio-economic diversity among students and teachers. This school was established in 1909. In the initial years, school was providing only primary education. By 1915, the school expanded and became a high school. It is a regional school with Marathi being the language of instruction. It is a mixed gender school. In the post independence period due to affirmative policies such as reservation it has been catering to students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

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<sup>41</sup> Bahujan is a term frequently found in Buddhist texts which refers to the majority. Initially Mahatma Phule and later Dr. Ambedkar used this term for people in Hindu society who have experienced discrimination and oppression on the basis of caste. In the state of Maharashtra the term 'Bahujan' is referred to non-Dvija or twice-born castes.



Though this school is old and has a historical significance, the premises of school and facilities are in poor condition. Students do not have access to clean toilets or a playground. Still, it is the only school in the locality that has a swimming pool and makes swimming classes compulsory for all students. This school is heavily dependent on government funding. It is critically short staffed with each teacher teaching at least three subjects and conducting five lessons per day, and performing administrative tasks after the teaching hours. The teachers' busy schedule was one of the major challenges while convincing them to participate in the project.

In 2019, there were 135 students attending the high school and 142 students attending the junior college. Most of the students attending this school come from Janata Vasahat<sup>42</sup>, the largest slum area in the city mostly occupied by migrant families who have come from various rural parts of Maharashtra. There is also a caste based diversity evident among students. Also, several of the students also come from adjoining rural areas, commuting for over one hour every day. Accordingly, almost all students interviewed at this school were from the slum areas or from rural areas. Very few students were from upper caste or class and living in the apartments or in the old part of the city. The recruitment process in this school was also influenced by the level of literacy of the parents, since not all of them were able to read and understand the information about the project shared with them.

This dynamic of students coming to the part of the city dominated by the upper caste communities made this school a complex site for research as it shed light on the issue of cultural capital and who exactly has it. The interviews were conducted in one large empty classroom. In the interviews, the lack of articulation about culture was evident among students, if compared to the students from Urban school 1. The interviews with the teachers revealed concerns over increasing caste and religion-based polarisation in society. Still the adherence of both students and teachers to a homogeneous Hindu culture was evident.

**Semi-urban school** is one of the very few privately owned schools located in Lonavala. This school is affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)<sup>43</sup> and provides education in English language. It charges higher fees compared to the government-funded schools. While the annual fee is around INR 3000 (37.90 EUR) at the Urban schools 1 and 2 (this fee is to provide for stationary and books, as tuition fees are completely waved off in state-funded schools; meals are provided for free in Urban school 2, but not in Urban school

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<sup>42</sup> Janata Vasahat is a locality that is known as the largest slum area in Pune. It is based in the foothills of Parvati-one of the most iconic and historic places in Pune.

<sup>43</sup> CBSE is a national level board of education controlled by the Government of India. Private and public schools across the country can become affiliated with this board and teach their specific curriculum.



1), it is INR 43,800 (553.91 EUR) at the Semi-urban school. This stark difference indicates that only the representatives of the higher socio-economic classes can afford to send their children to this school. It also indicates that very few students coming from rural areas who come from a lower economic background can get access to this school.

This school has middle- or upper-middle-class students coming from various villages such as Kamshet, Mulshi, Khopoli, etc. Students coming from villages are from the landowners', higher income farmers' families and those who in the industrial centres as several manufacturing units of large companies are located in Lonavala. More students from non-Marathi-speaking backgrounds attend this school because of the employment realities in Lonavla. There are several industrial plants near this school that employ personnel from across India.

The school has efficient infrastructure, clean toilets and facilities such as a common hall, computer lab, science lab and sports arena. It also provides bus services for students as most of them travel for a minimum of one hour to reach the school.

This school's staff were excited to participate in the project. They had made proper arrangements to enable researchers to conduct the interviews in two empty classrooms. In this school, the recruitment strategy was to focus on students coming from rural areas and migrant families.

The students seemed to share a special camaraderie with each other as they spent most of their time together in school and travelling. Most of the interviewed students stated that they enjoy staying in semi-urban or rural areas as it is more peaceful compared to cities. Also, most of the city attractions such as malls, internet access, cafes have reached the small town of Lonavala and its surroundings.

CHIEF's common interview guide was used for the interviews. In each school, to make the informants comfortable, the interviewer began with a conversation that may not have been part of the guide. According to the fieldwork notes recorded by the researchers, students from Urban school 1 seemed more equipped to speak about local and national issues. Interviewers in Urban school 2 stated that it took them more effort to make students comfortable and answer the questions at length.



## 4.2 Data analysis

As mentioned earlier, the India team conducted 69 interviews in three schools. All the interviews were audio-recorded. The transcription of the interviews began from March 2019 simultaneously with the fieldwork. Most of the interviews were conducted in Marathi. The interviews were transcribed in Marathi and then translated in English. The transcripts were anonymised and pseudonyms were assigned to all informants by the researchers.

The transcriptions and translations were discussed by the CHIEF research team members and parallels were drawn by the researchers to strike a dialogue among them and create a theoretical framework based on the collected data, drawing references from the formal educational setting in India.

The next step was coding using NVivo. NVivo 12 Pro version was used. Nine interviews were selected to create initial coding trees. These interviews included interviews of three female students, three male students and three teachers representing all three schools. Since interviews were in Marathi they were translated and then translated transcripts were used for the coding of these interviews to avoid any difficulties in the software pertaining to Marathi font. Reflective notes of the researchers and participant notes about the informants was another set of data included in the process of coding.

During this stage of data analysis, two separate codebooks were created by two researchers independently from each other. These codebooks led to two separate coding trees. These coding trees were compared, and the codes were finalised. The coding tree was submitted to the CHIEF researchers who lead work package 2 on September 28, 2019.

This process led to the consolidation of certain themes. Some of the most prominent themes were, nation and culture, tradition vs culture, cultural superiority, identity in the cultural context, diversity and curriculum. The participant notes further led us to deepen the understanding of what is considered as identity by participants. Another important theme that emerged from the data was curriculum in the context of culture.

The themes led us to certain sub-codes to segregate the data further into smaller capsules. This has helped in detailed analysis and addressing the research questions. The quotations of the students used in the report have also emerged through this coding process. The same coding process was followed for all the remaining 60 interviews, available reflective notes and all the participant notes. While coding and reviewing the interviews, the re-reading of the



text and discussion was taking place. That discussion has found a significant presence in this report.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 School experiences: Location, Composition and Culture

The characteristics of the selected schools inevitably left their marks on the ways in which culture and cultural activities were taught and practiced in each of them.

The common experience in all the three schools lay in the detailed explanation and initiation that had to be carried out by the researchers to encourage students to share their thoughts. A lot of warming up exercises were needed, in terms of making the students comfortable first and then framing the questions not in a direct fashion but rather in a way that was both explanatory and in turn facilitated the conducting of the interviews. Often these facilitations took the form of informal, casual and friendly chatting with the interviewee to make him/her feel at home. In the semi urban school, this almost amounted to coaxing where the interviewer had to resort to innovative and experimental practices to encourage students to share their feelings and opinions.

This general unpreparedness can perhaps be attributed to the fact that students in Indian schools are not accustomed to such interviews. Also, one of the concerns that surfaced time and again, both in the interviews and in our analysis of it are, can we really interrogate a concept like culture in a country like India? How does one even go about introducing a complex concept like culture to young people?

In Urban school 1, it was observed that the students had a particular difficulty in articulating their understanding of culture. There was a certain desire to maintain a ‘political correctness’ in the answers that seemed too neat and organised. This has much to do with a sense of pride that most students of this school exhibited in the history of the school as having played a pioneering role in promoting women’s education in Maharashtra. This sense of pride is also clearly visible in the teachers’ interviews, who must have inculcated it in the students. Discipline, punctuality, cleanliness were cited as virtues that the school insists on. Students of the Urban school 1 seemed to be announcing themselves as the arbiter of the culture of Pune city and the values of democracy. While the students and the teachers in this school seemed to be confident and prepared upholding a grand narrative of the school’s tradition and glory, we realized a homogenised discourse emerging through this sense of pride. In fact, a student in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade who had enrolled in this school from a different school indicated that the



idea of culture should not be restricted to the state alone and should embrace all humanity. In its zeal to bolster a Marathi culture and an associated pride, this school came across as the most elite and homogenised of the three schools studied.

In the Urban school 2, the interviews were conducted over a short time span primarily because of staffing shortages and students, especially those in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, who were not attending lessons regularly. This was a very interesting case because most of the students studying in this school were also working to make ends meet. During the interviews, it seemed that this was perhaps the only time where the students were asked to voice their opinions and there was a sense that their opinions mattered as well. The articulation of caste identity was much clearer and forthright here. This is perhaps owing to the fact that the marginalised formed the majority in this school. However, marginalisation continued and kept perpetuating itself in the case of students from different religious identities.

The teachers celebrated a sense of rootedness in culture and there seemed to be an exposure to mainstream Brahmanical culture<sup>44</sup> and an evening out of anything diverse or at loggerheads with the mainstream. This rather feudalistic behaviour in an otherwise democratic school (housing a majority of students from the lower and marginalised castes) is perhaps indicative of a larger shift towards a monolithic projection of culture and an outright rejection of the nuances and multiplicity that goes into the making of the many cultures that constitute India.

In the Semi-urban school, the students and teachers articulated their views on culture in a much more elaborate way compared to the other two schools. One of the basic reasons for their awareness is owing to the Central Board of Secondary Education curriculum<sup>45</sup> and the very composition of the student body where one finds migrants from other Indian states and the rural population. Students from the Indian states of Karnataka, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who come to study in this school lend a distinct flavour to the school environment and its politics that was visible despite the attempts at homogenisation. However, what began by appearing like a happy mingling gradually unfolded a different narrative of discrimination and marginalisation. As the majority of students are Maratha<sup>46</sup>, a distinct pride in Maratha

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<sup>44</sup> The term *Brahmanical* refers to those who born into a caste group named Brahmins or to do with Brahmanism, the dominant ideology codified from earlier religious texts and practiced in everyday life. Brahmanical thus refers to those norms and practices which privilege the Brahmin and their way of life in cultural and religious terms, Brahmanical refers to set of practices bound by the principle of purity and pollution, which allow for the continued hegemony of the Brahmin.

<sup>45</sup> The other two schools were following the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (SSC) curriculum.

<sup>46</sup> Maratha is a group of upper castes in Maharashtra known as Kshatriyas (warriors). They also include peasants, landowners and sub-castes such as Kunbi. These are one of the most dominant castes in Maharashtra.



identity was reported in the interviews, as well as a tendency towards adopting a parochial approach based on regional and linguistic identity is noticeable in the ways in which the students from the other states are discriminated against for being outsiders to a Maratha identity.

With a distinct access to cultural and economic capital, the students in this school were very well versed with technology, showed familiarity with hip hop and rap music and aspirations of looking West-wards. While the students' exposure to digital technology and social media continues to be discouraged by most teachers, there was a clear indication that the idea of culture that the young people are articulating is primarily that being mediated through new age media and technology. This cannot be seen as a passive reception of technology but as an active participation in a technology-enabled world which also contains within it the possibility of intervention and subversion. Technology allows young people an access to a larger world that is not necessarily something that they experience in their day-to-day lives. While technology is regarded as a bane that threatens the rootedness in local culture and traditions by the teachers, the students seem to be exploring through technology an alternative space to experience their culture. WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms become a means of straddling the local and the global, the universal and the parochial. The use of the internet to complete their school assignments was reported to be a regular practice among students and yet they were apprehensive while talking about their social media accounts. This apprehensiveness perhaps could be attributed to the ways in which the school authorities project social media as a constant threat to a student's growth and development. So, it appears that students use the new platforms as a shared space within their peer groups to engage in the activities that the institutional space of the school discourages. Often culture and cultural practices are mediated through technology for young people and there can be no denying that the appeal of these technology-mediated cultural practices and sharing these with the peer group become a major way of cultural participation for the young people.

## **5.2 Notions of 'culture' and 'cultural heritage'**

The interviews suggest a lot of confusion about the concept of culture in young people. Culture, as emerged from the interviews, was not understood as a part of everyday life. Rather, special events, celebrations, holidays were assigned the label of culture. In fact, the very endeavour of wanting to define culture in a categorical way seemed rather futile.

Of the many understandings that emerged through the interviews, one was the most recurrent in the Indian context: culture was understood most often as a synonym to traditions and



festivities. The interconnectedness of these concepts cannot be overlooked and that is what keeps emerging repeatedly through the informants' attempts at grappling with the concept of culture. By locating the exemplifications of culture in the festivities (mostly religious), there is an attempt to invoke the intricate and complex connections that are at the core of any understanding of Indian culture. Related to this confusion of using culture and traditions interchangeably is the idea of authenticity and its repeated mention when justifying the need to uphold an idea of an authentic culture. This projection of an authentic culture brings with it corollaries like cultural pride, cultural superiority, cultural divide which in turn form the basis of cultural identity.

The interviewed teachers and students reported different understandings of culture. For example, a student from Urban school 2 talks about festivals as cultural pride and how they connect her to the past. She says:

*Culture means our language and the various festivals that we celebrate. We preserve our culture through them. By celebrating Gudhi Padwa we start our new year. After that we celebrate Diwali and other festivals. To remember things [that] happened in ancient days we celebrate festivals. (Sheetal, female, student, urban school 2, India)*

On the other hand, a teacher from Urban school 1 indicates how cultural preservation is often mistaken as cultural education when she says:

*One of the main objectives is to look after it (culture), protecting your culture, this is the main purpose. In preserving culture, one does not think about the thoughts or feelings behind it, it tends to be more prone to blindly preserving it than it is to preserve it for that... I won't say that there is no emotional attachment to it. (Varsha, female, teacher, urban school 1, India)*

### **5.3 Cultural identity**

Cultural identity is often played out through a set of binaries that are created and furthered by process of socialisation. The school environment, the curriculum, the student-teacher interactions, interactions of students with their peers all create conditions of socialisation that play a vital role in the formation of cultural identity. In our interviews, we noticed that the concept of cultural identity, like the concept of culture itself, is not well formed or understood by the young people. When asked about cultural identity, they tend to juxtapose their individual and their families' experiences with those of their peers. The family plays a crucial role. Many of the interviewed students identified themselves in respect to their everyday



practices at home, in the family. They spoke about values and norms that they learn at home, e.g. respecting elders, pride in their religion and traditions; clothing and culinary habits, i.e. the values and norms that are generally learned in the family and not so much in school. And even the values and norms related to a caste or a social or economic class are associated with the family setup and young people's practices there. In schools, these values and norms are shaped further through a formalised system of socialisation. In none of the interviews did we witness reports of any radical transformation through processes of socialisation. Rather, these seem to be strengthened at school. For example, the role religion plays in a country like India in instituting a sense of identity cannot be overemphasised. An English teacher from the Semi-urban (SUB) school, Kalpana said that she regards religion as a value to be inculcated and internalised in the students:

*First of all, I would like my students to know about the religion because I believe that religion can control the actions of anyone. If they know their religion well, if they know the teachings of their religion, definitely the fear would come for doing the wrong things, and that would restrict them into the wrong path. So, first of all I would like to tell them that they should follow the religion, they should know about the religion. (Kalpana, female, teacher, semi-urban school, India)*

What also emerged from the interviews was a strong opposition against the reservation policy in higher education.<sup>47</sup> This sentiment was common among teachers and students of the upper castes, but also was observed in interviews with students belonging to the lower castes who are to benefit from this policy. For example, a student from Urban school 1, while answering a country-specific question about uprisings and marches of caste-based groups for reservation rights in 2018-2019, said that she herself, together with other members of her family, participated in a march in Pune to demand reservation for the representatives of the Maratha caste. In her answer she clearly mentions,

*Yes, if we refuse to believe in caste discrimination then there won't be any need for reservation. If we stay together then everyone will get this equally. [...] these differences of upper caste and lower caste should not be there. (Payal, female, student, urban school 1, India)*

#### **5.4 Cultural participation**

Cultural participation often begins in the family and continues in school. One of the most prominent forms of such participation is in religious festivities. Of the festivals repeatedly

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<sup>47</sup> Reservation policy is an affirmative action policy that has been present in India since the 1950s, and aims to empower those who come from the disadvantaged background when it comes to their educational and employment opportunities.



mentioned in the interviews as the most important is the Ganesh festival which has special significance in Maharashtra because Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), a nationalist leader of the Indian Independence Movement, -ideologue at the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, initiated them in order to mobilise the population. These are religious and cultural celebrations in honour of the elephant god known as God Ganesha. Another celebration often mentioned by the students is Diwali, festival of lights. The students express their familiarity with these celebrations and report their enthusiasm while participating in these. It is noteworthy that these celebrations seem to work as a bridge across the social, religious, economic and caste divides as students across different communities, belonging to different social and economic strata, report participating in these festivities. While these festivals provide occasions for celebration, one cannot forget the fact that the very origins of both of these festivals along with others are imbued in caste and religious hierarchies. This may be regarded as a very curious and unique bringing together of a tool of social hierarchy and divide to help propagate a sense of apparent unity which at a closer look illustrates as being missing.

### 5.5 Europe and European culture

Knowledge about Europe is, usually, very limited. While World history taught in schools does include chapters and topics on Europe, there is a general silence or lack of awareness about Europe in general and European culture in particular. Surprisingly, students show a greater familiarity with Japanese and Korean cultures, perhaps owing to more exposure through popular culture. For example, Pallavi (student) from the Urban school 1 says:-

*Me and my sister watch Japanese cartoons together. ... I really like the discipline that is there, they say 'sorry' and 'thank you' to each other all the time, and they continue the conversation. And they help each other, too...They have a nice culture. They preserve their culture and live like that that is why I like it, and I feel that India should also do it. (Pallavi, female, student, urban school 1, India)*

Her comments on the hierarchisation of the linguistic communities in India and the growing importance of English as the most dominant language, indispensable for social, cultural and economic mobility are also very interesting. She says:

*There is this curiosity that develops, their language is Japanese. And Maharashtra's language is Marathi. Whenever I watch [Japanese] dramas and cartoons, they always speak in Japanese, not so much in English, here it's a bit opposite. Marathi is less spoken and English is more spoken. We should preserve*



*our Marathi as a Maharashtrian, or else even if not Marathi then at least Hindi should be spoken. (Pallavi, female, student, urban school 1, India)*

Pallavi is not only commenting on this linguistic hierarchy, but is also juxtaposing a narrative that has always privileged Europe and America as the much sought after destinations to fulfil one's dreams and aspirations. On the contrary, she aspires to do 'something different' and acquaintance with the popular culture of Japan and Korea becomes an alternative space perhaps for her to nurture her dreams and aspirations. She says:

*Till now, I have seen that everyone likes to go to America, or in Europe; England, Paris, France, Germany, other countries they would like to go to, so I thought if it's the same, then I should do something different. ... I like Japan, Korea, China more. (Laughs) (Pallavi, female, student, urban school 1, India)*

Often, Europe is not understood as a continent, it is rather thought of as a country. Moreover, in the binary of the West vs the East, it is America, not Europe that is generally highlighted as the 'other,' Western end. It also happens that America and Europe are used as synonyms, as the West in general, especially when the topics of fashion and clothing are concerned. Western fashion and clothing often are contrasted with the traditional clothing of Maharashtra.

Another kind of othering is witnessed when a student from the Semi-urban school comments as follows:

*I feel it's not good. It has entered our country through European people. They will party late at night, sleep the whole day. But they have less population so they can earn well. Their total income doesn't get affected whatever they do. There is a big difference between their and our culture. (Jinku, male, student, semi-urban school, India)*

He further states,

*Foreigners party whole night, drink beer, ... and their parents don't live with them. Children stay separately that's why they are so spoilt. But now that culture is gradually spreading in India. Don't know how but it has spread more since the arrival of the British. (Jinku, male, student, semi-urban school, India)*



Another form of cultural participation mentioned in the interviews is that of so-called special days celebrated in the schools and colleges. These special days can primarily be divided into three types: (1) days of national importance, e.g. Independence day, Republic day or anniversaries of national leaders (October 2 is celebrated across the country as Gandhi Jayanti, i.e. birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi); (2) different kinds of celebrations like traditional day; (3) days that are celebrated as instructed by state or national authorities, like national Yoga day (to propagate the practice of yoga as an ancient Indian cultural practice). In addition, school authorities often organise extra-curricular activities like visits to heritage sites or activities pertaining to the cause of environment, like planting trees.

### **5.6 Country-specific issues**

In India, the questions of cultural awareness pertain to awareness both at regional and national levels. Given the sheer geographical expanse of the country, it is very difficult to legitimately ascribe the label 'Indian culture' without accounting for the specificities pertaining to different regional and local cultures that contribute towards the making of what we loosely may then call 'Indian'. And yet, the plurality of cultures will have to be emphasised, nonetheless. It will perhaps be more conducive and necessary to talk about Indian 'cultures' in the plural from the very outset.

The caste and gender-related issues are recurrent in the interviews. The question of the reservation of seats for marginalised communities in formal education is viewed with a degree of concern by teachers and students. While this is as per the provisions made in the constitution of India, a certain kind of elitism rules rampant when it comes to executing reservation rules and carrying it to fruition. This is observed in the teachers' community as well including those we have interviewed, in spite of the fact that some of the teachers have themselves got their jobs thanks to reservation rules and yet they seem to be pessimistic about the execution of such rules, claiming that they are responsible for the declining quality of education. The young people coming from more privileged backgrounds in terms of caste hierarchy constantly look upon their less privileged peers as a threat to their existence. There is a latent discourse of caste and class privilege that erases nuances that would perhaps have afforded a possibility of an alternative history of the school. This is remarkable in the Urban school 1, where the principal, though herself being from a marginalised community refuses to address the issues of caste and class as critical in her experience of the school. There is a visible attempt at this school to project one form of regional Brahmanical orthodox culture as the dominant culture. This is visible in the ways in which caste barriers seem to be overcome



during the Ganesh festival, and yet there is no mention of Ambedkar Jayanti<sup>48</sup> or Buddha Purnima<sup>49</sup> as other occasions or days to be commemorated or celebrated. It is quite striking that in the Urban school 2, which houses a majority of students from the middle- and lower middle class backgrounds, who, in the caste hierarchy, belong to the Dalit community, they still report Brahmanical celebrations. A certain kind of the elite culture – that of the Ganesh festival, Shivaji Jayanti<sup>50</sup> and Diwali - seems to be predominating the mindscapes of these young people and their understanding of culture. Thus, though the demographic composition of these two schools is very different, their students and teachers do not exhibit the diversity that would have been expected.

An interesting example to this effect would be the case of Kabir, the only Muslim student interviewed in the Urban school 2. When asked about the programmes on the calendar that he would consider as cultural programmes, Kabir's answer was Diwali; when asked about holidays, he mentioned Dusshera<sup>51</sup>. Coming from a Muslim community with Hindi as his first language, events like Ramadan or Eid did not occur to him until prompted by the interviewer. He further said, *“My opinion is that everyone should have one religion”* (Kabir, male, student, urban school 1, India). He could not mention which religion this should be.

The same is true of the gender dichotomies that emerged during the interviews. Though gender sensitisation is on the school agendas and both teachers and students talk about its importance, there seems to be a lack of practical steps in this direction. For example, often discussions about menstruation or the reproductive system are conducted separately for male and female students. Even in the all-girls school, the students expressed their discomfort in discussing matters pertaining to the menstrual cycle. Certain taboos associated with gender and gendering kept surfacing in the ways in which gender roles play out with a hint towards gender discrimination. There is a gender discrimination that was noticed in the case of parenting, where families seem to be treating their male and female children differently.

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<sup>48</sup> Ambedkar Jayanti is a celebration of the birth anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891-1956) known as the architect of the Indian Constitution and the leader of the Dalit movement. It is celebrated by Dalit community across the nation.

<sup>49</sup> Buddha Purnima is a celebration of the birth anniversary of Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. It is celebrated in India on the national level, especially by Dalit community that converted into Buddhism following Dr Ambedkar, to break the shackles of oppressive caste system of Hinduism.

<sup>50</sup> Shivaji Jayanti is a celebration of the birth anniversary of the Maratha Emperor, Shivaji. It is celebrated in Maharashtra and is a public holiday.

<sup>51</sup> Dusshera, also known as Vijaya Dashmi, is a major Hindu festival, culturally marks either goddess Durga's or god Ram's win over evil.



## 6. Discussion

The study of cultural literacy practices in the schools of Maharashtra cannot be contained in any singular framework. This pushed us to go beyond post-coloniality to a more contemporary understanding of 'India' as a nation-state and 'Indian' culture as a corollary. There was therefore a necessity to revisit the idea of the nation-state in its multiple forms and formulations both when it comes to its structured institutional functioning and even otherwise in the minutiae of its non-formal and loose execution. The ideas of inclusion and exclusion, their several ramifications in the circulation and consumption of the concept of culture formed the cornerstone of our investigation.

The practices of exclusion, for example, operate at several levels, in terms of linguistic hierarchies, caste hierarchies, gender and economic hierarchies among others. What is challenging is the fact that not only are these forms of exclusion interrelated in important and rather complex ways, but that they are also instrumental in the maintenance and execution of a political structure that continues to carve its position in world politics on the practices of democracy. Moreover, the inclusivity-exclusionary contestations in the case of India also stem from and overlap to a large extent with the history of colonialism and the understanding of a colonial modernity. To say this is not to yet again voice an unmitigated complaint against colonialism that renders the task of the cultural/social historian unbearably complex through its project of rewriting codes of dominance. Rather, colonial modernity for most non-western societies afford an important moment of departure that helps in situating pre-colonial hierarchies vis-a-vis the post-colonial ones and is suggestive of the implications that determined an emerging structure of mobility. One of the many ways in which colonial rule restructured prevalent social hierarchies was by pitting 'high' and 'low' as a binary that would manifest itself in different spheres of socio-cultural and political existence. This began with a reconfiguring of the relation between high and low languages, the ripples of which proliferate in the various rungs of everyday existence. These consequent changes were not merely of a discursive nature. Rather, by virtue of determining access to rungs of political power, these shifts had important implications that restructured social and cultural life in a fundamental way. The introduction of English, along with print, and the reshaping of the modern Indian/regional languages under these influences determined the ideological orientation and social position of the newly educated English knowing and the regional sections of the intelligentsia, their access to state power as well as attitudes towards less privileged social groups. Though such a proposition will not help us unravel all the subsequent connections of social structuring, nevertheless, it provides a vantage point to embark on an analysis of how the restructuring of the linguistic field under colonialism defined political identities and possibilities within Indian modernity. This debate has had a



continued relevance way beyond colonialism – both in the post-colonial and the contemporary reconfigurations of the nation state in terms of linguistic communities and their access to languages of power and mobility (both in terms of English and the other European foreign languages). While the refashioning of regional languages was an important axis along which the transformation of social relationships actively proceeded, from within a vastly hierarchical order to one premised on egalitarian ideas, the linguistic debate was crucially played out in strengthening the already strained and dichotomous relationship of caste hierarchies. Several telling instances of the discursive effect can be listed in the bristling antagonism between English speaking and regional intellectuals and their always already fated interdependence; the peculiar tension in the simultaneous cultural marginalisation of the regional sphere and its valorisation as the site of political legitimacy, which found its most significant culmination, perhaps, in the consolidation of regional identity along linguistic lines at the time of the linguistic reorganisation of states after Independence. While this was a noticeable trend across India, in Western India, the politics of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, which eventually resulted in the bifurcation of the old Bombay state into Gujarat and Maharashtra in 1960, perhaps merit special mention. Most interestingly, the campaign for Samyukta Maharashtra sustained itself and mobilised support for the monolingual state by combining this demand with the language of class resistance, demonstrating yet again the shifts in the links between language, structures of domination and the political arena (Naregal, 2000).

The historicity and hierarchies that determine the kind of possible exchanges stated above have also been instrumental of the many ‘modernities’ that India continues to grapple with. The empirical data collected in these interviews in the state-run educational institutions in western India point towards asymmetries of many kinds that urge us to be mindful lest we hastily define our modernities or our contemporaneities. For, the empirical data is indicative of narratives that can be traced back to colonial times and yet cannot be contained therein. The example of linguistic and caste linkages in the understanding of culture that recurs as a dominant motif in these interviews may be cited as a case in point. While the language of privilege, elitism, opportunities and the like have been vested in English, there is a counter discourse that envisages a future in the preservation and conservation of niche cultural markers – linguistic identity being one of those markers. Thus while it might sound presumptuous to ascertain the linguistic hierarchy a centre stage in this performative that constitutes the nation state, yet there is no denying that the linguistic hierarchy is acquiring more weight in the contemporary political scenario that is upholding a particular species of legitimisation based on language and its corollaries in religion and caste.



The rise of a majoritarian government at the centre and the sheer political appropriation is necessarily mired in a larger politics of linguistic, religious and caste hierarchies. The steady rise of a dominant, mainstream ideology, in the Indian context, a Hindu ideology, and a claim to a Hindu nation and its political arrival in 2014 is noticeable in the empirical data collected and the indicators of a counter hegemony in the upholding of a linguistic monopoly is simultaneously on the rise. This was witnessed in cases where students who form a linguistic minority feel discriminated against. The tentacles of this majoritarian dominant politics keeps perpetuating other already available forms of marginalisation and this is amply noticed in the telling cases of caste and gender across the schools, young people and teachers alike.

What, however, deserves reiteration are the instances where these otherwise discriminatory and exclusionary sites become locations of inclusion and a projection of solidarity. This happens noticeably in the celebration of religious festivals where students across caste, class and religious divides are seen participating in the celebrations. However, one cannot overlook the genesis of these religious and ritualistic performances in a very clear Brahmanical politics and thus what apparently appears as inclusion becomes a double-edged strategy for appropriation and rejection variedly used as needed by the mainstream dominant discourse.

## 7. Conclusion

While the dominant mainstream discourse on culture seems to wield considerable power and its dissemination is rapid, resistances and counter-narratives have also been part of the contemporary India that we are witnessing. The CHIEF interviews allowed us varied viewpoints into India's diverse social and cultural practices along with a glimpse of some of the contemporary political debates and their ramifications. It is in this process of the making of a contemporary India that the citizens, those who are the consumers as well as producers of culture, have a vital role to play.

While investigating questions relating to what constitutes Indian culture it was realised that no homogeneous definition was possible. Rather, the question seemed rhetorical in the face of the plurality of concepts jostling for space in the very idea of culture. The rather hierarchised relation shared by linguistic, religious, and caste denominations proved vital in the shifting contestations that determine the intricate fashioning of a cultural space that is often loosely labelled as 'Indian'. We realised that this 'Indian' culture is a mediating and mediated one – one that is constantly struggling to make its presence felt in the larger global context with its contemporary politics and a post-colonial past contesting for space. This gave rise to several interesting patterns of symmetries and asymmetries when in comparison to the question of an understanding of European culture and Indian culture. In schools, where the



interviews were conducted, these further manifest themselves in the discrepancies witnessed in the upholding of an elitism that is often executed at the level of linguistic competence in English as opposed to the regional languages. This can be regarded as a carry forward of a colonial legacy that had defined English as the sole language of higher learning implying a relegation of the regional languages only fit for primary education. This as we know, not only fixed the modern Indian regional languages within an intellectual hierarchy but had a major impact also on the social structure – a certain kind of subalternisation of the regional sphere in the emerging cultural and political hierarchy. The linguistic hierarchy was visible in the interviews conducted in the schools. Another hierarchy, constitutive of a nationalist discourse, was also seen in the answers on how the students and teachers understood culture. This nationalist discourse was propelled by a need to consider English as alien and extraneous to the essentialist understanding of India. This understanding, as the interviews helped illustrate, was based on a homogeneous and monolithic view of the nation-state. Increasingly, there is noticeable a propagation of this view that works to erase a heterogeneity that was earlier (before the 1990s) considered to be at the core of the concept of a modern India. While there is a fear that this will be detrimental to the concept of India as a secular democracy, there is also a contenting view that suggests that a new India is being created in the process – India that is striving to create a mark for itself in the larger global politics is also aware of the ways regional languages play a determining role in the refashioning and transformation of relationships both in the nation state and larger global scenario. In most cases, the state supervises this through the educational curriculum and determining tenets through which a sense of nationalist solidarity is to be executed at different strata of the society. We saw this in the ways in which certain religious festivals were being repeatedly emphasised as the markers of culture and were hailed as being synonymous to the notion of India rooted in its culture and heritage.

The proliferation of similar views and its legitimisation through state machineries of which educational institutions and their curriculum is but one, helps perpetuate a grounded and exclusionist view of culture that is not accommodative of its others and meticulously deletes anything that comes in the way of its propagandist agenda of circulating a uniformity in cultural legitimisation and circulation. This leads to a sense of culture of which the individual becomes the bearer. A culture that is upheld as pure, guarded against pollutants and exclusionist in nature emerges in the process.

The institutions of inclusion and exclusion and their practices often work in tandem and this may be regarded as a unique feature of the Indian case. Social, cultural and political historians in India have generally assumed a direct connection between the formulation of state policies, their pronouncements and execution. This understanding presupposes a linear,



uninterrupted progression that is seamless thus conflating intention with effect. However, our study reveals that the process is not as direct or linear as may have been expected. We suggest that one does not overlook the possibilities of subversion and intervention that individuals can and do make in the larger systemic and institutional apparatus, even when the apparatus is as dominant and powerful as a state machinery. In fact, in the interviews conducted, one noticed these moments of interruptions and interventions which when studied at length would reveal a pattern. Be it in the ways in which a predominant cultural trait was highlighted; caste and gender markers questioned or accepted; or the ways in which texts in the curriculum were taught and understood; one can identify the possibility of the consumers' agency – in this case that of the students and teachers. For example, a teacher from Urban school 1 suggests,

*I think that the things that have happened in the history which are related to culture, from which we introduce ourselves as Indians, all things related to this are important to be told to them [the students]. Be it our natural diversity, diverse geography, different languages ... I feel that it should be introduced in these terms. And along with that the sentiment of being Indian, ... how our diversity is strength for us, is something that I feel is important to tell them. (Varsha, female, teacher, urban school 1, India)*

This is an important moment of intervention where the actor becomes a co-creator in disseminating and circulating a view that has within it the possibility of subverting the mainstream dominant discourse of homogenisation.

Through recent advents in post-colonial discourse and its assessment of the colonial moment there have been noticeable shifts in understanding and defining the 'colonised.' One important shift is the way in which the otherwise passive consumer who was regarded as being at the receiving end of a plethora of things, was now being looked upon as an active agent in the making of colonial modernity. The narrative of India's colonial encounter is being and needs to be revisited from the perspective of dissent and consent, cooperation and subversion. Though this exchange was largely unequal, and perhaps unequally motivated, the encounter, despite its unevenness, can still be characterised by exchange of some sort.

We felt that it was important to situate the present set of interviews in such a continuum and identify the myriad ways in which the post-colonial discourse has been furthered in the contemporary ways in which India understands and projects her culture vis-a-vis a larger global politics. The school interviews proved it difficult to define the concept of culture in any clear way. It may be more enabling to understand these institutional spaces of formal



education as the ones that participate in the making of cultures in their plurality in the Indian context. To miss this plurality will be to overlook a whole history of exchange and transaction that is so constitutive of any idea of culture.

Having said that, we must also remind ourselves, that plurality in the Indian context is always a contested term in terms of what we really mean by claiming plurality and whether it is practically possible. There are possibly two ways of understanding the plurality in the Indian context: one is to celebrate plural histories, cultures and ways of life and second, to take a critical look at the claim to this plurality and challenging the way plurality has been present in India. This latter concern became predominant with the upsurge of majoritarian politics' main domination on making everyday life more alike to practices of the upper caste Hindu community. Although this is an attempt to homogenise Hindu practices and, eventually, to make India a Hindu state, this also leads to a certain inclusion of the marginalised groups. This is evidenced by the findings that the interviewed students from various class, caste and religious backgrounds reported having participated in the mainstream hindu festivities. It is perhaps in witnessing and participating in such a discourse that one could locate the contemporaneity of the Indian case.



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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

No	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
1.	WP2_IN_YP_Natasha_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi, Hindi, English, Marwadi	Jain
2.	WP2_IN_YP_Anita_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi	Hindu Brahmin
3.	WP2_IN_YP_Chakuli_U	21/02/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi, Hindi	None
4.	WP2_IN_YP_Gauri_U	20/04/2019	Marathi	Female	15	Marathi, Hindi	None
5.	WP2_IN_YP_Harsha_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi, Hindi, English	Humanity
6.	WP2_IN_YP_Hetu_U	21/02/2019	Marathi	Female	17	Gujarati, Hindi, English, Marathi	Gujarati
7.	WP2_IN_YP_Manu_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	15	Marathi, Hindi	None
8.	WP2_IN_YP_Namita_U	21/02/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi	Hindu Maratha
9.	WP2_IN_YP_Sania_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi, English, Hindi	Hindu- Matanga Caste
10.	WP2_IN_YP_Pallavi_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	17	Marathi	Hindu
11.	WP2_IN_YP_Payal_U	21/02/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi, Hindi	Equality
12.	WP2_IN_YP_Purva_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	17	Marathi, English	Koknastha Brahmin



No	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
13.	WP2_IN_YP_Priya_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	15	Marathi	Hindu Brahmin
14.	WP2_IN_YP_Rani_U	20/04/2019	Marathi	Female	17	Marathi, Hindi	None
15.	WP2_IN_YP_Rucha_U	20/04/2019	Marathi	Female	17	Marathi, Hindi	Hindu
16.	WP2_IN_YP_Sangeeta_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi, English	Hindu Brahmin
17.	WP2_IN_YP_Seema_U	20/04/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi, Hindi	None
18.	WP2_IN_YP_Shreya_U	21/02/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi	Unity as Indians
19.	WP2_IN_YP_Srushti_U	25/02/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi, Hindi	Hindu
20.	WP2_IN_YP_Vrushali_U	22/02/2019	Marathi	Female	15	Marathi, Hindi	Indian
21.	WP2_IN_YP_Aadi_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi	None
22.	WP2_IN_YP_Ashwini_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Female	15	Marathi, Hindi	Marathi
23.	WP2_IN_YP_Devesh_U	16/03/2019	Marathi	Male	16	Marathi, Hindi	None
24.	WP2_IN_YP_Gargi_U	16/03/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi	Marathi
25.	WP2_IN_YP_Gudi_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi, Hindi	Marathi
26.	WP2_IN_YP_Kabir_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi, Hindi	None
27.	WP2_IN_YP_Kedar_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	16	Marathi	Hindu
28.	WP2_IN_YP_Manish_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	17	Marathi, Hindi, English	Hindu



No	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
29.	WP2_IN_YP_Mauli_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	16	Marathi	Hindu Maratha
30	WP2_IN_YP_Nagesh_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi	Maratha Caste
31.	WP2_IN_YP_Piu_U	16/03/2019	Marathi	Female	17	Marathi	Marathi
32.	WP2_IN_YP_Pranav_U	16/03/2019	Marathi	Male	17	Marathi, Hindi	Hindu
33.	WP2_IN_YP_Rohan_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	16	Marathi, Hindi	Maratha Caste
34.	WP2_IN_YP_Sandeep_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi, Hindi	Hindu Maratha
35.	WP2_IN_YP_Satish_U	16/03/2019	Marathi	Male	17	Marathi, Rajasthani	Hindu
36.	WP2_IN_YP_Saurabh_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	17	Marathi, English	None
37.	WP2_IN_YP_Sheetal_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi	None
38.	WP2_IN_YP_Shriranga_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi, Hindi	Maratha
39.	WP2_IN_YP_Shweta_U	16/03/2019	Marathi	Female	17	Marathi	Marathi
40	WP2_IN_YP_Sushrut_U	15/03/2019	Marathi	Male	17	Marathi	None
41.	WP2_IN_YP_Aditi_S	04/04/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi, Hindi, English	Hindu Maratha
42.	WP2_IN_YP_Aditya_S	04/04/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi	Hindu Maratha
43.	WP2_IN_YP_Anshu_S	04/04/2019	English	Male	17	Marathi, Hindi,	None



No .	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
						English	
44.	WP2_IN_YP_Hrushish_S	03/04/2019	English	Male	14	English ,Marathi. Hindi,	Marathi
45.	WP2_IN_YP_Babush_S	03/04/2019	English/ Hindi	Male	14	Marwadi , Hindi	Rajasthani
46.	WP2_IN_YP_Deep_S	03/04/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi, Hindi, English	Hindu Maratha
47.	WP2_IN_YP_Jinkush_S	03/04/2019	Marathi	Male	15	Marathi, English, Hindi	Hindu Maratha
48.	WP2_IN_YP_Kartik_S	03/04/2019	English	Male	14	Hindi, English	Satsang
49.	WP2_IN_YP_Kirtish_S	04/04/2019	Marathi	Female	16	Marathi, English , Hindi	Marathi
50	WP2_IN_YP_Prabhash_S	03/04/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Hindi, English, Marathi	None
51.	WP2_IN_YP_Prallhad_S	04/04/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi. Hindi	Hindu & Indian Traditions
52.	WP2_IN_YP_Radhikash_S	03/04/2019	Marathi	Female	14	Marathi	None
53.	WP2_IN_YP_Samrat_S	03/04/2019	English	Male	14	Hindi, English	None
54.	WP2_IN_YP_Shardul_S	03/04/2019	English	Male	17	Tulu, Hindi, Marathi, English	Kannada Tradition
55.	WP2_IN_YP_Tinash_S	03/04/2019	Hindi	Female	17	Marathi, English ,	Marathi



No	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
						Hindi	
56.	WP2_IN_YP_Vidya_S	03/04/2019	English	Female	14	English, Hindi	None
57.	WP2_IN_YP_Vivek_S	04/04/2019	English/ Hindi	Male	15	Hindi, English	Hindu
58.	WP2_IN_YP_Yash_S	04/04/2019		Male	14	Hindi	Hindu
59.	WP2_IN_YP_Yatin_S	04/04/2019	Marathi	Male	14	Marathi, Hindi, English	Hindu
60.	WP2_IN_YP_Parag_S	04/04/2019	Marathi	Male	17	Marathi, Hindi, English	Marathi

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

N.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
1.	WP2_IN_T_Chitra_U	25/02/2019	Marathi	Female	57	Marathi, Hindi, English	Hindu
2.	WP2_IN_T_Varsha_U	25/02/2019	Marathi	Female	48	Marathi, Hindi	Humanity
3.	WP2_IN_T_Mitra_U	26/02/2019	Marathi	Female	58	Marathi, Hindi, English	None
4.	WP2_IN_T_Subhash_U	26/03/2019	Marathi	Male	57	Marathi	Hindu-Chambhar
5.	WP2_IN_T_Samar_U	28/06/2019	Marathi	Male	50	Marathi, Hindi	Hindu
6.	WP2_IN_T_Shekhar_U	26/03/2019	Marathi	Male	57	Marathi, Hindi,	Buddhism



N.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious/spiritual affiliation
						English	
7.	WP2_IN_T_Ritu_S	4/04/2019	English	Female	50	Hindi, English	Islam
8.	WP2_IN_T_Kalpana_U	4/04/2019	English	Female	38	Hindi, English	None
9.	WP2_IN_T_Kishor_U	4/04/2019	English	Male	55	Hindi, English	Hindu

**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

	Ethnic diversity	Income diversity	Median income	Deprivation (unemployment)	Cultural infrastructure
<b>Urban</b>	Urban schools 1 and 2 are located in Sadashiv Peth, one of the oldest parts in the central area in Pune. It is historically known as an area dominated by upper caste community. Most of the population owning homes in Sadashiv Peth belong to the upper caste community.	As the school is publicly funded and teaches in the regional language, most of the students belong to (lower) middle and lower class families.	NA	This area is the amalgamation of commercial and residential settlements. Unemployed people would find it hard to afford to live in this area financially as well as socially.	This area is culturally rich due to the presence of several heritage buildings, Museum, public libraries and old residential buildings. Few of the older drama theatres are also located in the area making it one of the cultural centres of Pune.
<b>Semi-urban</b>	The school is located in Lonavala, a hill station and a popular tourist destination, which is also a commercial hub due to its strategic location between Pune and Mumbai. There are production plants of multinational companies in the area. There is labor migration to this area from South or north region of India.	People belonging to upper class, upper middle class, middle class and lower classes live in the area.	NA	This area is rich with natural resources and has industrial presence. It is also a tourist hub, thus unemployment is low. But those who are dependent on agriculture may have to migrate for better income.	Areas near Lonavala have now facilities such as a Multiplex theatre, Malls and a wax museum. It also has a historical significance due to the presence of ancient Buddhist caves.



**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school 1)**

School type		Public school affiliated with Maharashtra state board of secondary and higher secondary education (SSC board)
School size	# students	2,227
	# teachers	60-70
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		This school has rich historical significance and renowned alumni. It has sports grounds and a badminton hall in the premises. It employs only female teachers. Students actively participate in inter school sports and cultural competitions and activities. Social schemes such as 'Earn and Learn', adoption of underprivileged students by parents of privileged students and boarding facility for students coming from other parts of Maharashtra is provided by the school. It was founded in the central location of the city in British ruled India. This makes it an interesting case to understand European connection as well.

**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Urban school 2)**

		Mixed gender school in Pune
School type		Public School affiliated with Maharashtra state board of secondary and higher secondary education (SSC board)
School size	# students	277
	# teachers	10-12
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		This school is also one of the oldest schools in the city. As it is a public school, it is attended mostly by students who are from underprivileged backgrounds. Most of the students come from several slum settlements in Pune. Students who have migrated to Pune from other parts of Maharashtra could also be seen in significant numbers. This school offers bare minimum facilities. It does not have a play ground but has a well functioning swimming pool. Students participate in local cultural programmes.



**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Semi-urban school)**

		Co-ed school in Lonavala
School type		Private school affiliated with Central Board of Secondary Education
School size	# students	600
	# teachers	30-40
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		It is one of the very few privately owned schools in the area. School has students coming from adjacent villages, from diverse caste and religious background. As it is privately funded, the fees charged by the schools are higher than in public schools. Students who belong to middle class or upper middle class background attend this school. The school also has non Marathi speaking students. Its affiliation to central board has made it mandatory to celebrate all the festivals in the school, organize sports day, annual day and participate in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Cleaning India) and Yoga day.



## **Cultural literacy practices in formal education (Latvia)**

**Alina Romanovska**

### **1. Executive summary**

Culture, which is determined by ethnic, historical, religious, political and other developments has a potential to ensure human unity, understanding between individuals and nations despite ethnic, religious and other differences. The study presented in this report was conducted in the framework of Horizon 2020's CHIEF project (Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future) to learn about understandings of culture, cultural heritage and cultural identity among young people in Latvia.

The study aims to analyse the data obtained through qualitative interviews with students and teachers in formal educational settings to examine how the national guidance on cultural literacy is reflected in classroom practices, specifically, the teaching practice, pedagogical tools and learning experiences and to understand how cultural literacy is acquired and enacted within formal educational settings.

The choice of schools where the interviews were conducted was driven by the project aims and objectives: the geographical location, the settlement's economic situation and infrastructure, population and ethnic composition were taken into account. Three public schools were selected for fieldwork: one in Riga, one in Daugavpils – the second largest city of Latvia, and one in Daugavpils district. The three schools provide full secondary education and offer a wide range of opportunities for interest education. The interviews were coded by employing NVivo 12 software. A thematic analysis of the interviews was undertaken using an iterative, inductive approach to the generation of codes and themes guided by the aims and objectives of the review.

The findings reflect the current developments of Latvia's education system. Latvia's national policies related to cultural education assign an important role to culture. In the latest policy documents, culture is considered a resource with an unlimited potential that can ensure successful development of the country by developing the population's creativity. The informants also acknowledged the important role culture plays in the development of the State of Latvia as a whole and in the personal growth of each individual.

The content and methods of education are the most important topical issues of today's Latvian education system, in which a large part of society is actively involved through



participation in the debate on the issues of education reform. Despite the fact that students do not know much about the education reform, during the interviews they expressed their views indirectly in its support. They stress the importance of acquiring certain life skills at school, thereby indirectly supporting the introduction of a competence approach (which is the most important innovation of the education reform). Teachers' opinions, on the contrary, is mostly conservative, suggesting that Latvia's teachers are not ready for the changes under the reform.

One of the most difficult issues discussed in the context of the study is young people's perceptions of belonging to a particular space and their identity formation. Young people are aware of the fact that the cultural identity building process is not easy. It does not depend solely on the ethnicity of the young people themselves or that of their parents, but develops individually. It is affected by external agents (the socio-cultural situation, a specific cultural environment, opportunities, etc.) and by an individual's personality traits, acumen, etc. An interplay between ethnic, regional, national and European identities often result in young people having a "hybrid identity."

Young people interviewed in Latvia acknowledge being part of the European culture based on the geographical aspect and taking into account the shared values of democracy, tolerance, appreciation of diversity, etc. However, their sense of belonging to their country, region, city or village clearly prevails over the sense of belonging to a European space. Young people's knowledge of European culture is relatively general and, often, quite abstract. Young people often lack a subjective and emotional sense of attachment to Europe. They see European culture as a mix of different national and ethnic cultures.

## 2. Introduction

The present report aims to analyse the data obtained through qualitative interviews with students and teachers in formal educational settings in Latvia to examine how the national guidance on cultural literacy is reflected in classroom practices, specifically, the teaching practice, pedagogical tools and learning experiences, and to understand how cultural literacy is acquired and enacted within formal educational settings.

The analysis focuses on the following main questions:

- How is cultural literacy reflected in the teaching practice and pedagogical tools?
- How do young people understand concepts like "culture", "cultural heritage", "European/national/ethnic/regional identity"?



- What cultural activities do young people participate in both inside and outside of school?

The central part of the present report is the Findings section, which analyses the key concepts and challenges identified by the informants. A great deal of attention is paid to assessments of school life and young people's views on the shortcomings and advantages of the Latvian education system. This raises questions about the possibilities and types of students' participation in cultural activities offered by formal educational settings and available to young people outside the school, taking into account their interests. The report focuses particularly on young people's understanding of the concepts "culture", "cultural heritage", "European/national/ethnic/regional identity" which are dealt with in detail in the chapters on Findings and Discussion. During the interviews, the above concepts proved to be the most difficult ones and therefore encouraged an in-depth analysis.

Before the presentation of the findings, the report provides an overview of the relevant context using the results of the studies carried out earlier in the framework of the CHIEF project and presented in the reports on policy documents and curricula priorities in the fields of culture and cultural literacy, as well as the results of qualitative studies carried out in heritage sites. The theoretical and methodological basis of the analysis is composed of post-colonial and semiotic approaches, as well as modern researchers' knowledge of the specific features shaping young people's perceptions of culture.

### 3. State of the Art

In the existing policy documents of Latvia, culture is considered an area comprising features that create the national originality and foster development of the nation. The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia 2030, which is considered the most important long-term policy document underlying the drawing up of other documents, defines the development of Latvian cultural space as one of the most important priorities, because "the identity of a strong and creative nation is rooted in our unique, inherited and newly created material and spiritual values. It unites and consolidates society for creating new economic, social and cultural values that are also valued and recognised in the world" (Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija, 2010). The officially highlighted significance of culture has been determined by various factors in Latvia: specificities of the country's cultural and historical development, the ethnic composition, economic potential, etc.

The ethnic composition of the population is an important feature of Latvia's society. This feature has emerged in the course of cultural and historical development of the country as a



result of various demographic processes (e.g. emigration of the Baltic Germans in 1914–1920, deportations, escape of Latvians from the country during the World War II, immigration of people of various ethnic backgrounds from the former Soviet republics after the break-up of the Soviet Union, massive emigration waves of Jewish people through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, etc.). Expectation that ethnic minority representatives have to be integrated into the Latvian society, which is based on the Latvian language and culture, is of particular importance in the Latvian cultural policy and ethnic minority studies (e.g. Rungule, 1992; Dribins & Šņitņikovs, 2006). Various measures aimed at enhancing the sense of belonging to the Latvian social and cultural space among representatives of ethnic minorities have been implemented, such as projects targeted at teaching the Latvian culture and language.<sup>52</sup> Studies suggest that the cultural policy implemented in Latvia with regard to the engagement of ethnic minorities in societal and political processes is relatively successful (Latvijas Universitātes Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts, 2017).

There is empirical evidence that, for the representatives of ethnic minorities, the sense of belonging to the State of Latvia is gradually increasing. Over two years, the share of ethnic minority representatives reporting feeling closely or very closely associated with Latvia has increased from 67% in 2015 to 84% in 2017. Representatives of older generations report a closer sense of belonging to Latvia, while only 53% of those between 18 and 24 years old feel close links with the State of Latvia (Kultūras ministrija, 2017). It should be noted though that in recent years the sense of belonging to Latvia among young people of ethnic minorities has also strengthened considerably (Latvijas Universitātes Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts, 2017).

At the same, there is also evidence that modern tendencies of globalization, the multinational composition of the State of Latvia, the inclusive cultural policy of the country, among other reasons, formed the basis for the creation of the so-called hybrid identity of people, especially the representatives of younger generations. The hybrid identity may consist of, but is not limited to: (1) a national identity, (2) an ethnic minority identity existing and developing alongside the national one, (3) European identity, and (4) global/globalized identity, the latter being often seen as an “identification with all of humanity” (McFarland, Webb & Brown, 2012). “Hybridity stands in opposition to the myth of purity and racial and cultural authenticity, of fixed and essentialist identity, embraces blending, combining, syncretism and encourages the composite, the impure, the heterogeneous and the eclectic” (Guignery,

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<sup>52</sup> These projects have been implemented, and partly funded, by the Society Integration Foundation (<http://www.sif.gov.lv/>) and the [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund](http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/starptautiskie_finansu_instrumenti/eiropas_savienibas_fondi/patveruma_fonds_2014_2020/) ([http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/starptautiskie\\_finansu\\_instrumenti/eiropas\\_savienibas\\_fondi/patveruma\\_fonds\\_2014\\_2020/](http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/starptautiskie_finansu_instrumenti/eiropas_savienibas_fondi/patveruma_fonds_2014_2020/)).



2011:p.3). Homi Bhabha has concluded that the hybrid identity is a completely new formation with independent features which is not just a mechanical combination of two or more identities. He uses the term “Third Space” to reflect this idea (Bhabha, 1994). “It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha, 1995:p.209).

Relationships between culture and the economic development of the country has also become an important factor in today’s political and scientific discourse in Latvia. The current economic situation in Latvia is fragile – some indicators are improving, but a series of other indicators show threats to the country’s well-being. Risks to long-term economic development include an aging population and increasing emigration. Since the beginning of 2010, the population has fallen by 186,000. Mortality rates have been exceeding birth rates since 1991. In 2017 alone, this led to a 7,900 decrease in the population (the population declined by a further 7,800 due to long-term emigration) (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde). In the next 20 years, Latvia’s population is projected to decrease by almost 1% per year on average (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde). “Latvia remains among the countries whose economy is catching up fastest with the EU average, but addressing population decline and ensuring that economic growth benefits all of society continue to be important challenges” (European Commission, 2019:p.3).

In times of economic instability, when many social groups feel threatened, culture is considered a resource with unlimited potential for successful development of the national economy (Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija, 2010). Long-term strategy documents in Latvia seek to base the country’s future development on a core of values that place less pressure on the utilisation of physical resources. This approach foregrounds the value (and potential) of human capital and emphasises creativity, openness to the new, tolerance and cooperation (that contributes to both cultural development and social cohesion) and participation (CHIEF project, 2018). The Latvian policy documents declare the transition to the creative economy, development of which largely depends on the population’s cultural potential, determined by its cultural literacy.

The creative economy is about non-standard decisions, original and non-traditional management approaches, both with regard to strategic growth objectives and crisis situations where it is necessary to seek and implement fundamentally new survival pathways, look for opportunities to move forward, for ways of gaining market competitiveness of organisations and supporting measures to win the competitiveness battle (Viržbickis, Semjonova and Plotka, 2017). An important point in the process of transition towards the creative economy is



development of the creative potential of individuals, and general education is particularly important in this process. One of the objectives of the Latvian education reform is the introduction of the competence-based approach, which also aims at developing the creative potential of students.

In modern-day Latvia, responsibility for youth creativity development is borne mainly by the so-called interest education and institutions providing it, e.g. music and art schools, youth centres where creative workshops and cultural activities are organised. According to the findings of the CHIEF project's WP6 (Qualitative research in heritage sites), museums are also relatively active in developing the creative potential of children and young people, offering them opportunities to participate in workshops, teaching them to understand art and encouraging them to be active in the arts. It is important that museums also organise training events (lectures, seminars, etc.) for teachers of general education schools and interest schools (CHIEF project, 2019b).

In the Latvian formal education system, the ongoing education reform is currently the most acute issue. The changes initiated by this reform are expected to affect society's level of cultural literacy. The reform concerns significant aspects of education:

- a gradual transition to Latvian as the language of instruction in ethnic minority schools during the period from 1 September 2019 through the school year 2021/2022;
- change of the curricula following the introduction of the competence approach;
- a consolidation of the school system by closing schools with a small number of students or by merging small schools;
- a transition to inclusive education by closing schools for children with special needs and offering these children opportunities to attend regular general education schools.

Both the transition to Latvian as the language of instruction in ethnic minority schools and the introduction of a competence approach have caused a lack of understanding and protests in Latvian society. The Ministry of Education and Science pointed out that the amendments to the General Education Law do not contain discriminatory clauses against any of the ethnic minorities, but, on the contrary, they ensure the acquisition of the Latvian language for all. Knowledge of the Latvian language will expand opportunities for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds in vocational and higher education, where teaching takes place in Latvian, and it will promote their competitiveness in the labour market (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, 2017).



## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Context

Three public schools were selected for fieldwork. The selected schools provide full secondary education and offer a wide range of opportunities for interest education. The choice of schools where the interviews were conducted was determined by the objectives and tasks of the project, and took into consideration several contrasting criteria:

Geographical location: one school is located in Riga, the capital of Latvia, the second one – in Daugavpils, which is the second largest city of Latvia, and the third one – in a rural settlement in Daugavpils district. These schools are referred to through the report, respectively, as urban, semi-urban and rural schools. It is important that the school of Daugavpils and that of Daugavpils district are located in Latgale region bordering Russia, Belarus and Lithuania. Approximate distances from the two schools to the borders of these countries are from 50 to 100 km.

The economic situation and infrastructure: Riga is a city with well-developed infrastructure and a major hub of air, sea and rail transport. The infrastructure of Daugavpils and Daugavpils district is less developed. It should be noted that the major economic indicators in Riga are in sharp contrast with those in the rest of the country, particularly in Latgale, which is the poorest region of Latvia. The average wage in Riga exceeds that of Latgale by 40%. The most pronounced differences can be observed in employment opportunities. The unemployment rate of the economically active population of Riga stood at 3.9% at the end of 2018 (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde). The unemployment rate in Daugavpils is 9.3% and in Daugavpils district – 10.4% (ibid). Since 2010, employment has increased by 12% in Riga and Pierīga,<sup>53</sup> while the rest of the country has witnessed a decrease in employment by 2% (ibid). These disparities have also affected emigration; the decline in population numbers in and around Riga has been considerably lower than elsewhere in the country (European Commission, 2019). As for the cultural infrastructure (opera, museums, big concert halls, etc.), it is well developed in Riga and Daugavpils, but it is less developed in the selected rural settlement.

Population and ethnic composition: the number of inhabitants in Riga is 637,000, in Daugavpils – 82,000 and in the selected rural settlement – 2000. In Riga, there are 47.0% Latvians, 36.8% Russians, 3.7% Belarusians, 3.4% Ukrainians, 1.8% Poles, 0.8% Lithuanians, 0.1% Roma and 6.4% other nationalities, including those who did not indicate

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<sup>53</sup> Pierīga is a territory of Latvia located in the immediate proximity of its capital city of Riga and is geographically and historically linked to it.



their nationality during the census. In Daugavpils, there are 49.0% Russians, 19.9% Latvians, 13.5% Poles, 7.6% Belarusians, 1.9% Ukrainians, 0.9% Lithuanians, 0.4% Roma and 6.8% other nationalities. In the Daugavpils district (excluding the city of Daugavpils), there are 42.1% Russians, 33.5% Latvians, 12.6% Poles, 6.5% Belarusians, 1.4% Ukrainians and 3.9% other nationalities (Centrālais Statistikas pārvalde).

Basic facts about the selected schools: the Riga and Daugavpils schools are state gymnasiums.<sup>54</sup> The rural school is a secondary school. The number of students in the grades 10, 11 and 12 (i.e. the students between the ages of 16 and 18 years old) exceeds 100 in the Riga and Daugavpils schools, but it is slightly smaller in the school of Daugavpils district. At secondary level, i.e. in the grades 10, 11 and 12, the Riga school offers a programme in the math and natural sciences, as well as the general programme with more profound studies in literature, history, French and English. The Daugavpils school offers only one programme in the math and natural sciences, and the Daugavpils district school – two programmes, the general one and the ethnic minorities programme. The language of instruction in the Riga school is Latvian. The Daugavpils school is a Polish ethnic minority school where entire studies at secondary education level take place in Latvian, though the school offers an opportunity to learn Polish language and culture. The school in Daugavpils district is a dual-stream school with Latvian and Russian ethnic minority pupils; here as well, entire studies at secondary education level take place in Latvian. In addition, the school offers an opportunity to learn Russian language and culture. More detailed descriptions of each school are provided in the **Appendix**, Tables A4, A5 and A6.

The most important events which might have affected the content and emotional response to the CHIEF interviews analysed in this report are related to culture, history, politics and education:

- The celebration of Latvia's centenary is unequivocally in the spotlight at the national level. It has been officially declared that the celebrations are to take place during a five-year period from 2017 to 2021. To demonstrate the importance of Latvia's cultural heritage, an extensive programme of events is being implemented in Latvia and abroad. Each year, crucial staging posts towards Latvia's statehood have been highlighted, starting with the First Latgale Congress in 1917, which marked Latgale's commitment to join Kurzeme and Vidzeme<sup>55</sup> to establish a unified state. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia was celebrated on 18 November 2018, and

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<sup>54</sup> The status of a state gymnasium is awarded by the founder of the educational institution, taking account of the number of students and learning outcomes and coordinating the respective decision with the Ministry of Education and Science.

<sup>55</sup> According to the Latvian Constitution Latgale, Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Zemgale are regions of Latvia.



homage to heroes of the Freedom Fights was paid in 2019. In 2021, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of international *de jure* and *de facto* recognition of Latvia will be celebrated. Such a wide-scale celebration of Latvia's centenary highlighted the importance of the values of the national culture. In the context of the celebration of Latvia's centenary, the programme "Latvian School Bag" was implemented at all schools across the country in 2018. The programme provides an opportunity for students to visit cultural events, local historical heritage sites and natural reserves, covering costs of admission tickets, participation fees and transportation. Costs of guest performances and professional creative projects, shows, workshops and other activities organised in educational institutions are also covered. The "Latvian School Bag" is designed as a complex and interdisciplinary programme with a total budget of 13 million euros for the period of 2017-2021, aiming to strengthen young people's national identity, sense of citizenship and belonging to the state, increase cultural awareness, and raise the quality of education, as well as reduce social inequalities (National initiative).

- As discussed above, the ongoing education reform is currently the most important issue in the Latvian education system. The school curricula have been revised in light of policy documents produced both domestically and at the EU level (e.g. the European Commission's reports "Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for Better Socio-Economic Outcomes" (European Commission, 2012) and "Developing Key Competences at School in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities for Policy" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012). Compared with the teachers, the interviewed students mentioned the reform much less, since the reform is being implemented gradually, and the innovations had not yet reached students at the time of the interviews, during the Winter and Spring of 2019.
- Elections of Latvia's 13<sup>th</sup> Saeima (Parliament) were held on 6 October 2018. Several parties with opposing views won the seats in the Parliament. This made the government formation process, which went on until the beginning of 2019, very difficult. The first major task of the new government was to adopt urgently the 2019 budget. There was a negative public response due to insufficient funding for healthcare and education. As a result, the skeptical attitude of Latvia's population towards the government and 13<sup>th</sup> Saeima strengthened. Other widely discussed political developments of this period include disagreement between the central government and Riga City Council, as well as the identification of infringements in the work of the Riga City Council's top management. As a result, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Regional Development announced in April 2019 the dismissal of the Chairman of Riga City Council.
- In the context of global events, the 2019 presidential elections in Ukraine should be named as one of the most important, given the geographical location of Latvia and the



specific nature of its political relations with the Russian Federation. In the eyes of the population of Latvia, the Ukrainian elections were a possible turning point for the stabilisation of relations between Ukraine and Russia. This could, in turn, have a positive impact on Latvia's political and economic stability and security. Among other international events, especially those affecting the global cultural heritage, the Notre-Dame de Paris fire in April 2019 was important and struck a chord with the young people. The fire provided food for thought as to the strengthening of people's responsibility in the field of preservation and protection of cultural heritage.

## 4.2 Fieldwork

The fieldwork at schools took place from 10 February 2019 to 30 May 2019. At the start of fieldwork, a contact was established with the school administration and teachers who informed students about the project, as well as the tasks and the process of fieldwork. A total of 60 students and 9 teachers in the selected three schools of Latvia were interviewed.<sup>56</sup> The data collected is not representative of the students and teachers in Latvia; however, the findings presented below provide an in-depth understanding of the cultural literacy practices in the selected schools. When selecting students, the “theoretical sampling” (Breuer et al., 2019) approach was employed and the following criteria were applied:

- Age balance: young people between 14 and 18 years old (grades 8-12) were interviewed, 4 young people from each age per school.
- Gender balance: 10 girls and 10 boys per school were interviewed.
- Ethnic balance: representatives of both ethnic majorities and ethnic minorities were interviewed in each school. (Detailed information about the interviewed students is presented in the **Appendix**, Table A1.)

The central factor in teacher selection was their specialisation: one foreign language teacher, one teacher of a subject related to cultural studies and one representative of school administration was interviewed in each school. (Detailed information about the interviewed teachers is presented in the **Appendix**, Table A2.)

Students and teachers had an opportunity to choose the most suitable time and place for interviews. At the beginning of an interview, an individual contact was established with the informant while discussing the project tasks, explaining the mode of using the data. The interviewer tried to create a relaxed atmosphere during interviews, which took place mainly in school premises. In some cases, students, particularly those of upper grades, opted for

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<sup>56</sup> All informants were citizens of the Republic of Latvia.



interviews in other places (e.g. at the interviewer's workplace, informal organisation premises visited by students, etc.) due to particularities of their timetables. Young people and teachers had an opportunity to choose the language of interview. All of them chose Latvian, but in some cases informants whose mother tongue is not Latvian, used Russian or Polish<sup>57</sup> inserts for more successful revelations.

Certain general questions of the Discussion guide (e.g. *"What is 'culture'?"*, *"How can you live your culture in school/outside school?"*) sometimes posed a challenge to students. However, following additional questions or explanations by the interviewer, these more difficult questions in most cases were also answered. It was only a few times that students refused to answer a question since for some reason they did not want to or could not answer it. Similar problems emerged when interviewing teachers, except those who were teaching subjects related to cultural fields. The other teachers openly acknowledged that they do not always think about culture in such general, conceptual dimensions.

### 4.3 Data Management and Analysis

Before the interview, each informant was asked to come up with a pseudonym for him/herself that was recorded in the Participant's note.<sup>58</sup> This helped to gain informants' trust. According to researchers, renaming has psychological meaning to both the participants and the content and process of the research (Allen and Wiles, 2016). The informants did not experience difficulties in choosing pseudonyms, and it was done relatively quickly – within a few minutes. Overall, it was interesting for the informants to invent pseudonyms for themselves. In some cases, however, when the names chosen could potentially lead to the identification of the informants, the respective pseudonyms were changed by the members of the research group.

The average duration of interviews with teachers was 51 minutes and those with students – 37 minutes. The interviews were transcribed by professional transcribers, following generally accepted transcription rules and marking particularly vivid emotions or longer pauses. The manual by T. Dresing and T. Pehl (2015) was employed when formulating the transcription

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<sup>57</sup> Since all interviewees had a very good knowledge of the Latvian language, they chose to speak Latvian, only occasionally saying a word or a phrase in Russian or Polish. All interviewers were fluent in Latvian and Russian. An interviewer who also knows Polish went to a Polish school where some of the informants are native speakers of Polish. Interview transcription and analysis was also conducted by a researcher who knows all three languages.

<sup>58</sup> The pseudonyms were not necessarily meaningful names, these could have been abbreviations, names of songs of places, etc. All the interviewees at one particular school took different pseudonyms.



rules to be followed. Language proficiency of transcribers was sufficient to transcribe also in the Russian and Polish languages when appropriate.

The interviews were coded by employing NVivo 12 software, in the Latvian language. A thematic analysis of interviews was undertaken using an iterative, inductive approach to the generation of codes and themes guided by the aims and objectives of the analysis. At the commencement of coding, case classification was established. This enabled systematic collection of the same basic descriptive data about informants, e.g. demographic information, religious and national origin issues, etc.

To create initial codes, two members of the research team independently coded three transcripts of the interviews. The codes were compared, discussed and combined into a preliminary coding tree with two-level nodes. Nine first-level nodes were created which remained unchanged through the entire duration of the analysis: School life profile, Cultural activities at school, Family cultural activities, Defining culture, Defining own culture, European identity, Latvian identity, Culture of friends, Latvian cultural issues. Following the creation of the original coding tree, one researcher continued coding the rest of the interviews. The second-level nodes of the coding tree were supplemented, when necessary, as new interviews were coded.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 School experiences

#### *5.1.1 General assessments of school experiences by the students*

Young people willingly speak about their school experiences at length, highlighting the priorities that stand out to them and assessing the features and activities of their school life. They emphasise that a school provides valuable experiences that will be useful later in life. An important factor mentioned by young people is the school atmosphere, which provides a favourable environment and motivates students to pursue their future development and acquire new knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, unpleasant incidents or formal restrictions create obstacles to successful learning and personal development. Such barriers include misunderstandings between students and teachers, as well as overly strict formal discipline that requires mandatory school attendance and hinders students' participation in activities of other organisations, e.g. in projects involving trips abroad.



Many interviewed young people from the selected urban and semi-urban schools have previously attended other schools, thus they could compare experiences in various schools and highlight the positive and negative features of the current school. They, and/or their parents, have chosen their current schools (where they were interviewed) due to their relatively high ratings or because the respective school was recommended as the one offering a friendly atmosphere and personal development opportunities. Overall, when assessing their schools, young people say they enjoy the privilege of attending the particular schools and belonging to them. Students mention the following positive features of schools: interesting activities, mutual respect among students, a possibility to find a quiet place for learning (e.g. a library or a room specially equipped for learning purposes), tasty food, an opportunity to choose a specific learning programme, a short distance from home, and high quality teaching in certain subjects.

Development of communication skills is considered by young people an extremely important experience of school life. It manifests itself in various forms, i.e. as informal communication with friends, an opportunity to contact the school's visitors, development of communication skills during lessons and extracurricular activities. Normally, when answering questions about their school experiences (e.g.: "*What do you like at school?*", "*What is of greatest importance in your school life?*", etc.), young people start their reflection by pointing out that the most important part of their school life is communication with classmates and friends at school. They emphasise that this aspect contributes significantly to their well-being at school. According to them, it is the communication skills that will serve them well in their future lives, while the specific knowledge in a certain subject may not be relevant at all. For example, the answer to the question on the most important thing at school provided by an 18-year-old young man, who is in his last year of secondary school, is as follows:

[The most important things at school are] ...*classmates, friends, conversations with them, some joint work, group work, because I believe that the knowledge acquired in secondary school is not particularly needed in life, but social knowledge is more important.* (Karls Markss, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)

Positive relationships with friends, classmates and teachers contributes not only to the development of social skills, but also to students' overall well-being at school, which also contributes to the success of the learning process, to the extent that young people are willing to attend school and are motivated to learn.



### ***5.1.2 Assessment of the education system and expectations about the future***

Learning and educational achievements are very important for young people, particularly at secondary school level (in grades 10–12, when pupils are 16–18 years old). This is not surprising as only the students who have a stronger motivation to learn and are willing to study in higher educational institutions continue their education at the secondary school (non-compulsory) level of general education. It is during this period that schools' ranking<sup>59</sup> becomes particularly important as schools with higher rankings provide better opportunities for the students to successfully pass the final exams, results of which are taken into account when enrolling at a university.

At the secondary school stage, students are mostly aware of the areas in which they would like to continue their studies; therefore they would prefer to focus on studying only specific subjects in a targeted manner. However, according to the curriculum requirements, students have to acquire comprehensive education which includes mandatory humanities and science subjects. Students' attitudes towards this requirement are often negative. The young people oriented towards the humanities are particularly critical of the large number of science subjects included in the curriculum. They point out that they will not need mathematics later in life at the level they are obliged to learn it in order to pass the final exam, which is mandatory for all 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Young people propose to give them more freedom in choosing the course of learning (the humanities, the sciences, commerce, etc.) and to create their individual curricula at secondary school level, depending on their future plans and interests.

In general, young people point out that they lack essential practical knowledge since education at school focuses on acquiring theoretical knowledge, and, according to them, this knowledge will be needed on a very limited basis. Many students point out that the only subjects they would like to study at secondary school level are the ones related to the particular future educational pathways chosen by them and the ones providing an opportunity to acquire general social skills that they believe are needed in their lives. Young people claim that the education content and teaching methods need to be seriously reviewed, they should be focused on learning the skills needed in life; new subjects should be introduced (the titles of which young people cannot clearly define), or the content of the existing ones should be changed.

One of the most frequently mentioned changes in the Latvian education system and teaching methodology is an increase in the use of computer technologies. Many informants consider

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<sup>59</sup> Schools in Latvia are rated every year by Atis Kronvalds' Foundation, an organisation established by the Ministry of Education and Science. When rating schools, excellence indicators, such as the results of the centralised exams, prizes won by students at subject competitions, etc. are taken into account.



increased use of computer technologies very positively and point out that after 10 years books and notebooks might be replaced by interactive boards, computers, tablets and other technologies. Many informants believe that these changes will have a positive impact on the learning process, e.g. instead of taking many books and notebooks to school students will need only a tablet; information exchange between a teacher and students will accelerate, and the unnecessary rewriting will disappear. However, there are also students who are against an increased use of computer technologies in the education system:

*I think we don't use technologies very often in our school, but I also don't see the need for a more frequent use, because it's fine as it is now. (Aspazija, female, student, urban school, Latvia)*

*I think technologies should not be used at all, because they, one might say, degrade our minds. (Besa, female, student, urban school, Latvia)*

At the same time, there are also pupils who claim to be fully satisfied with the current education system and do not see the need to change anything. In their opinion, the Latvian education system will change very marginally in the future. Only a few students express a pessimistic view that the number of schools will decrease significantly in Latvia in the future due to Latvia's shrinking population. This will make it difficult for some students to obtain secondary education due to financial and other practical reasons, since a decrease in the number of schools may lead to a situation requiring additional expenditure for ensuring transportation of children and young people to school and their stay in the respective place which could be located relatively far from their home.

When assessing textbooks, pupils express various critical considerations. Some note that they would like books to be improved, be more exiting, written in a simpler manner and with more pictures. For example, an 18-year-old girl, who is in her last year of secondary school, notes:

*I would like the people who write these books to be a bit closer to readers and write in a little bit more comprehensible manner [...]. So that someone who reads it and doesn't have knowledge of the topic could understand what it's about. (Jola, female, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

Students also make specific proposals for improving textbooks, e.g. [...] *in different foreign languages, books should contain words to be learned for the next lesson, this would also be very valuable* (Ēvalds, male, student, urban school, Latvia). Students are very critical of



errors in textbooks, pointing out that mathematics textbooks by different authors are riddled with errors that make it difficult for students to learn the subject and waste their time.

## 5.2 Concepts of culture and cultural heritage

### 5.2.1 Peculiarities of defining culture

Questions involving a request to define or describe their understanding of culture or cultural heritage made informants consider their answers for a longer time. These questions were often answered after a pause dedicated to reflection; sometimes informants (both students and teachers) confessed that the question is difficult. For example, a 15-year-old young man says,

*I don't know how to describe it, how I understand it, but I understand. It's hard to say.* (Krēsls, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)

Some young people refuse to answer such questions, making the excuse that they cannot define culture. Senior secondary school students (aged 17–18 years old) experience less difficulties when answering the questions about their understanding of culture or cultural heritage, possibly because at secondary school level the compulsory curriculum contains Culturology, a subject which, according to students, contributes very much to raising their awareness of culture, its development and current events.

A very common approach when trying to define the concept of culture is the listing of different types of culture, processes and phenomena. Each informant who opts for such a strategy names 3–5 types of culture or phenomena which in his/her opinion are part of culture, very often mentioning traditions. Other commonly mentioned phenomena, when describing the concept of culture, are language, national values, art, literature, cities, theatre, religion, cinema, museums, technologies, norms of behaviour, etc. It can therefore be concluded that a very wide range of processes and phenomena are considered culture. On the other hand, when defining cultural heritage, informants often highlight the historical dimension, indicating that objects and values preserved over the course of the centuries can be considered cultural heritage.

Many young people have a broad understanding of culture when they try to define it in a few sentences:

*Culture – it's everything that happens in a country, in a certain territory.*  
(Narcise, female, student, rural school, Latvia)



*Culture is a sphere of society where people and the nation in general express their identity and their own thoughts and beliefs. (Jola, female, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

Young people point out that culture is “everything around us”, they stress that culture is composed of all the peculiarities that manifest themselves in both behaviour of a particular person and in the surroundings.

An important nuance of understanding the concept of culture is the focus on a person and his/her activity. A 17-year-old girl says:

*Culture, in my opinion, might be everything people create in a spiritual and emotional way. (Aspazija, female, student, urban school, Latvia)*

However, when young people express their views on culture more precisely, they often interpret it in a relatively narrow way, taking it as recognised cultural values or phenomena of cultural heritage. It is sometimes evident that young people do not think about culture but use established clichés to describe their cultural awareness; for example, they claim that cultures are represented by folk dances, songs, music, painting etc. Everyday culture is very rarely interpreted as a cultural phenomenon.

The definition of culture and cultural heritage provided by teachers is often based on theoretical knowledge and linked to the specific subjects taught by them. Teachers of culturology provide detailed comments on various definitions of culture, choosing the ones they prefer most. However, all interviewed teachers share the views that: 1) culture is a result of human activity; 2) culture is constantly developing; and 3) it is essential to be informed about cultural heritage sites of various levels (local, regional, national, global).

### ***5.2.2 Main channels for obtaining information about culture***

#### **School**

Often, school has been named as the most important formal institution that provides the bulk of information on culture. Students emphasise that they learn a lot during lessons, especially those on culturology. Social sciences, geography, languages (the mother tongue and foreign languages), music, visual arts and history are also mentioned as important subjects contributing to cultural learning. In addition to lessons, young people and teachers mention trips as an important opportunity not only to acquire knowledge of culture but also to familiarise themselves with it and practise it in real life. An 18-year-old student points out that the best way to get to know culture is



*... only during trips, only through seeing with one's own eyes, hearing with one's own ears and understanding. (Yan, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

Teachers, particularly foreign language teachers, point out that they aim to involve students, as much as possible, in various projects which enable them to travel abroad, thereby helping students to obtain a better understanding of the specificities of other cultures, to value one's own culture more dearly, to learn languages and equip oneself with life skills. Young people point out that they always try to take the opportunity to travel abroad. This allows them to have fun, compare cultural specificities, learn something new and adopt best practices, although it is not always easy. When assessing trips around Latvia, young people point out that they are valuable. However, they do not always remember what they have discovered or learned and what particular place they have visited.

### Internet

Another important way for young people to acquire cultural knowledge is the internet. With only a few exceptions, young people point out that they do not find watching television or reading printed newspapers or newsmagazines meaningful, since all the necessary information can be found on the internet in a much faster and more concentrated way. At primary school, young people (grades 8-9) rarely use the internet for a targeted search of information if it is not linked to their school subjects. In their spare time, interviewed young people aged 14-18 use mostly social networks (Facebook, Instagram, VKontakte) and read the information that they see in their newsfeed – mainly about current events at different levels (global, national, regional).

Young people acknowledge that the internet plays a central role in their lives, but they have contradictory views on that. An 18-year-old girl explained it to the point:

*... I'd say that I'm really addicted to the internet, but the way I look at it is both positive and negative. It's bad in the sense that it takes my time, and I know a lot of things that would be more useful to me than spending time in front of a phone or computer screen, but I also look at it positively in the sense that I still get new information from it. (Kaspine, female, student, urban school, Latvia)*

Young people acknowledge that the main benefits provided by the internet are improvement of foreign languages skills, particularly English, and the development of intercultural communication skills, as well as the possibility of gaining new (virtual) friends abroad. These aspects raise the overall level of cultural literacy.



Only a few young people, mostly those interviewed in the rural school, respond that they watch television and are able to name specific shows or movies they watch. They also emphasise that they want to watch Latvian television, but in families, especially where the main language spoken is not Latvian, Russian television channels are often the first choice. On Latvian TV channels, young people mostly watch the news over entertainment programmes, shows or films. Students rarely make targeted choices of programmes; normally, they do not consult TV guides and turn on the TV when they are bored and watch what is being offered at that point in time.

Only a few young people note that they are happy to read newspapers, magazines and books of their choice on a regular basis.

### Family and friends

Family and friends are relatively infrequently mentioned as sources of information about culture. It is more common for young people to get involved in cultural activities by being members of certain interest groups. However, many students mention that family culture is important to them, it is passed from generation to generation. First knowledge of culture is acquired in the family, but later young people estrange from it. (See the following section for more details on young people's relationship with family and friends).

## **5.3 Young people and diversity**

Cultural interests of young people vary greatly. They depend on both the characteristics of young people's personalities (temperament, nature, specific psychological situation) and external factors (school, family, friends, place of residence, mass media, etc.). When describing differences between their own cultural priorities and those of their friends', none of the informants indicate that they might find expressions of other cultures or different life priorities unacceptable, but they are able to indicate unacceptable behaviours or character traits. Young people emphasise that it is the differences that shape a human personality, and the diversity of personalities makes life more vivid and interesting; contacts with different people provide an opportunity to enrich one another. An important priority, which defines a person's happiness, is the ability to feel united with others while maintaining his/her own personality, to be tolerant to the "otherness:"

*People can find something in common and they don't have to be divided into friends and strangers, and so on. It helps to be united. (Yan, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*



However, young people sometimes perceive some of their traits that make them different from the others as burdensome, as a potential cause of estrangement from their peers:

*I smile all the time. “What – are you American? Why are you smiling?” And I realised that yes, I’m different. (Yan, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

In describing their friends and classmates, young people express seemingly opposite views, namely that they are both very different and very much alike. Many informants point out that all young people are different from each other in terms of their dressing style, interests, personality traits, etc. However, there are also students who point out that all young people have similar beliefs, priorities, and interests:

*We’re young people, some are more active than others, some like languages, others prefer technologies, but we all want to do something, we’re young and beautiful, we want to do something and we do it. This is the most important thing, and this makes us alike. Everything else is just minor differences. (Karls Markss, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

At the same time, they perceive there are major differences between young people and older people, as well as between young people of different ages, e.g. the 18-year-olds and the 14-year-olds. For example, differences between young people and their parents are manifested by their different interests:

*Very little of my culture is related to the culture of my parents. (Karls Markss, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

Young people claim to have stronger bonds and more in common with their friends than with their parents. They point out that they rarely talk to parents, especially about cultural developments.

## **5.4 National and European identities**

### **5.4.1 National identity**

Information about young people’s understanding of the cultural particularities of Latvia in the past and present provides some insights about their national identity. Many informants acknowledge that they belong to the Latvian nation regardless of their ethnicity (some informants were ethnic Russians, Polish, Belarusians, Lithuanians), and their mother tongue.



All informants speak good Latvian regardless of their ethnicity. It should be noted that being Latvian for these young informants is associated with nationality rather than with ethnicity. The question about what it means to be Latvian has been answered by all informants, each of whom highlights the most significant aspects for themselves. Answering this question, young people emphasise the importance of self-awareness:

*A Latvian is aware that he/she is Latvian.* (Anna, female, student, urban school, Latvia)

Such awareness presupposes pride in one's country and its culture, which is not only passive, as part of human consciousness, but is also expressed in behaviour:

*It means to be proud of those people who have improved Latvia and made it more well-known elsewhere in the world.* (Bauders, female, student, urban school, Latvia)

A Latvian is not ashamed to name his/her nationality regardless of the political trends prevailing in the country in a certain period, or irrespective of its economic situation. A Latvian perceives Latvia as his/her home where s/he can always feel good psychologically. A Latvian is a patriot of his/her country, s/he actively contributes to making Latvia a better country, participates in cultural events, knows the local culture, carries on cultural traditions of his/her family. A Latvian must also know the history of the development of his/her country and know when and how the Latvian nation emerged.

One of the most important conditions of national identity is the ability to speak Latvian. Some young people even point out that it is important not only to speak Latvian, but also to keep the language pure and not "contaminate" it with foreign words.

#### **5.4.2 European identity**

Questions about belonging to the European cultural environment, and about what it means to be European, have been answered in a contradictory way. The question "*Do you feel European?*" often causes surprise and reflection, since, as the informants noted, they have never been asked questions like this before. Overall, they acknowledge that they belong to Europe. It is relatively difficult for them to define the European identity and a set of common characteristics for all European citizens; often the first thing that comes to mind is the geographical aspect:



*First of all, I live in Europe, so I regard myself as a European. (Fritz, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

The geography is not always crucial to identity-building, often there are more important arguments. Young people respond positively to belonging to the European cultural space based on shared mentality with other Europeans. To continue quoting Fritz:

*Secondly, perhaps, my values are common to those of all Europeans. (...) Germans have a good saying: “live to work”, so I believe I have similar values with them and in general, I think, all European citizens have a similar culture, rather similar values. This links us all. (Fritz, male, student, semi-urban school, Latvia)*

Young people believe that diversity, tolerance, democracy and freedom are the most important European cultural values that unite the people of Europe. Diversity and tolerance take the form of mutually tolerant relationships between various groups of the population in a multinational Europe and a positive attitude towards other cultures of the world. Democracy and freedom, on the other hand, are the main values of the official policies of the European countries and the EU, which allows Europeans to express their thoughts freely and to defend their rights. Young people also see an important historical dimension to these values, giving examples of how European democracy, equality and other key values have emerged. Knowledge of the process of development of these values over the course of history also constitutes “Europeanism” and the European identity of the individual. Young people point out that a European is also a nationalist in the positive sense of the word, knowing and appreciating the culture of his/her country and caring for the preservation of the cultural values of his/her nation. According to them, national identity is not an opposite of European identity, but an integral part of it.

It is also important for the informants that Latvia is part of the European Union (EU). In general, Europe is very often associated with the EU and its benefits, such as open borders, development opportunities offered by European projects, the single currency, etc. Often, when asked questions about Europe, young people provided answers about the EU.

Different levels of knowledge about the EU was demonstrated in the schools where our interviews were conducted. In the semi-urban school, there is a EuroClub whose members are students. They organise various awareness-raising events and quizzes at school. Consequently, students of this school were much better informed about Europe, compared to the students of the other two schools. Otherwise, the interviewed young people acknowledge



that they acquire a relatively small degree of knowledge about Europe during lessons. European particularities are addressed in subjects such as geography, history, culturology.

## **5.5 Cultural participation**

### ***5.5.1 Participation in extracurricular cultural activities***

Many interviewed young people are very active and enjoy participating in various activities both in and outside school. Sometimes young people admit they do not have enough time for everything they would like to do. Particularly secondary school students (aged 16–18) stress that they cannot afford to participate in some activities because school takes a lot of time – the classes usually finish at 4pm. It is difficult for the young people to explain their motivation to take an active part in extracurricular cultural activities as, according to them, it has been an integral part of their lives since early childhood. Their initial motivation to participate in such activities was developed by their family.

Participation of young people in extracurricular cultural events takes place in a targeted manner over several years (e.g., attendance of music, arts or sports schools, pursuing their other hobbies, or being part of choirs, dance groups, sports clubs, interest clubs, etc.) or is guided by spontaneous interest, either at the recommendation of friends or family members or together with them. Informants believe, these extracurricular cultural activities are likely to be useful in the future, as participation in different activity groups and hobby schools helps develop a variety of skills and abilities that are useful for life, so called “soft skills” such as the ability to organise and self-organise, to focus, the ability to act in stressful situations, etc.

Many young people have volunteering experience. Such an experience often starts through voluntary assistance to interest groups that they know of, by organising stage performances, settling travel matters, doing advertising activities, etc. Young people admit that they enjoy helping well-known people (culture professionals, sportspersons, etc.) whose tasks and objectives are well understood by them and close to their heart. In Latvia, voluntary work is supported by organisations where students can volunteer, and they give small but practical and symbolic gifts to the volunteers. Municipal youth departments also promote volunteering, organise festive events at the end of the year and reward the most active volunteers. There is also a website dedicated to volunteering, [www.brivpratigie.lv](http://www.brivpratigie.lv), where young people’s voluntary activities are registered. The informants were rather familiar with these resources. For some of them, this support system is important, and they keep track of the points they have collected, while others believe that the most important thing is the work they do and which gives them satisfaction. Young people are happy to have the opportunity to help someone and feel an internal need to do it:



*I believe that if I have time, if I have a possibility, then why not do something good for someone else? (YYY, male, student, rural school, Latvia)*

Sometimes volunteering also provides a psychological shelter and a possibility for self-expression that is otherwise impossible. In general, volunteering is viewed very positively, and young people who have not yet volunteered, consider becoming volunteers.

### **5.5.2 Participation in school activities**

Young people are generally happy to participate in events organised at school. Many of the students interviewed are actively involved in organising and moderating school events. These events are regarded as an integral part of school life, but they are rarely associated with the concept of “culture” by the informants. When asked, what cultural events are going on at school, they often respond that there were very few or no such events, e.g. a 15-year-old student said:

*... there have been some events where there was nothing about culture. There were folk songs, folk dances, but there was nothing more. (Imants, male, student, semi-urban, Latvia)*

In the course of this conversation, it turned out that many extracurricular events take place at his school, and that students more or less actively participate in them. This situation highlights the specific understanding of the concept “culture” discussed above in the section *Concept of culture and cultural heritage*.

When assessing the various activities at school, young people stress that they are very fond of non-traditional activities which bring students together and provide a special, cosy atmosphere at school, and during which everyone can feel particularly important and appreciated. For example, so called coloured days, which were organised in two schools (the rural and semi-urban ones), when, in honour of a historical or cultural event, or without any particular reason, students and teachers must be dressed in a certain colour; or the day of slippers when students arrive at school wearing slippers and pyjamas. Such events make the school environment cosier and enhance communication.

All three schools in which interviews took place offer extensive opportunities to participate in different cultural activities. Schools have choirs, students’ parliament (a school self-government body), dance groups, theatres and sports groups; various optional lessons are also offered. Teachers actively invite students to participate in different contests organised



between schools. Active students often participate in several activities both within and outside of school. Activities related to folk culture, both Latvian and that of other nations, are very popular in all three schools where the interviews were conducted – students love to dance folk dances, play traditional musical instruments and sing folk songs of different nations. Students are especially proud when they have an opportunity to represent their school in larger scale cultural events. They point out that participation in cultural activities at school enables them to develop not only their skills in a specific field, but also other skills that are useful in life, e.g. the ability to organise their peers and themselves, the ability to speak in public without being scared, the ability to plan their time, etc.

The interviewed teachers point out that they tend to offer students as many opportunities as possible to ensure their active participation in cultural life both in school premises and outside school. Class and school-level events are organised in school premises. Students of each class jointly attend cultural events outside school and visit cultural sites at least twice a year. The programme “Latvian School Bag” has significantly enriched students’ cultural life, providing an opportunity to visit various Latvian cultural sites and attend events (museums, theatres, natural sites, concerts, sports games, etc.) once or twice during the school year free of charge. Teachers indicate that outside-of-school events and visits have a positive impact on students’ motivation to learn, they improve students’ cultural literacy and develop so called soft skills.

## 6. Discussion

The analysis of the interviews conducted with teachers and students in three Latvian schools not only provides knowledge about cultural literacy practices at the schools and students’ awareness of the issues related to culture, but also reveals a number of issues, directly or indirectly highlighted during the interviews, as well as inconsistencies of the aims of policy documents and education standards, on the one hand, and teachers’ and students’ viewpoints, on the other hand. The issues revealed during the interviews include: education content and methods, different understandings of culture and cultural heritage at various levels (by students, by teachers, in the curricula and in the policy documents), peculiarities of the formation of European/national/regional/ethnic identity, etc. Let us discuss the most pressing issues in more detail.

The content and methods of education are the most topical issues of today’s Latvian education system, in which a large part of society is actively involved through participation in the debate about the ongoing education reform. Despite the fact that students do not know



much about the education reform, during the interviews they often indirectly expressed their views in its support. Teachers' opinion, on the contrary, is often conservative. As for the content of the subjects they learn, students raise the issue of the importance of acquiring certain life skills at school and offer to introduce new subjects, although usually they are not able to name the new subject that they would like. However, it should be noted that there are currently no data with regard to whether students' opinion on education quality and choice of subjects is analysed or taken into account in some way.

Speaking specifically of cultural literacy, teachers point out that a great deal of attention is paid to exploring cultural heritage at schools, in fact, all subjects of the humanities block highlight some aspects of cultural heritage. Students are taught, directly and indirectly, that cultural heritage is a value to be preserved. Students' relatively thorough knowledge of different aspects of cultural heritage serves as a proof to support what teachers have said. Learning to appreciate the cultural heritage (especially so, the national cultural heritage) is also prioritised in policy documents and educational standards (CHIEF project, 2019a).

There are significant differences in cultural narrative among students from the school in Riga and the two regional schools where the interviews were conducted, highlighting the opposition of *centre – periphery*. Students in Riga find themselves in the most active place of cultural life in Latvia, and they have opportunities to use the rich cultural infrastructure of Riga on a daily basis. Knowledge of the young people in Riga is mostly related to the manifestations of the culture at the national level, while the cultural knowledge and activities of young people in the city and district of Daugavpils are related to a greater extent to the manifestations of the regional culture.

One of the most difficult issues in the context of the study, is understanding young people's sense of belonging to a particular space and their identity development. The interest is high towards the issues of development of global, national, and/or regional identities and the sense of belonging, and there have been a number of studies carried out in Latvia and worldwide (Said 1985; 1993; Paasi 2003; Huggan and Tiffin 2015; Young 1995; Steger 2014; Szeman 2013; Runce 2013; Jones 2000; Keating 1997; Khnodker 2005; Kursīte 2005). These studies are often associated with the analysis of the post-colonial situation. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin assert that the special post-colonial crisis of identity is related to the problematic relationship between self and place (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989). Open information space, wide opportunities for mobility and development of the internet have changed people's views on themselves and their place in the world. Since the connection between a person and place of their residence, or provenance, in the consciousness is very strong, the processes of globalisation have caused a crisis of identification, resulting in the



emergence of the so-called hybrid and unidentified identities (Romanovska, 2019). Overcoming the crisis of identification is ongoing, including an attempt to find one's place in a spatial unit, i.e. a country, region, city, village, etc.

The analysis of the results of studies carried out within the framework of the CHIEF project allows comparisons between the priorities referred to in policy documents and educational standards and young people's opinion on their cultural awareness and cultural identity, complemented with the analysis of teachers' viewpoints. The results of the analysis show the peculiarities of the formation of the place identity, i.e. the perception of the self as European, national, ethnic, regional and local, and the interaction between these different levels of belonging in personal awareness. Let us have a closer look at the key aspects of the formation of the place identity by juxtaposing the priorities set in policy documents and educational standards with research data.

Currently, the issues related to national identity are widely discussed in Latvia, and the sense of belonging to Latvia is strongly supported by the Latvian government as it is seen as a consolidating factor under the current circumstances of globalisation. The Latvian cultural canon, a website offering "a collection of the most outstanding and significant works of art and cultural heritage" of the country has been launched ([www.kulturaskanons.lv/en](http://www.kulturaskanons.lv/en)). National research programme "National Identity – Language, Latvian History, Culture and Human Security" and Latvian Studies, as well as the pilot programme "Promotion of National Identity" are being implemented. Latvian policy documents emphasise the importance of people in Latvia retaining and developing their Latvian identity, language, national cultural values and lifestyle as a part of a broader aspiration of preserving cultural diversity in Europe. To this end, Latvian culture is viewed as an integral element of the diverse European identity (Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija 2010).

The analysis of policy documents shows that, according to them, belonging to Latvia and having a Latvian identity also means belonging to Europe. However, the answers provided by young people to the questions about their perceptions of belonging to Europe and Latvia show that many of them have the sense of belonging to Latvia, yet do not feel they belong to Europe or any other larger (global) spatial unit.

Teachers acknowledge that students' European identity is weak. A possible reason for this is the focus on the learning of specific topics with the emphasis on knowledge rather than on competence development. When implementing such an approach, the shaping of an overall picture of culture and development of cultural competences "disappear completely behind other objectives" (Ārija, female, teacher, urban school, Latvia). Students also acknowledge that the curriculum focuses primarily on providing specific knowledge rather than on creating



awareness. It is understanding of cultural processes that could strengthen young people's sense of belonging to a certain global (e.g. European) cultural space.

When speaking about the formation of the European identity, two levels of awareness of belonging to Europe can be distinguished. The first one is the awareness of formal geographical belonging, and many of the informants report having this awareness. The second, deeper level is formed in the sphere of feelings and emotions; and in this case, the sense of belonging to a smaller space clearly prevails for our informants over the sense of belonging to the European space. By naming the aspects that are the most important for them, young people undoubtedly see themselves in terms of the national, ethnic, regional or local identity, while the European identity remains marginal. The results of the study presented in this report confirm in this respect the findings of identity researchers, according to which people both in Latvia, as well as in other countries of Europe, tend to bring local and regional identity to the forefront, reducing the importance of global identity (Paasi, 2003; Runce, 2013; Kursīte, 2005). Regional and local identities may provide a sense of stability and, in some cases, an often unconscious protest against the trends of globalisation and unification (Paasi, 2003; 2013).

Importantly, the informants acknowledge that they have little knowledge of Europe and that there are no school subjects focusing on European culture and European identity. Young people see European culture as a combination of different national and ethnic cultures, and they don't have individual subjective and emotional European narratives.

The interviewed young people feel the impact of different cultures, mainly by watching and analysing the cultural traditions of different nations and the active use of different languages on a daily basis. Some of them acknowledge that they feel simultaneous coexistence of several ethnic, national and regional identities in their consciousness, which brings to the forefront the issue of "hybrid identity." Awareness of their ethnic roots is important even if it is based solely on general knowledge and does not translate into specific cultural activities, as it contributes to the formation of their hybrid identity.

## 7. Conclusion

Young people and teachers demonstrated a relatively common understanding of the concepts "culture", "European/national/regional cultural heritage" and "cultural diversity." This complies with an understanding of the above concepts in Latvian policy documents and educational standards. Latvia's policy documents assign an important role to culture, both global and national; following the restoration of the State of Latvia, culture became a



cornerstone of the Latvian nation, uniting all ethnic groups living in Latvia. In accordance with policy document aims, the informants also acknowledged the important role culture plays in the development of the State of Latvia as a whole and in personal growth of each individual.

The informants unanimously acknowledged that the concept “culture” is difficult to define. The exception in this regard was teachers of culturology, a specific subject focusing on theoretical understanding of culture. When defining culture, the rest of the informants mostly used a method of enumerating phenomena and processes, e.g. culture is architecture, art, dances, festivals, etc. Definition of culture as a result of human activity was also common both among teachers and students.

While learning about culture, many of the interviewed teachers and students consider the methods of “learning by doing”, i.e. offering students to engage in relevant activities instead of just passively acquiring education, to be more successful. In this respect, students are very positive about opportunities to participate in different trips across Latvia and abroad. Meanwhile, teachers stress that they aim to teach culture (including differences between national and ethnic minority cultures) imperceptibly by making cultural behaviour, traditions etc. of a certain culture part of the learning process, so that students, along with knowledge of the topic, could also acquire cultural skills.

The assessments by the informants of the content and methodology of acquiring cultural literacy, as well as the opportunities offered by the school to increase it, have to be assessed in the context of the ongoing education reform. For teachers, the education reform is the most important current event, which makes them revise both learning material and teaching methodologies. The changes initiated by the reform have created confusion among both teachers and the general public. The issues debated most intensely include those directly affecting cultural literacy, e.g. a complete transition to Latvian as the sole language of instruction in ethnic minority schools, leaving the possibility of learning the relevant minority language and culture within the framework of the humanities subjects, as well as a gradual introduction of the competence approach. It is notable that the education reform is viewed mostly very critically by teachers who indicate that they do not understand the goals of the reform and have not been adequately prepared for it methodologically. The students, on the other hand, are not sufficiently informed about the reform. It is important, however, that when assessing Latvia’s education system as a whole, students almost unanimously pointed to the necessary changes. Moreover, the changes proposed by students largely coincide with the aims of the education reform. In particular, students point out that it is necessary to review the content and methods of education, with an emphasis not on theoretical knowledge



but on social skills, and diversifying learning methods in order to make students work more independently. Teachers, who work with students on a daily basis, have learned to understand their needs and tend to prepare for lessons in such a way that the subjects taught by them are of interest to students. Pursuing this goal to facilitate the achievement of high learning outcomes, teachers diversify learning methods, using the best material from different textbooks and other sources and developing learning materials on their own.

When assessing various channels of obtaining cultural information, young people unanimously acknowledge that they have acquired most of their knowledge and skills at school through the formal curriculum and participation in various activities. Among other sources, the internet plays the dominant role; television and press are very rarely named. Young people are aware that the internet is an integral part of their lives. Their views regarding a frequent use of the internet are contradictory: on the one hand, it is addictive and takes time; on the other hand, it offers extensive opportunities for gathering information and making new friends. Communication with friends is also perceived by young people as an important way of acquiring cultural literacy. Very rarely, the bearer of cultural literacy is perceived to be family.

Young people's cultural interests vary greatly. According to teachers and young people themselves, cultural interests and participation in certain cultural events are important factors determining young people's cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is perceived as an interesting and positive feature of society. Young people emphasise that they see both diversity and similarity in the people they have around. This can be explained, on the one hand, by similarity of their lifestyles and, on the other hand, by diversity of their subjective interests.

One of the most difficult issues discussed in the context of the study is the sense of young people's belonging to a particular space, and development of their identities. Young people are aware that the formation of a national identity is a complex process. It does not fully depend on the ethnicity of the young people themselves or that of their parents, but develops as an individual construction. Young people acknowledge that being a Latvian does not mean to be formally included in the nation (i.e. being a citizen of Latvia), but it means to be aware of one's belonging to the State of Latvia, namely, to be proud of the cultural values and natural assets of Latvia and to be a patriot of the country. One of the most important conditions for being considered Latvian is the ability to speak Latvian and the awareness that this language needs to be nurtured. Many of the interviewed students in the schools of multinational Daugavpils and Daugavpils district considered their identity as complex and expressed satisfaction that they belong to several cultures, perceiving it as an asset.



Young people acknowledged unequivocally their belonging to the European cultural space, taking into account the geographical aspect. The sense of belonging was also strengthened by a number of shared European values, which are also important in Latvia: democracy, tolerance and cultural diversity. However, young people are much more loyal to Latvian culture and/or to a particular regional culture than to European culture. Only by acknowledging Latvia's affiliation to the European cultural environment, young people recognise their own, being residents of Latvia, belonging to the European cultural environment.



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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious /spiritual affiliation
1.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Rolands_ R	03.03.2019	Latvian	M	14	Latvian, Russian, English,	Old believer <sup>60</sup>
2.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Kika_R	04.05.2019	Latvian	F	14	Latvian, Russian, English, Ukrainian Latgalian	Catholic
3.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Pelnruškī te_R	10.05.2019	Latvian	F	14	Latvian, Russian, English, Latgalian	Catholic
4.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Harlems_ R	10.05.2019	Latvian	M	14	Latvian, Russian	Old believer
5.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Džentlme nis_R	13.05.2019	Latvian	M	15	Latvian, Russian, English, Latgalian	Catholic
6.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Varavīks ne_R	12.04.2019	Latvian	F	15	Latvian, Russian, English, German, Latgalian	Didn't specify
7.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Klark_R	18.04.2019	Latvian	M	15	Latvian, Russian, English, German	Didn't specify
8.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Anna_R	06.05.2019	Latvian	F	15	Latvian, Russian, English, German, Latgalian	Catholic
9.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_K2_R	06.05.2019	Latvian	M	16	Latvian, Russian, English, German, Latgalian	Catholic
10.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_YYY_R	09.05.2019	Latvian	M	16	Latvian, Russian, English, Latgalian	Didn't specify

<sup>60</sup> Old Believers, or Russian *Starovers*, are members of a group of Russian religious dissenters who refused to accept the liturgical reforms imposed upon the [Russian Orthodox Church](#) by the patriarch of [Moscow Nikon](#) (1652–58).



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious /spiritual affiliation
11.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Nikija_R	09.05.2019	Latvian	F	16	Latvian, Russian, English, Latgalian	Catholic
12.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Tessa_R	28.03.2019	Latvian	F	16	Latvian, Russian	Catholic
13.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Džins_R	27.03.2019	Latvian	M	17	Latvian, Russian, English	Didn't specify
14.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Varūna_R	27.03.2019	Latvian	F	17	Latvian, Russian, English, Ukrainian	Didn't specify
15.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Sergejs_R	29.05.2019	Latvian	M	17	Latvian, Russian, English, German, Ukrainian	Didn't specify
16.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Narcise_R	29.05.2019	Latvian	F	17	Latvian, Russian, English	Catholic
17.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Viktorija_R	24.05.2019	Latvian	F	18	Latvian, Russian, English, Latgalian	Catholic
18.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Anna_R	24.05.2019	Latvian	F	18	Latvian, Russian, English, German	Catholic
19.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Klei_R	20.03.2019	Latvian	M	18	Latvian, Russian, English, Latgalian	Didn't specify
20.	WP2_LV_YP _IK_Tofiks_R	29.03.2019	Latvian	M	18	Latvian, Russian, English, German	Catholic
21.	WP2_LV_YP _IR_ValdisK_U	09.04.2019	Latvian	M	14	Latvian, Russian English	Didn't specify
22.	WP2_LV_YP _IR_Peldētājs_U	08.04.2019	Latvian	M	14	Latvian, Russian, English	Baptist
23.	WP2_LV_YP _IR_Kaspine_U	16.04.2019	Latvian	F	14	Latvian, English, German	Didn't specify
24.	WP2_LV_YP _IR_Luce_U	17.04.2019	Latvian	F	14	Latvian, Russian, English	Didn't specify
25.	WP2_LV_YP _IR_Grāmata_U	06.05.2019	Latvian	M	15	Latvian, English	Catholic



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious /spiritual affiliation
26.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Pingvins_U	06.05.2019	Latvian	M	15	Latvian, English, Russian	Catholic
27.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Besa_U	22.03.2019	Latvian	F	15	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
28.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_KMP_U	9.05.2019	Latvian	F	15	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
29.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Ēvalds_U	10.05.2019	Latvian	M	16	Latvian, English, Russian	Lutheran
30.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Aspazija_U	9.05.2019	Latvian	F	16	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
31.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Klavieres_U	04.05.2019	Latvian	M	16	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
32.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Čība_U	23.05.2019	Latvian	F	16	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
33.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Gregors_U	23.05.2019	Latvian	M	17	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
34.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Volejbolists_U	16.05.2019	Latvian	M	17	Latvian, English, Russian	Didn't specify
35.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Gaismassariņš_U	08.05.2019	Latvian	F	17	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
36.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_ĒL_Ū	06.05.2019	Latvian	F	17	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
37.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Kurts_U	18.03.2019	Latvian	M	18	Latvian, English, German	Didn't specify
38.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Gabis_U	18.03.2019	Latvian	F	18	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
39.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Jefiņš_U	17.04.2019	Latvian	M	18	Latvian, English	Didn't specify
40.	WP2_LV_YP_IR_Astroīde_U	17.04.2019	Latvian	F	18	Latvian, English, German, Russian	Catholic
41.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Sportists_S	06.05.2019	Latvian	M	14	Latvian, English, Russian, Polish	Catholic
42.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Muzike_S	07.05.2019	Latvian	F	14	Latvian, English, Russian, Polish	Catholic
43.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_LauruLapa_S	07.03.2019	Latvian	F	14	Latvian, Russian, Polish	Didn't specify



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious /spiritual affiliation
44.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Skolēns_S	21.03.2019	Latvian	F	14	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
45.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Krēsls_S	21.03.2019	Latvian	M	15	Latvian, English, Russian, Polish	Didn't specify
46.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_ZefīrA_S	04.04.2019	Latvian	M	15	Latvian, English, Polish	Christianity
47.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Veronika_S	04.04.2019	Latvian	F	15	Latvian, English, Polish	Catholic
48.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Mūziķe_S	09.04.2019	Latvian	F	15	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
49.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Jānis_S	30.04.2019	Latvian	M	16	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
50.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Šamans_S	29.04.2019	Latvian	M	16	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian	Catholic
51.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Lilija_S	06.05.2019	Latvian	F	16	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
52.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Aga_S	08.05.2019	Latvian	F	16	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
53.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Mine_S	08.05.2019	Latvian	F	17	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Agnostic
54.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Mūziķis_S	23.05.2019	Latvian	M	17	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
55.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Fritz_S	24.05.2019	Latvian	M	17	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Didn't specify
56.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Basne_S	16.05.2019	Latvian	F	17	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious /spiritual affiliation
57.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Jan_S	14.05.2019	Latvian	M	18	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian, Hebrew, Ukrainian	Catholic
58.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_KarlsMarka_S	14.05.2019	Latvian	M	18	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
59.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Jola_S	17.05.2019	Latvian	F	18	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Catholic
60.	WP2_LV_YP_AR_Marija_S	1.03.2019	Latvian	F	18	Latvian, English, Polish, Russian	Didn't specify

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in	Religious / spiritual affiliation
1.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Marija_U	07.05.2019	Latvian	F	62	Latvian, Russian, German	Didn't specify
2.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Ināra_U	07.05.2019	Latvian	F	34	Latvian, Russian, English	Didn't specify
3.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Ārija_U	11.05.2019	Latvian	F	42	Latvian, Russian, English	Catholic
4.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Ausma_R	25.04.2019	Latvian	F	52	Latvian, Russian	Catholic
5.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Evalīna_R	25.04.2019	Latvian	F	38	Latvian, Russian, English	Didn't specify
6.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Pēteris_R	03.05.2019	Latvian	M	31	Latvian, Russian, English	Didn't specify
7.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Inta_S	03.05.2019	Latvian	F	38	Latvian, Russian	Catholic
8.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Anna_S	31.05.2019	Latvian	F	43	Latvian, Russian, English	Catholic
9.	WP2_LV_T_AR_Andris_S	30.05.2019	Latvian	M	33	Latvian, Russian, English	Catholic



**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located \***

	<b>Ethnic diversity</b>	<b>Income diversity</b>	<b>Median income</b>	<b>Deprivation (unemployment)</b>	<b>Cultural infrastructure</b>
Urban	High	High	High	Low	Well developed
Semi-urban	Low	Low	Low	High	Well developed
Rural	Low	Low	Low	High	Less developed

\* Estimated assessments by the author.

**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school)**

School type	State gymnasium/public school	
School size	# students	799
	# teachers	73
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:	<p>The school implements a general secondary education programme, and is accessible to children with special needs. The majority of students are Latvian, but the school is attended also by minority (mainly, Russian) children and foreign exchange students (mainly from Germany) who regularly study at the school for some period of time (from one week to one year). The school employs a speech therapist, psychologist and social educator to provide special types of support to the students. According to Latvian legislation, English is taught at school from the first grade, German or Russian are offered as a second foreign language at the primary and secondary levels, and French is also an option at secondary level. The school has a wide programme of hobby education: two choirs, a folk dance ensemble, a school theatre, a stage speech group, a visual arts group, sports clubs, a school newspaper, etc. Various cultural events, which are advertised on the school's website, take place regularly in the school. Students and teachers participate in international (bilateral exchange programmes, Erasmus + projects, etc.) and Latvian projects on a regular basis.</p>	



**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Semi-urban school)**

School type		State gymnasium/public school
School size	# students	380
	# teachers	46
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		The school implements minority education programmes, as well as programmes for children with special needs. The school has a multicultural and multilingual environment: students use three languages in everyday communication: Latvian, Russian and Polish. Particular attention is paid to teaching Polish and Polish history, students and teachers are offered Polish language practice and summer camps in the Republic of Poland to improve their knowledge. Teachers from Poland work at the school. The school employs a speech therapist, psychologist and social educator to provide special types of support to the students. According to Latvian legislation, English is taught from the first grade in the school, German or Russian are offered as a second foreign language at the primary and secondary level. Subjects such as Polish language and literature and Polish history are taught in Polish. The school has a wide programme of hobby education: a choir, an ensemble, a folk dance group, a children and youth public organisation, a school newspaper, etc. Various cultural events, which are advertised on the school's website, take place regularly in the school. Students and teachers participate in international (bilateral exchange programmes, Twinning, Erasmus+ projects, etc.) and Latvian projects on a regular basis.

**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Rural school)**

School type		Public school
School size	# students	335
	# teachers	38
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		Various educational programmes are implemented at the school: a general secondary education programme, minority education programmes, as well as programmes for students with special needs. The school has a bilingual environment – students use Latvian and Russian in everyday communication. According to Latvian legislation, English is taught from the first grade in the school, German or Russian are offered as a second foreign language at the primary and secondary level. The school has a broad programme of hobby education: folk dances, choirs, visual arts, folklore, an expressive speech; various cultural events take place regularly. Students and teachers participate in international (bilateral exchange programmes, Erasmus + projects, etc.) and Latvian projects on a regular basis.



## **Cultural literacy practices in formal education (Slovakia)**

**Monika Bagalová, Ľubomír Lehocký**

### **1. Executive summary**

This report was prepared in terms of the CHIEF project's Work package 2 (Qualitative research in formal educational settings) and aims to explore how policies and practices for the provision of cultural literacy are institutionalised. Because formal education is the main institutional setting within which young people acquire resources and develop their cultural literacy skills, we interviewed teachers and students to gain an understanding of how cultural literacy is acquired and enacted within these settings. We focused on several aspects of the process of formal education, such as: How is educational guidance on cultural literacy (policy documents and curricula) reflected in teaching practice? How do students experience the existing practice of cultural education? What forms of cultural participation do young people engage in within the formal education system and beyond? Which of the sources of cultural knowledge found in the formal education system and outside school are most important for students?

We also provide information about the methodology and theoretical background and the approach we took to analysing our data. To select locations and schools for the interviews, we used four main criteria: settlement type, level of socio-economic development, degree of ethnic diversity and support for nationalistic parties. We chose a grammar school in Martin and secondary vocational schools in Bratislava and Rimavská Sobota. The final selection reflected the different types of secondary school in the Slovak education system. In each school we interviewed 5 teachers and 20 students, together 25 interviews per school and a total of 75 interviews.

The interviewed teachers understand European/national cultural heritage as a set of individual elements, such as cultural and historical monuments and the key figures associated with them. They felt proud to be Slovak and their Slovak identity was more important to them than the European identity. They also mentioned that cultural heritage is an ongoing process in which we are co-creators and try to facilitate cultural competence and participation in students. However, the findings show that only a few students were interested in the topic of cultural participation. Most of them described the way in which they came to learn about cultural heritage as stereotypical, a set of learned lessons. Their identity was formed primarily outside school, through their friendship groups and from role models, both virtual and real. Online platforms seem to dominate the spontaneous organisation of leisure activities among young people today.



The findings are discussed and compared with the previous Slovak CHIEF reports relating to our review of policy documents (CHIEF project, 2018) and curricula (CHIEF project, 2019), and with existing academic literature in this field.

## **2. Introduction**

### **Aims of the Report**

The main aim of this report is to answer the following questions of the CHIEF project regarding cultural literacy in formal education practices. The research questions are divided into two sections: the first seeks to understand how national educational guidance on cultural literacy is reflected in teaching practice and pedagogical tools, how teachers understand European and national cultural heritage, cultural identity and cultural diversity, and how teachers communicate these concepts to their pupils, facilitating cultural participation. The second set addresses how these practices shape young people's understanding of European and national cultural heritage, cultural identity and cultural diversity. More specifically, we seek to provide an understanding of how young people describe their experience of learning about the concepts of European and national cultural heritage, cultural identity and cultural diversity and how they engage with these concepts in practice in formal, informal and non-formal education contexts. In addition, we were interested in finding out what sources of cultural knowledge young people are exposed to in Slovakia.

### **Structure of the Report**

The report first provides a brief overview of the state of the art, the details of research methodology, including context and information about fieldwork and data analysis. The results of our fieldwork are presented in the Findings section, followed by a brief Discussion which sets our findings against academic literature on cultural literacy and cultural heritage. The concluding remarks are presented in the final section.

## **3. State of the Art**

Our previous findings from earlier CHIEF reports, namely, the analysis of Slovak policy documents and curricula, showed there was no clear definition of essential terms such as culture, cultural identity and cultural literacy. While some Slovak policy documents promote a constructivist approach to culture, identity and heritage, others seek to essentialise them (CHIEF project, 2018: p.162-206). A more dynamic approach to the conceptualisations of



culture, cultural identity and cultural heritage is hinted at in the Slovak curricula, but these still are not clearly articulated (CHIEF project, 2019: p.142-185).

The academic research contains different theoretical approaches. Starting with the concept of cultural identity, following Rogers Brubaker's work *Ethnicity without Groups* (2004), we can employ a "strong"/"hard" and "weak"/"soft" understanding of "identity". According to Brubaker, strong, or an essentialist understanding of identity, emphasises sameness over time or across persons. By contrast, the weak, or a situationalist or contextualist understanding of identity consciously breaks away from the everyday meaning of the term; identity is multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated and so on (Brubaker, 2004: p.37). Other conceptions emphasise the importance of spatial relations: identity can be reconceptualised in spatial terms as different modes or vectors of spatial experience. Multiplicity of identities and differences, rather than a singular identity may be highlighted (Lawrence Grossberg, 1996: p.101). A similar approach is presented in P.W. Preston's *Political/Cultural Identity: Citizens and Nations in a Global Era* (1997), where identity refers to a shifting balance between what is privately remembered and what is currently publicly demanded (Preston, 1997: p.36). One of the key challenges for contemporary studies on identity, according to Preston, is trying to deal with the unstable nature of identity in the modern world and the ambiguous nature of the system within which identity is constructed (ibid:p.31).

The other prevalent theme in our case is how to approach and comprehend the notion of identity in terms of grounding the research results, while also looking closely at the terms of nation, nation-state and nationalism in academic discussions. For instance, according to Anthony D. Smith, "national identity and nations are complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components – ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and political. They signify bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths and traditions that may or may not find expression in states of their own but are entirely different from purely legal and bureaucratic ties of the state" (Smith, 1991: p.15).

The sense of nationalism is strong in regards to questions of cultural identity in the Slovak education system. The pro-national take on matters of culture and cultural identity is unevenly distributed across the Slovak policy documents. On the one hand, the documents emphasise the ethnic Slovak culture, while, on the other hand, they do not mention that Slovak traditional culture is, in fact, the result of multi-ethnic endeavours.

In Slovakia, there is no strategy for cultural literacy education per se: no single document that brings together the full range of issues affecting cultural literacy (CHIEF project, 2018:



pp.162-206). The findings from the National Curricula Review show that the main ideas found in the policy documents (e.g. culture as a way of being and as the artistic output of such being, directed at the national/ethnic cultural space, calls for attention to be focused on the cultural spaces of extra-national/ethnic cultures or global education) have been implemented in the curricula (CHIEF project, 2019: pp.142-182).

The concept of the nation-state needs to be discussed on the basis that it has appeared several times in the Slovak curricula. For instance, the nation-state identity is clearly preferred when approaching the past, or when the nation-oriented narrative is promulgated.

The division into national/ethnic, European and world culture is one example of the essentialisation of people's activities to clear-cut cultural boundaries mapped on the boundaries of the nation-state. Nowhere in the curricula is this problem discussed and the 'others' are preferably designated to remain outside the nation-state borders or assigned a clear-cut space within them as minorities. The boundary manifested in the political border of the ethnic/national seems to be a crucial tool for understanding culture and difference (CHIEF project, 2019: pp.142-185).

Another key issue in our investigation of the nature of identity in the present era, especially in relation to young people, is the enormous influence of the new media. Contemporary research on young people's identity highlights the importance of social media regarding self-representation and new forms of communication, and we should not neglect young people's everyday practices. For instance, as D. Buckingham, S. Bragg and M.J. Kehily note in their work, the analysis of online youth culture needs to extend beyond the spectacular subcultures of fan communities. "The more mundane processes of self-representation on social networking sites, the routine exchanging of photographs on mobile phones and the commenting on video clips on sharing sites are everyday aspects of contemporary youth culture that are in need of more sustained and systematic research" (Buckingham et al., 2014: p.11). In global times and in online space, young people can more easily connect with one another and communicate about things they do not usually come into contact with in everyday life. The connections between young people in the online world highlight the need for self-presentation and self-identification among other things, and this can lead to an abrupt demarcation between "me" and "other", and "we" and "they". In this respect, the findings from the Slovak National Curricula Review are interesting, particularly the unclear and unexplained claim that learning about one's own culture brings a better understanding of other cultures.<sup>61</sup> What is particularly unclear is how the conceptual preservation of the

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<sup>61</sup> Considering your own self-identification, you more clearly know who you are or who you are not.



boundary between “us” and “them” helps students to better understand “them”. The positing of a cultural boundary between “us” and “them” also extends to the European cultural space, with an explicit and unproblematised Eurocentrism found in the curricula (CHIEF project, 2019: pp.142-182).

According to R.L. Thompson, social media is an effective way of connecting people with different sources of information and “bringing” them into the event so they can watch it unfold as it happens. This intensifies their emotional reactions and they may become engaged and turn into radical supporters (Thompson, 2012). A recent research into extremism and young people in Slovakia by The Institute for Intercultural Dialogue found that what young people watch is important to them, and popular things on internet have a particular influence on them. Emotions are a significant trigger of young people’s interest. Young people find anything that is controversial, provocative or legally borderline to be appealing, interesting and exciting. Popular “icons” (social media influencers, “*YouTubers*”) have great influence, and conspiracy websites attract young people’s interest more than standard media. It is crucial that young people are taught critical thinking and how to verify sources. They should receive media education and be taught how to navigate media content (Milo, 2017: p.14).

The Institute for Intercultural Dialogue also discovered that, although the State Education Programme contains cross-cutting themes such as multicultural education, the number of history lessons has been increased and there are excursions to Auschwitz, teaching is predominantly focused on the acquisition of facts and much less on developing opinions, attitudes and values. In terms of attitudes towards minorities, students’ attitudes to the mentally disadvantaged are most positive, while their attitudes towards refugees and Muslims are least positive. Students from grammar schools had a better knowledge of history and civic education than students at other schools and also had a more tolerant attitude towards minorities (Kalmárová et al., 2017:p.21).

Another important theme in our research is cultural heritage. The findings from the CHIEF project’s National Curricula Review show that it approaches questions of cultural heritage only minimally. Cultural heritage features only through the optic of the cultural heritage philosophy of conservation. Students learn about cultural heritage and UNESCO sites in Slovakia, but there is no mention of other issues, topics, challenges and approaches to cultural heritage in the curricula (CHIEF project, 2019: pp.142-182). Cultural heritage can be studied by exploring new ways of understanding the nature of “heritage”. It is an approach that presents cultural heritage as being on the move. The dynamism of heritage lies in its subjective, emergent and performative parts (Silverman et al., 2017: p.14). Several scholars emphasise that heritage is not a “thing” or a historical or political movement, but refers to a



set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past. Heritage is presented as a cultural practice, involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings (Smith, 1991: p.11). Heritage can be explored as the production of the past in the present, leading to a reassessment of who and what is involved in the process of “making” heritage, and where the production of heritage might be located within contemporary societies (Harrison, 2013: p.32).

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Context and information about the fieldwork

Three public schools in different regions of Slovakia were selected for the fieldwork. The settlements where the schools are located were selected based on four major criteria. The first criterion is the settlement type: the goal was to select a predominantly urban settlement, where the rural population accounts for less than 20% of the total population; an ‘intermediate’ settlement where the share of the rural population is between 20% and 50% of the total population; and a predominantly rural settlement where the rural population accounts for 50% or more of the total population. The selected urban location is Bratislava, the capital. The ‘intermediate’ one is Martin, a medium-sized town. In 1994, Martin was by law declared as a national cultural centre of Slovaks, and has important cultural institutions like Slovak Matica and Slovak National Museum. A small town of Rimavská Sobota was selected as a predominantly rural location.

The second criterion was level of socio-economic development. We used the database of the Slovak Government Office, which identifies the most and the least developed districts of Slovakia<sup>62</sup>: Bratislava (five districts in Bratislava are among the six most developed districts in Slovakia), Martin (Martin district ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> most developed), and Rimavská Sobota (79<sup>th</sup>, i.e. the least developed district in Slovakia).

The third criterion was the degree of ethnic diversity: the selected district of Bratislava is rather homogeneous ethnically, with a small share of the Roma population. The same is true for Martin, while Rimavská Sobota is a more heterogeneous district, with a higher proportion of ethnic Hungarians and a large share of the Roma population (Mušinka et al., 2014).

The fourth criterion was support for nationalistic parties according to the 2016 election data. Specifically, we considered the share of votes received by three nationalistic parties: Peoples Party Our Slovakia (Ľudová Strana Naše Slovensko), Slovak National Party (Slovenská Národná Strana) and Party of the Hungarian Community (Strana maďarskej komunity). In

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.nro.vlada.gov.sk/podpora-najmenej-rozvinutych-okresov/>



Bratislava, none of these parties got any significant electoral support; in Martin, Slovak National Party and Peoples Party Our Slovakia got average electoral support, and in Rimavská Sobota Party of the Hungarian Community got high electoral support, while Slovak National Party and Peoples Party Our Slovakia got average support.

The selection of schools was determined on the basis of the availability of schools in locations (especially valid for smaller towns) and considering different types of schools like secondary grammar schools and secondary vocational schools. We chose a grammar school in Martin, and secondary vocational schools in Bratislava and in Rimavská Sobota.

The Martin school is attended by students from the Martin region (mainly nearby villages). The school has many activities for students. G8-gate is a voluntary student club, created as a continuation of activities organised under the international project 'Connecting classrooms under the auspices of the British Council. The club organises cultural, sports and beneficial events for students and the public. The students are also encouraged to develop their creativity and a strong sense of self by, for instance, publishing a collection of stories and poetry written by students. The school organises an annual event attended by students family members where students present their contributions to the collection of stories. The school also has a student parliament and students regularly participate in extracurricular learning events. Throughout the school year, students are able to attend dances, sporting events, competitions, language courses, handicraft courses, local and international excursions, and many other events. The gymnasium is involved in the Erasmus program; hence the students are eligible to apply for study exchanges to other European countries. The school also collaborates with several NGOs.

The Bratislava school is attended by students from Bratislava and the surrounding area. The school participates in two major international projects. It offers international exchanges and practical training in several countries (for instance, Japan), excursions in Slovakia and foreign countries as well. Students have the opportunity to visit theatres, galleries and other cultural events during the school year. Other cultural activities the school participates in include a traditional craft project. The school also has a student parliament.

The school in Rimavská Sobota is attended by students from Rimavská Sobota and nearby villages. Students can participate in several cultural activities. They have the opportunity to go on excursions – focused on vocational education – to Slovak and foreign cities, to visit local galleries, museums and theatres during the school year, and take part in the student parliament. The students are eligible for exchange practical training through Erasmus+. The



school participates in the *We love Slovakia* (Máme radi Slovensko) project, the aim of which is to create a multimedia guide of interesting locations in Slovakia.

In each of the selected schools, we interviewed five teachers (among those teaching Slovak language and literature, English, history, civics, art and culture, geography, and ethics) and 20 students of the age between 16 and 19.<sup>63</sup> We asked the school heads or their deputies to help to select students to be interviewed according to our criteria reflecting age, gender, academic results, different national/ethnic/cultural background. Then teachers offered the option to participate on research in their classrooms. Students volunteered for interviews. As all interviews were conducted in Slovak, the choice of informants was limited in the Rimavská Sobota school, where approximately 50% of the pupils are Hungarian speakers. They could barely speak the Slovak language, so they could not participate in our research. In addition, as this school has technical focus, 90% of the students are boys. No Roma pupil volunteered to participate in the project in the addressed classes.

CHIEF project's common interview guides were used for the interviews, adjusted, when necessary, for the local context (some questions were focused on the local cultural environment). Two or four researchers were visiting the schools together during the fieldwork, conducting the interviews separately (although in some cases two researchers conducted interviews together).

## 4.2 Data Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded. Participant notes were written by the interviewers immediately after each interview. The notes contained general observations of the interview setting, interview process, openness of the informant, his/her involvement and interest, events during the interview that might have distracted the informant. All the interviews were anonymised by the researchers, who randomly assigned pseudonyms to participants.

Transcribing the audio was the first step of the analysis, as the method of transcription determines the type of information transcribed.

In analysing the data, it was crucial not to reduce the complexity too early on. Initial ideas can get lost; therefore, in the beginning, it is better to take a little bit of time to expand the data and try to get as many connections and ideas as possible, without imposing too much structure through our own conceptions. In order to do that, we needed to explore our own ideas, whilst bearing in mind that they were subjective.

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<sup>63</sup> See the respective Tables in the Appendices.



As soon as the first interview transcript was ready, we began coding. The first three transcripts were coded by two researchers independently of each other. Then we discussed the results and agreed on a common coding tree. Whenever we found a new poignant code that could be merged into the coding tree, we first discussed it with the other team members and then decided whether we should extend the coding tree or not.

The coding was done in NVivo12 inductively, by using two different coding methods, performed alternatively. The first was the open coding method where an important phrase or sequence was attributed a code. The first observations led to analytical questions such as: What is this person saying? What role does the context play? Coding line-by-line gave us an overall perception of the data that was distinct from our preconceived notions. In this method, the phrase was separated from its context, allowing us to see different possible meanings. Whenever possible, we confronted our own perceptions with other perspectives. The second method focused on coding. We organised the codes obtained from the open coding into categories and sub-categories and identified the codes which were more relevant with regard to our research questions. These codes were applied to the rest of documents. But whenever we found something striking or surprising, it was advisable to go back to the open coding. Both interview transcripts and participant notes were subjected to both steps of coding. The interview transcripts contained answers to our “anchor questions”.

Whenever possible, we tried to find connections between the different documents. Sometimes, one interview can answer a question that emerged when analysing another, or two people might have contradictory opinions.

Once we had established a system of categories, we started to look for connections with the scientific literature. We sought established explanations to the phenomena we observed. We took a deeper look at the scientific discourses relating to the topics we found in the field. This process of analysing the content and our reflexive interaction with the data was intended to reaffirm, broaden, or contradict common theories and arguments. In this process, it was necessary to differentiate between the theoretical perspectives, our own perspective as researchers and the participants' perspectives.



## 5. Findings

Formal education is one of the main institutional settings in which policies and procedures for fostering cultural literacy of young people are applied. It is in formal educational settings that young people acquire resources and develop their cultural skills. In this section, we present our analysis of cultural literacy practices in formal education, teaching approaches and educational experiences in the selected schools in Slovakia.

The interviews with students confirmed our assumption that social networks and friendships are more important today in shaping young people's cultural identity than the formal education process in schools. We were surprised by the marked regional differences in students' ability to understand and meaningfully answer the questions. In general, students who often participate in schools' cultural activities (schools' parliament, schools' magazine) gave more complex answers. However, these active students were in the minority of all interviewed pupils. We also observed the efforts of school representatives to choose 'better' students to participate in the project. This effort was the most visible in Rimavská Sobota, where the project was presented only in selected classes, considered as better ones by teachers. This phenomenon was probably due trying to look better in front of us, although it was thoroughly explained to school representatives that we were not testing and inspecting their school.

### 5.1 Learning about culture

The students said in the interviews that they learn about culture mainly in their Slovak, English, geography and history lessons. The teacher explains the concept, and then usually asks the students to discuss it. Differences of opinion are rare in these discussions, and generally, it is the more active students who engage, while many are left out. The teachers at the school in Bratislava said that there was not enough time to discuss the issues during lessons.

The students gave a wide range of views on culture in general, reflecting their personal understanding. They often expressed the view that their generation's culture was more open and tolerant than that of their parents and grandparents, but that older generations were more polite and responsible. In almost all cases, they had positive views of traditional Slovak culture. Some students showed a keen interest in traditional Slovak culture, reproducing it in various folk groups or on traditional craft courses. However, most of the interviewed students did not engage in what they considered traditional culture, nor were they interested in exploring it. Some informants in Bratislava and Martin showed great interest in other



countries cultures, such as Austria, France, and Japan. They liked these cultures because they thought the people in these countries were decent and responsible and that everything worked better than in Slovakia. In general, the students were more interested in the cultures of economically developed countries. Some responses indicated a degree of contempt for economically underdeveloped countries, and the informants were less interested in these countries' cultures. This could be interpreted as result of Eurocentric views of policy and curricula makers, in which the idea of “developed us” and “undeveloped others” is still present.<sup>64</sup> The students also reported that in school they learned primarily about European cultures. That reflects the dominance of the Eurocentric themes apparent from the Slovak curricula, which either does not mention the cultures and history of Asia, Africa and Latin America, or does so in a limited way (CHIEF project, 2019:p.14).

Several teachers expressed the view that the maturity of a culture is directly related to a nations' economic development. On the question about this connection, teacher Petra answered:

*The culture of a nation reflects whether ... the culture is still developing in some way, and I think it certainly reflects the nation's maturity, that if the nation is stagnating somewhere, or if it can respect those traditions but let go of them a little bit to advance the nation (economic development). (Petra, female, teacher, urban school, Slovakia)*

Some students, especially from Rimavská Sobota, did not answer the questions about their views on culture.

## 5.2 Cultural heritage

The students often thought 'cultural heritage' referred to different customs and traditions. Slovak cultural heritage was thought to refer to costumes, traditional cuisine, crafts and folk songs; some also mentioned the traditional Slovak alcohol (*Borovička*) as an example of 'cultural heritage'. Students were also familiar with the UNESCO World Heritage List. They were able to name Slovak sites from this list but had greater difficulty with European or world UNESCO cultural heritage sites. A few students gave examples of other cultural artefacts, such as literary works, statues, and so on.

Students in the first year of study at secondary schools often could not answer, or even understand the questions about cultural heritage. This may be because of the sequencing of

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<sup>64</sup> More about these relations has been discussed in Said (1985).



subjects taught at Slovak secondary schools; geography and civics lessons often begin in the second year of secondary school. Students of upper grades from the school in Bratislava, on the other hand, stated that they had mainly covered this topic while studying geography and tourism, where they learn about Slovakia and heritage sites such as Banská Štiavnica, Vlkolinec, the Altar of Master Paul in Levoča. As part of their lessons, these students prepared various presentations, for which they also had to cook meals and dine, following several different culinary traditions. Thus, they get a chance to practice various elements of foreign cultural heritage, especially when it comes to culinary customs.

The students at the school in Martin mentioned various school excursions to places of cultural heritage. They most often reported having been on trips to local cultural sites, many of them of national importance, such as the National Cemetery located in Martin. These students also had the most extensive knowledge and views on cultural heritage out of all the students interviewed. In contrast, students from the school in Rimavská Sobota often had no idea what was meant by the term cultural heritage. They did not mention having visited cultural places with the school. The students from Bratislava did not give many examples of school excursions either, and often could not remember if they had visited places, or what places they had visited.

In general, students thought about cultural heritage in terms of what they had learnt about great cultural works from the past, rather than as something that they could create or that could directly influence their lives. Some students were able to grasp this distinction, such as Joseph from Martin, who said, having mentioned that Slovak cultural heritage was his roots, that it certainly was not part of his everyday life. While answering a follow-up question about why he had mentioned it as his “roots”, he expressed through his body language that he did not really know and answered, “*Um, that's so learned*”<sup>65</sup> (Joseph, male, student, semi-urban school, Slovakia). Several students admitted that their ideas about Slovak cultural heritage were just stereotypes they had learned at school. While Bruman and Berliner talk about UNESCO cultural heritage sites as a ‘linchpins of global imaginaries (Bruman and Berliner, 2016:p.3), for Slovak students it is just a list to learn. And because they are Slovaks, they think they should know primary Slovak cultural heritage sites.

The interviewed teachers showed similar thinking. When asked about cultural heritage, they responded by listing the different elements covered by the term. For example, a geography teacher from Bratislava said the following about her method of teaching about cultural heritage:

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<sup>65</sup> This student has used this word in the sense that he had just learned/memorized the about Slovak cultural heritage and he was thought at school that it is his roots, but he does not have any personal connection to it.



*I talk about cultural and historical monuments, natural heritage and so on ... about the historical figures who also formed our heritage. (Jana, female, teacher, urban school, Slovakia)*

To ensure the students do not just have an abstract conception of cultural heritage, schools try to make the topic more relevant through various practical activities. The most active in this respect was the school in Martin, which, in addition to several excursions, also organised events in which students find out about various topics from their grandparents, and then present their findings at school. Similarly, the school in Bratislava organises various workshops and projects. The students' responses show that many of them become interested in these crafts (woodcarving, basketry, tinkering, lace making, etc.). The school in Rimavská Sobota lagged in the activities it offered students, which probably contributed to the truncated responses of the students from this school.

### 5.3 Identity(ies)

Researchers approached identities rather as categories, than groups, which allowed them to understand “how categories get institutionalised and with what consequences” (Brubaker, 2004: p.184). Informants, however, thought about identity, especially national/ethnic<sup>66</sup> identity, as a group (Slovaks, Roma, etc.) with whom they identified themselves and others. When answering questions about identity, most of the teachers and students firstly reported their belonging to an ethnic group. According to the informants, national/ethnic identity is represented most in the teaching process. Students thought about “national identity and pride” in the context of cultural heritage made by ethnic Slovaks. This is consistent with policy documents and curricula, which are mainly nationally oriented in identity issues (CHIEF project, 2019:pp.142-182). Most informants stated that they felt they were Slovaks. Far fewer students said that, in addition to feeling Slovak, they also felt like Europeans. Several students from the Rimavská Sobota school did not find the European identity attractive: “*Europe ... It's not appealing*” (Bruno, male, student, rural school, Slovakia).<sup>67</sup> Surprisingly, only a few students named their religious affiliation as part of their identity. When answering questions for the participant notes, several of them stated that they were religious and practising Christians, but this did not come up during the interviews.

In general, the teachers said there was not much opportunity to cover other types of identities in teaching, for example religious, political, gender. Only Ethics and Religious education

<sup>66</sup> In Slovakia terms „nation/nationality“ are used rather as a synonym to ethnicity than as a citizenship.

<sup>67</sup> Several students answered that European identity is not important to them, but they could not explain why.



subjects provide space to discuss these aspects, but most of the students did not remember if they ever talked about them at school. Also, several teachers mentioned off record, that they did not feel confident to talk about multiple forms of identities with students because they were not trained how to approach these themes. Teachers also mentioned, that students are influenced heavily by online role models in thinking about their identities.

*Young people are following their role models (mostly YouTubers) strongly.* (Jana, female, teacher, urban school, Slovakia)

When asked about their identity, Slovak students were clearly able to answer questions about whether they felt they were Slovak, European, and Christian; but many did not understand the questions about subcultural, political, and opinion identities; it was not something they were used to thinking about. There were, of course, exceptions, with some students identifying with various groups such as hip hop, liberal, patriot, or Satanist groups. Only one student, Eve from Bratislava, said that she was also dealing with the question of her own gender and sexual identity. She mentioned that a Slovak language teacher had made an inappropriate joke in the classroom that she found very offensive:

*'Why can't the sun have children? Because it is warm!' Then the teacher said that it doesn't matter, none of you here are warm.*<sup>68</sup> (Eve, female, student, urban school, Slovakia)

#### **5.4 (Inter)cultural interaction and multicultural education**

The curricula state that pupils should learn to tolerate diversity (CHIEF project, 2019:p.159). This goal is addressed from various perspectives in different subjects. The most important one regarding cultural tolerance seems to be Multicultural education, which is a cross-cutting (interdisciplinary) theme within certain subjects, namely History, Civics, Geography, Ethics, Religion, and Art and culture. However, the interviewed Slovak students had rarely encountered the term “multiculturalism” in their lessons. Those who could remember covering multiculturalism at school said it had come up mainly in English lessons and less so in Civics, Geography, and Ethics.

*I know it was in English class, ... when we did cities like London and they said that it was a very multicultural city, that there are a huge number of nationalities, that it is one city, but basically that every part of the city is almost like a different country, that they have Chinatown, the Indian Quarter,*

<sup>68</sup> 'Warm' meaning being homosexual.



*and that there are many places in one place.* (Marko, male, student, urban school, Slovakia)

"Multicultural society" was also part of the English-language graduation exam for the students of the gymnasiums.<sup>69</sup>

A geography teacher from Bratislava said that multiculturalism came up only marginally in her lessons, because there is not enough time to talk about it. A history teacher from the same school said that she included multicultural education in her subject as follows:

*Kollar (Slovak historical national figure), he asks which should we prioritise, our country or nation? So, let's start talking about migration, for example, the current connection (with Kollars question) is that foreigners come here, but we go abroad, too.* (Božena, female, teacher, urban school, Slovakia)

Matej from Bratislava recalled that they had talked about Islam in civics lessons: "[t]errorism is also related to it, so that is what we remember" (Matej, male, student, urban school, Slovakia). Bruno, also from Bratislava, did not even know the name of Islam, so he called it "Muslim Christianity." However, he said he does not like Muslims because he met people from the Middle East as hotel guests during his internship, and they were always very rude.

In general, the students thought multiculturalism is the coexistence of several cultures in one place, but some said they did not understand the concept at all. Multicultural education does not seem to have made its way into Slovak formal education yet.

*It is always the problem with all the Ministry of Educations cross-cutting themes ... Very often, when something is given as an obligation and there are no resources, there is no teacher training behind it.* (Jana, female, teacher, urban school, Slovakia)

Some teachers even openly expressed their prejudices about multiculturalism. Speaking about a student whose mother is white, and father is black, one teacher said:

*I think that even though [they are] a Negroid race, their nationality<sup>70</sup> can be Slovak. It must be accepted. As the influence of a time period that came from that multiculturalism, open borders and everything. And still who knows what*

<sup>69</sup> The students of vocational schools do not have this exam.

<sup>70</sup> As explained above, in the Slovak language the terms "nationality" and "ethnicity" are used as synonyms.



*awaits us. Nobody knows that. (laughs) ... But now we see her (a student) as normal.* (Blanka, female, teacher, semi-urban school, Slovakia)

All three selected schools work with various non-governmental organisations that organise multicultural education lectures and projects. As mentioned above, the schools in Bratislava and Martin are also involved in several international projects, such as Erasmus, where students encounter other cultures. Slovak students can go, for example, to France or Japan, and foreign students come to Slovakia. The students found these exchanges enriching. They consistently claimed that foreign students in their schools were accepted positively by other students. Eva from Bratislava admitted that she had chosen to study at this school because there was the possibility of an internship abroad. The students from Bratislava and Martin did not mention conflicts between classmates based on (sub)cultural or ethnic differences. Nor did they encounter any opinions or statements at school they would consider extremist. Our experience was that students from these two schools showed a high degree of tolerance towards other cultures and opinions.

By contrast, students in Rimavská Sobota openly talked about various tensions and conflicts at school. These were particularly between students of the majority population (in this context, ethnic Slovaks and Hungarians) and Roma students who represent approximately half of the school's students<sup>71</sup>. *“There are only two groups, white and black”* (Bruno, male, student, rural school, Slovakia). Students from Rimavská Sobota often spoke about the segregation inside and outside school. They also mentioned various fights, but not at school. Some of the boys identified themselves as “patriots”, but other students said about them that they proudly talk about themselves as skinheads or Nazis. Some of them wore during interviews T-shirts with slogans typical of the neo-Nazi subculture. They also mentioned that they went to Bratislava to support Slovan football club, whose Ultras are known to sympathize with neo-Nazi ideology and racist actions.<sup>72</sup> Researchers got the impression that this group avoided talking about topics connected with neo-Nazi ideology.<sup>73</sup> Several mentioned that they sometimes came into conflict with the teacher over lesson content, for example about the Slovak Republic during WWII, Andrej Hlinka (Slovak national figure of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century) and the so-called Hlinka guards, a Militia during WWII.

<sup>71</sup> Most of the Roma students identified themselves as ethnic Hungarian for the school's formulary. That is why in official statistics, Roma ethnicity represent less than 10% of students.

<sup>72</sup> For example, in August 2019, UEFA ruled that Slovan Bratislava fans had abused Albanians and called for violence against them, for which the club was punished. For more information, see:

[https://www.skslovan.com/clanok7234-Rozhodnutie\\_UEFA\\_za\\_spravanie\\_fanusikov.htm](https://www.skslovan.com/clanok7234-Rozhodnutie_UEFA_za_spravanie_fanusikov.htm)

<sup>73</sup> They also felt they were being watched at school by teachers and could be reported to police for their activities.



*[The teacher] said that everyone in the Hlinka Guard was fascist, and then we ... began to talk because my grandfather had told me that his family was also in the Hlinka Guard and that the Hlinka Guard weren't all fascist. (Boris, male, student, rural school, Slovakia)*

Some of these boys also said they would welcome more content about Slovakia, Slavs and Slavic culture in the school curricula, and less content about other European nations, because everyone should know about his own culture the most. The school organises special lessons for students from this group. In cooperation with NGOs, they cover various topics as part of multicultural education.

*This year, we've had these kinds of interviews all year, just because of us. There was a "blackie" (černoško) here from a gang and he started telling us about his life ... we can accept that, multiculturalism, but not in our own country. (Bruno, male, student, rural school, Slovakia)*

Students from other classes did not attend these lessons and these boys felt that they and their opinions were being targeted directly. Peter said he had previously belonged to this group, but later he became dissatisfied with it, because he found their opinions and actions to be extremist. He changed his group of friends completely.

Teachers and other students who did not belong to this group did not express discriminatory and ultra-nationalist attitudes. However, they also confirmed a certain division of the school. The fact that most Roma speak Hungarian better than Slovak, although studying in Slovak language classes, contributes to the separation between 'whites' and 'blacks'.

*I have [in the classroom] Roma children ... [and] I have children of Slovak nationality, too. And there is no ... racial or national problem in this class. Rather, the problem is that it is a class with Slovak as the language of instruction and many children from elementary schools came to this class, where the language of instruction was Hungarian, and ... there are children who do not know Slovak at all. This is because ... [in] some schools, especially the village's smaller schools, they pay no attention to the Slovak language. (Iveta, female, teacher, rural school, Slovakia)*

However, ethnic tensions do not manifest themselves significantly on school grounds. Students from Rimavská Sobota who had negative attitudes towards Roma students explained that this was the result of their own negative experiences of them. They experienced violence



and criminal activity (stealing) from Roma in their town and villages, but not directly in the school. As explained above, it is a pity that it was not possible to conduct interviews with Roma students.

### 5.5 Cultural participation

In terms of cultural participation, the interviewed Slovak students were generally very active. Some were members of folk, art and interest groups, such as scouts. Many were interested in culture, formed communities and went to museums, concerts and the like, without belonging to any formal group. In the latter case, the joint visits or events were organised primarily through social networks. Some informants also created cultural content individually, e.g. writing blogs and producing music, to distribute through social networks. Students also organise their leisure activities spontaneously, usually through social media. They use them to connect each other to visit museums, concerts, sport events, etc. Students were also involved in various environmental activities as many considered the destruction of nature to be the greatest problem in the world today.

Rarely was participation in political activities named. In civics lessons, students study the political systems of Slovakia and the European Union in a fair amount of detail, but most of them were not interested in politics. Discussions about politics usually only take place in the classroom in the run-up to elections. It was also true of students who were eligible to vote. Although they were not very interested in this topic, most said that they would vote. They made their choices about how to vote based on discussions with their parents and friends, and on information from the media.

Schools encourage their students' civic engagement. Through student parliaments, students can directly influence the management of their school. In school clubs, they can improve their skills in various areas. Schools also run civic engagement projects. At the school in Martin, for instance, there is a thematic group, in which students simulate G8 meetings and discuss important social issues. Some of the students involved in this project were excited about it and thought it was very beneficial to them. Although teachers claimed that participation in this group is voluntary, there were also students who stated that they felt pressurised by the school's deputy to participate. The reason the school's representative chose them was due to their impressive academic records.

At the school in Bratislava, students had to prepare a community project for a hospital. The project was devised and organised by students. *"We made a variety of snacks and we sold them at school and then actually donated the money to [the hospital]"* (Matej, male, student,



urban school, Slovakia). Most students rated the project very positively and felt good about participating, because they helped children with serious diseases. Others joined in simply because it was mandatory, and it was boring for them.

The schools in Bratislava and Martin publish a school magazine, and students contribute articles on various themes. The school in Rimavská Sobota was, again, substantially behind in terms of student participation in extracurricular activities. The main reason is that students have to travel to school from the surrounding villages. The buses go only a few times a day and so they cannot get involved in after-school clubs or activities because they would get home late. Another reason is that there are generally fewer cultural and civic activities in the region as well as economic opportunities. The students from Rimavská Sobota mostly did various sports activities outside school. Most of the students in this school are boys and football was the most popular leisure activity among them. Boys from a group of “patriots” also took part in various marches and activities organised by political party People’s Party Our Slovakia, according to Slovakia’s General prosecutor Jaroslav Čížnár, an extremist party with fascist tendencies “.<sup>74</sup> However, they did not want to give more details about these activities.

### Sources of information

Assessing the credibility of information is key to cultivating cultural literacy in young people. Young people obtain a lot of information online. In their interviews, teachers stressed that they were trying to keep students away from unreliable sources of information on the Internet. The school in Martin had even set up digital literacy classes covering these topics. Some of the students of this school were, in fact, more knowledgeable about fact-checking than students from other schools. Most of the interviewed students though, from all the schools, said that they had received only limited guidance from teachers on how to find and use resources. The teachers would only tell them which sources should be removed. Some students said they were taught to compare multiple resources, and that generally books offer more reliable information than websites. However, some students received no guidance at school.

During the teaching process, students at all three schools are asked to prepare individual presentations on various topics. While they are searching for information, Wikipedia seems to be an especially popular source. If students are interested in a topic, they will try to verify the information from several (Internet) sources. If they find the same information on more than one site, they consider it trustworthy. However, if they are not interested in the topic, they

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<sup>74</sup> See <https://dennikn.sk/775198/ciznar-podal-na-najvyssi-sud-podnet-na-zrusenie-kotlebovej-lsns/>



will usually use the information from the very first webpage they come across without verifying it. Students obtain information that is not related to the school curriculum from their family, friends and various Facebook, Instagram and YouTube influencers represent another big phenomenon, students follow quite a few of them.

## 6. Discussion

The finding from earlier CHIEF reports (CHIEF project, 2018; CHIEF project, 2019) showed that Slovak policy documents and curricula contain no clear definitions of essential terms such as culture, identity and diversity. The concept of cultural heritage is described as worth preserving. However, this approach reproduces the cultural heritage philosophy of conservation (Brumann and Berliner, 2016) without enquiring as to “why the legacy of the past should be evaluated” (CHIEF project, 2019:p.172). According to this study’s findings, teachers usually explain cultural heritage as a collection of material and intangible artefacts from the past, and the interviewed students perceive it in the similar way, mostly as a set of artefacts that does not feature in their daily lives. Researchers reported only few exceptions, where some students perceive cultural heritage as something “alive.”

The policy documents and curricula indicate that several perspectives apply regarding the acquisition of knowledge about cultural heritage, cultural identity and diversity (CHIEF project, 2019). “On the one hand, they attempt to deconstruct the nation-state narrative,” while, “on the other hand, the nation-state identity is clearly preferred” (CHIEF project, 2019:p.167). National/ethnic identity was mentioned most frequently by teachers and students, who mainly felt that belonging to the Slovak nation was the most important aspect of their identity. The category of culture becomes essentialised, because it is always culture that is evoked, whether in terms of the nation, the persons personality or some imagined other, despite all these potentially referring to “a very different set of practices-cum-knowledge and their historical antecedents” (ibid:p.173).

According to Brubaker, nationality can be seen as a strong understanding of “identity”, because it emphasises sameness over time and across persons (Brubaker, 2004:p.37). It is present in teachers and students, who have a strong concept of their nationality. National identity is also represented most in teaching. There is not enough class time to discuss other types of identities.

In terms of perceptions of diversity, Slovak policy documents and curricula are tied too closely to a Eurocentric approach. They portray stereotypical images of others and even



employ the language of stereotypes (CHIEF project, 2019:p.173). Researchers observed a few cases of teachers directly using racist language (i.e., “Negroid race”). According to some of the teachers, they receive insufficient training on how to incorporate new topics such as diversity of identities into the formal teaching process. Slovak students often perceived the cultures of economically less developed countries to be underdeveloped and showed more interest in the cultures of economically developed countries.

Researchers did not encounter strong manifestations of extremism or prejudice at the schools in Bratislava and Martin. If there were any prejudices, they were mostly directed at Muslims and refugees. The situation was different at the school in Rimavská Sobota. It was clear from what the students said that they were internally divided into “white” (Slovak and Hungarian) and “black” (Roma) students.

In Rimavská Sobota, no Roma students were interviewed, despite about half of the school roll being Roma. This could have been because most of the Roma students do not understand the Slovak language very well. It is also possible that they were afraid of any kind of interview perceiving it as a test (Roma are often stigmatised as less gifted students) or it could also have been the case that the teachers simply did not inform them about the CHIEF project, but we do not have any data to prove it.

Academic studies indicate that Slovak young people who attend vocational schools are more prone to adopt extremist views, and this is reflected in their support for extremist political parties (Veľšic, 2017). Other research has confirmed that students from grammar schools had a better knowledge of history and civic education than those at other types of schools and that they have a more tolerant attitude towards minorities (Milo, 2017). However, recent research findings show that having a better knowledge of history does not automatically lead to students having a higher level of tolerance towards minorities (ibid).

Based on the study presented in this report, several areas for future research are proposed. Research on improvements to the existing curricula and teaching materials is one. There is also a need to find an efficient way to train teachers on the topics such as multiculturalism. Research should be conducted to find new techniques and communication channels through which teachers can effectively engage more students in formal education for projects and activities designed to develop cultural literacy.



## 7. Conclusion

This report aimed to examine how the national guidance on cultural literacy is reflected in classroom practices in Slovakia. As stated in CHIEF's previous reports, Slovak policy documents and curricula contain specific goals relating to teaching young people cultural literacy, but they contain only very vague definitions and almost no practical instructions or guidelines on how to achieve these goals. This may be partly the reason for the observed lack of professional readiness among many teachers on how to incorporate topics such as multiculturalism or cultural identities into their teaching. Some teachers educate themselves on these topics, while others are less active and follow the curriculum.

In addition to the responsibilities set out in the curricula regarding which subjects include topics of culture, heritage and cultural identities, the teaching process also includes educational visits to museums, galleries, theatres, concerts, and others sites of local, national, and European cultural heritage, and the schools participate in various local and international projects and events on these topics, depending on the financial and human resources available. They often cooperate with NGOs and invite external experts. At the school in Martin, teachers work with NGOs on developing their own methodologies on topics such as global education or multicultural education.

The students were generally willing participants in the interviews. One of the reasons for this was that the interviews were conducted during lessons, which meant students were allowed to be absent for part of their lessons. During the interviews, most of the pupils were very open and had no problem sharing their opinions with the interviewers. They were also not afraid to criticise the school, some of the teachers and their methods, because they were guaranteed confidentiality and trusted us as researchers. One group of boys from the school in Rimavská Sobota (about one third of the interviewed students) were, however, an exception. As we learned from other students, these boys were known within the school as neo-Nazis. However, they did not mention this during the interviews. They were also very careful while answering the questions. Their participation was also apparently not entirely voluntarily but was coerced by teachers. They did not trust researchers and did not want to answer openly. These boys felt that they were being monitored (and possibly reported) by the teachers and even by the police, but they did not want to share any more details. Also, they felt that some of the school activities they had to attend deliberately targeted them and their opinions. Interestingly, most of the other students in the school did not want to talk about this group of boys, as if they were afraid of possible retaliation.



The teachers also responded positively to our interviews. Some teachers were initially nervous as if they were afraid they were being inspected. These concerns generally disappeared during the interview and the teachers opened up. However, the teachers did not want to comment in ways that might have been interpreted as a criticism of school management, and avoided controversial issues relating to their school. If the teachers criticised anything, it was the Ministry of Education regulations (excluding funding). They were most critical of the scale of the curriculum, and the small number of lessons allocated to school subjects they were teaching. This means they lack time to discuss the topics; nevertheless, the teachers try to encourage discussion. In general, the teachers rated our interviews positively, mainly giving scores of nine or ten (out of ten).

The teachers understood 'cultural heritage' and approached it as a set of individual elements, such as cultural and historical monuments and the key figures associated with them. A few teachers also mentioned that cultural heritage is an ongoing process in which we all are co-creators. As for cultural identity, the Slovak national identity was covered most in the schools. The teachers thought it was represented mainly by costumes, traditional dishes, crafts, folk songs and key figures/national heroes. All the teachers said they felt proud to be Slovak and encouraged their students to be patriotic. Their Slovak identity was more important to them than the European identity. Local/regional identity was important to only a few teachers.

In all the schools, there was an ethnic diversity among students. There was less religious diversity; apart from Christians or atheists, the teachers were not aware of any students subscribing to other religions. Ethnic diversity is experienced through international exchanges or locally, especially at the Rimavská Sobota school, where there is a large number of students of Hungarian and Roma ethnicity. During the lessons, some teachers revealed their prejudices, for example against Muslims in connection with terrorism, or against sexual minorities.

The students usually described the way in which they learned about cultural heritage in stereotypical ways, as a set of lessons. Few were interested in the topic, and some felt that what they knew about cultural heritage from school had little effect on their everyday lives. Like the teachers, most students felt they were Slovak. They felt much less European. Their reference points were primarily their friends and role models, both virtual and real. Online platforms seem to dominate the spontaneous organisation of leisure activities among young people today. Students perceived diversity positively both in their own school and in society. The only exception was, again, the group of patriot boys from Rimavská Sobota, where, in



addition to holding negative attitudes towards Roma students, anti-immigrant attitudes were expressed often.

The schools where the interviews were conducted had several activities aimed at developing students' cultural literacy. All the schools created sufficient opportunities for the students to participate in projects, giving them practical experience of the contexts of European and national cultural heritage through formal education. NGOs and the students' families were also involved in some projects. Participating students often evaluated these activities positively. The problem, however, is that the schools fail to stimulate interest in these topics and projects among the majority of students. Themes such as cultural heritage, multiculturalism, or civic engagement are of interest to a very narrow group, usually elite students, who are also often members of the school's parliament, contribute to the school's magazine, and engage enthusiastically in the aforementioned activities, while the majority of students are not interested in or sometimes forced into participating in these activities.



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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Settlement	Citizenship(s)	Languages fluent	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Date of interview
Adam	male	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Mother	Christian Catholic	03/18/19
Juraj	male	17	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Atheist	03/18/19
Dalibor	male	17	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Atheist	03/19/19
Jana	female	17	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Atheist	03/19/19
Branislav	male	17	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Christian Catholic	03/19/19
Barbora	female	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Atheist	03/18/19
Jozef	male	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Atheist	03/18/19
Dušana	female	19	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Mother	Atheist	03/19/19
Andrea	female	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Christian Catholic	03/19/19
Ján	male	17	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Cousin	Atheist	03/18/19
Laco	male	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents	Christian	03/18/19
Lena	female	17	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents, brother	Atheist	03/18/19
Petra	female	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Mother	Atheist	03/19/19
Nikol	female	16	Urban	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Atheist	03/18/19
Natalia	female	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, brother, sister	Atheist	03/18/19
Matej	male	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, sister	Christian,	03/19/19



Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Settlement	Citizenship(s)	Languages fluent	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Date of interview
									Catholic	
Marko	male	19	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents	Christian	03/19/19
Eve	other	18	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Parents	Spiritual	03/18/19
Rosa	female	19	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak, German	Parents, sister	Christian	03/18/19
Pavlina	female	16	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Mother	Atheist	03/19/19
Zoltan	male	16	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents	Atheist	03/21/19
Yvon	female	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Atheist	03/22/19
Roman	male	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, sister	Atheist	03/21/19
Romana	female	19	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents, brother	Atheist	03/21/19
Radka	female	20	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Alone	Satanist	03/21/19
Roberta	female	15	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Christian, Catholic	03/22/19
Silvia	female	18	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents, brother	Atheist	03/21/19
Sofia	female	18	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents, brother	Spiritual	03/21/19
Sandor	male	16	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, sister	Christian	03/21/19
Robert	male	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents, brother	Atheist	03/21/19
Radim	male	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, sister	Christian, Catholic	03/22/19
Martina	female	16	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents	Atheist	03/21/19
Mirka	female	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents	Atheist	03/22/19
Aneta	female	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Christian Catholic	03/21/19
Adriana	female	16	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Christian Catholic	03/22/19



Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Settlement	Citizenship(s)	Languages fluent	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Date of interview
Jaroslav	male	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Christian Catholic	03/21/19
Adrián	male	16	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Atheist	03/21/19
Juraj	male	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Christian Catholic	03/22/19
Marek	male	17	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	Mother	Christian Catholic	03/21/19
Blažena	female	18	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Christian Catholic	03/21/19
Agáta	female	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian, English	Hungarian	Slovak, Hungarian	Father, siblings	Atheist	06/24/19
Dávid	male	18	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Atheist	06/24/19
Lukáš	male	18	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Czech, Hungarian, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Christian Catholic	06/24/19
Denis	male	18	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian, English	Hungarian	Slovak, Hungarian	Father, siblings	Atheist	06/24/19
Erik	male	18	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Atheist	06/24/19
Gabriel	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Mother, siblings	Christian Catholic	06/24/19
Ivan	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents, siblings	Christian Catholic	06/24/19
Kamil	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian, English	Hungarian	Hungarian	Parents	Atheist	04/16/19
Luboš	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Christian Catholic	04/16/19
Milan	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Hungarian	Slovak, Hungarian	Parents, siblings	Atheist	04/16/19
Miro	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Grandmother, mother, brother	Christian, Protestant	04/16/19



Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Settlement	Citizenship(s)	Languages fluent	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Date of interview
Tibor	male	18	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak, English	Parents, brother	Atheist	04/16/19
Viktor	male	18	Rural	Hungarian	Slovak, Hungarian	Hungarian	Slovak, Hungarian	Parents, brother	Atheist	04/16/19
Karol	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Parents, brother, sister	Christian, Catholic	06/24/19
Boris	male	16	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Christian	06/24/19
Bruno	male	16	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Parents, brother	Christian	06/24/19
Vladimir	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Atheist	06/24/19
Volodin	male	17	Rural	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak	Parents	Atheist	06/24/19
Igor	male	18	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Slovak, Hungarian	Slovak, Hungarian	Father, stepmother, stepbrothers	Atheist	04/16/19
Gustáv	male	18	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Slovak	Slovak, Hungarian	Parents, brother, sister	Atheist	04/16/19

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

File name	Gender	Age	Settlement	Citizenship(s)	Languages fluent	Languages home	Languages friends	Subject	Years of teaching experience	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Date of interview
WP2_SK_T_Anna_U	f	52	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, Russian, Czech	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak language, Civics	24	Christian Catholic	03/18/19
WP2_SK_T_Božena_U	f	65	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, Czech	Slovak	Slovak	History, Ethics	35	Christian Catholic	03/18/19
WP2_SK_T_Petra_U	f	35	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English,	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak language,	7	Atheist	03/19/19



File name	Gender	Age	Settlement	Citizenship(s)	Languages fluent	Languages home	Languages friends	Subject	Years of teaching experience	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Date of interview
					German			Ethics			
WP2_SK_T_Magdaléna_U	f	44	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Hotel. Gastro. management	12	Atheist	03/19/19
WP2_SK_T_Jana_U	f	34	Urban	Slovak	Slovak, English, French	Slovak	Slovak, English, French	Hotel. gastro. Management	7	Christian	03/19/19
WP2_SK_T_Blanka_S	f	38	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Geography, Biology	9	Christian Catholic	03/21/19
WP2_SK_T_Alexej_S	m	45	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak and English language, Art and culture	14	Christian Catholic	03/22/19
WP2_SK_T_Erika_S	f	36	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak language, Ethics	8	Christian Catholic	03/22/19
WP2_SK_T_Eleonóra_S	f	57	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Civics Ethics		Christian Catholic	03/21/19
WP2_SK_T_Dorota_S	f	43	Sub-urban	Slovak	Slovak, Czech, English	Slovak	Slovak	History	11	Christian Catholic	03/21/19
WP2_SK_T_Iveta_R	f	43	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English, Russian, Czech	Slovak	Slovak	History, Civics, ethics	10	Christian Catholic	04/15/19
WP2_SK_T_Martin_R	m	57	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, Czech, German, Russian	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak language, Civics	30	Atheist	04/16/19



File name	Gender	Age	Settlement	Citizenship(s)	Languages fluent	Languages home	Languages friends	Subject	Years of teaching experience	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Date of interview
WP2_SK_T_Katarína_R	f	38	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English, German	Slovak	Slovak	English	10	Christian Catholic	04/15/19
WP2_SK_T_Dana_R	f	43	Rural	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	Slovak	Civics, Ethics	12	Atheist	04/15/19
WP2_SK_T_Livia_R	f	40	Rural	Slovak	Slovak	Slovak, English	Slovak	English	13	Christian, Protestant	04/15/19

**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

Area	Ethnic diversity <sup>75</sup>	Income diversity in relation to the country <sup>76</sup>	Deprivation (unemployment), in relation to the country <sup>77</sup>	Cultural infrastructure <sup>78</sup>	Regional political indicator (support for nationalistic parties) <sup>79</sup>
<b>Urban</b>	average	high	average	Well developed	No significant electoral support for nationalistic parties.
<b>Semi-urban</b>	low	average	average	Well developed	Average electoral support for Slovak nationalistic parties (Slovak National Party and People’s Party Our Slovakia).
<b>Rural</b>	high	low	high	Underdeveloped	High electoral support for Slovak nationalistic parties (Slovak National Party and People’s Party Our Slovakia) and for Hungarian nationalistic party (Party of the Hungarian Community).

<sup>75</sup> Sources: Mušinka et al., 2014; <https://census2011.statistics.sk/tabulky.html>; <https://www.arcgis.com/>.

<sup>76</sup> Source: <https://www.platy.sk/>.

<sup>77</sup> Source: [https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/generate\\_page.php?page\\_id=855042](https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/generate_page.php?page_id=855042).

<sup>78</sup> Source: Golias, 2017.

<sup>79</sup> Source: <http://volby.statistics.sk/>.



**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school)**

School type		Secondary vocational school
School size	# students	556
	# teachers	66
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		Language of education: Slovak. Foreign languages offered: English, German. Number of free time activities offered: 13. Cultural activities, projects and exchange programs: cultural and beneficial events, Culture in Action international project, AVITAE international project, traditional craft project, excursions to Slovak and foreign cities, visits to local galleries, museums and theatres, student parliament, school magazine, collaboration with several NGOs, Erasmus+ and other international exchange programs. Low level of ethnic diversity (over 90% of students are ethnic Slovaks).

**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Semi-urban school)**

School type		Secondary grammar school
School size	# students	456
	# teachers	34
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		Language of education: Slovak. Foreign languages offered: English, German, Russian, French. Number of free time activities offered: 15. Cultural activities, projects and exchange programs: cultural, sports and beneficial events, voluntary student thematic club under the auspices of the British Council, excursions to Slovak and foreign cities, visits to local galleries, museums and theatres, student parliament, regular cultural publications, an annual school magazine, collaboration with several NGOs, Erasmus+ exchange program, Rotary International exchange program. Low level of ethnic diversity (over 95% of students are ethnic Slovaks).



**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Rural school)**

School type	Secondary vocational school	
School size	# students	406
	# teachers	39
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:	Languages of education: Slovak and Hungarian. Foreign languages offered: English, German. Number of free time activities offered: 14. Cultural activities, projects and exchange programs: excursions to Slovak and foreign cities, visits to local galleries, museums and theatres, student parliament, “We love Slovakia” (Máme radi Slovensko) project, “Modern high school - the future for your job” (Moderná stredná odborná škola-budúcnosť pre Vaše zamestnanie) project, collaboration with several NGOs, Erasmus+ exchange program. Multiethnic student body: approx. 52% Slovaks, 40% Hungarians, 7% Roma.	



## **Cultural literacy practices in formal education (Spain, Catalonia)**

**Marta Rovira, Mariona Ferrer-Fons, Judit Castellví, Nele Hansen, Julia Nuño de la Rosa**

### **1. Executive summary**

This report explores how policies and practices for the provision of cultural literacy are institutionalised in formal educational settings in Catalonia (Spain). Formal education is one of the main institutional settings within which young people develop their cultural literacy skills.

The report analyses the findings of the qualitative fieldwork carried out in three secondary public schools of Catalonia in three different contexts: rural, semi-urban and urban. By interviewing teachers and students, we want to understand how cultural literacy is acquired and enacted within formal educational settings through the teaching practice, pedagogical tools and learning experiences. The data collected comprises 60 interviews with students of 14 to 18 years old (20 interviews per selected school) and 9 interviews with teachers (3 interviews per school). These interviews were conducted following a semi-structured discussion guide with common questions for all countries participating in the CHIEF project. We analysed the interviews through a coding process using NVivo12 software.

The main conclusions from the analysis of the data are the following:

- Both students and teachers demand a more dynamic and participatory educational process, with many activities (theatre, dance, music, chorus, urban art, etc.) performed outside the classroom and based on active participation of the students.
- Young people's understanding of culture encompasses practices associated with both "high" and "mass" cultures, as well as learning about different customs and lifestyles. They include in their concept of culture anything that might constitute a form of learning, from social science subjects at school to meetings and conversations with friends or playing videogames. They also understand culture as a heritage that must be transmitted from generation to generation.
- However important, young people's online activities do not exclude their face-to-face relationships with friends. Young people want to meet with friends and carry out activities with them: doing sports, walking, or simply going to a bar or strolling in the street are quite common activities.



- Students from the rural school have more difficulty in defining culture, and their cultural and sports practices are less diverse as their options are more limited. They also travel less and participate less than those who belong to “high culture” and urban culture.
- Cultural diversity is part of a normal way of life of young people. Schools are often the places for cohabitation and learning about diversity, especially in the urban areas.
- Young people define themselves in various ways, and often are characterised by “hybrid” identities. Some of them defined themselves as Catalans, others as Spanish, others claim both identities, yet others refer to their (or their parents’) countries of origin; finally, there are those who see themselves as “citizens of the world”. It is a notable fact that some young people refuse to identify themselves in national terms and prefer a universalistic and simply human adherence (such as “citizen of the world”).
- We have not found a subjective identification implying any emotional adhesion to Europe. On the other hand, young people attribute to Europe certain characteristics related with values (e.g., freedom) or with distinct advantages over other parts of the world (e.g., economic opportunities).
- There are certain cultural practices that differ between boys and girls. Videogames are a practice for boys, especially those older the age of 16. Using Instagram or reading are cultural practices more typical of girls. At the same time, the experience of girls and boys at school is marked by their perception of the gender conflict. Women's struggle for equality and against harassment is one of the issues that most sparks conversations and debates in and out of the classroom among young people.
- Young people receive cultural education both inside and beyond the school system. Interviewed students look for information on the Internet, in the documentaries they watch, following YouTubers, or asking questions in the classroom. They want to know. This leads us to conclude that, while the school has a great impact on the cultural formation of young people, cultural literacy goes beyond, thanks to the possibilities offered by modern technologies and the interaction with different socialising actors (family, peers, non-formal spaces of learning cultural practices, and so on).



## 2. Introduction

The CHIEF project's Work Package 2 (Qualitative research in formal educational settings) explores how the national guidance on cultural literacy is reflected in classroom practices, specifically, the teaching practice, pedagogical tools and learning experiences. In this report, we are focusing on formal educational settings in order to explore how policies and practices for the provision of cultural literacy are institutionalised. Formal education is one of the main institutional settings within which young people acquire resources and develop their cultural literacy skills. The analysis will help to recognise existing innovative practices as well as explore young people's interests and needs in the field of cultural literacy.

Previously, the first phase of the WP2 was dedicated to the analysis of the national/federal curricula, and the findings are presented and discussed in the Deliverable 2.1 National/federal Curricula Review (CHIEF project, 2019). In this second phase, by interviewing teachers and students, we want to understand how cultural literacy is acquired and enacted within formal educational settings. The key themes that we raise are:

- Educational guidance on cultural literacy as reflected in the teaching practice and pedagogical tools;
- Young people's perception and assessments of their learning experiences on the topics of 'Europeanness,' 'cultural heritage' and 'cultural literacy';
- The forms of cultural participation of young people within the formal educational system and beyond;
- The sources of cultural knowledge of young people coming from the formal educational system and outside the school.

The central questions of the research have been:

- How do teachers understand 'European/national cultural heritage', 'cultural identity' and 'cultural diversity'?
- How do teachers communicate these concepts to their pupils and, in particular, facilitate cultural competence and participation?
- How do young people understand 'European/national cultural heritage', 'cultural identity' and 'cultural diversity'?
- How do young people describe their experience of getting familiar with the concepts of 'European/national cultural heritage', 'cultural identity' and 'cultural diversity'?
- How do they engage with these concepts in practice in the contexts of formal education and outside the school?



This report is based on results obtained from fieldwork carried out in three secondary public schools located in Catalonia (Spain) in three different contexts: a rural, a semi-urban, and an urban area. Following this Introduction, the report begins with a section focusing on the state of the art that established the basis for analysing the interviews. The State of the art section uses information from previous CHIEF Deliverables, including the analysis of the secondary education curricula in Spain and Catalonia and the reviews of Spanish and Catalan academic literature on cultural literacy, cultural education, cultural heritage, and diversity among young people. Within this theoretical framework, notes on the role of museums and cultural sites in the educational sphere are provided as well.

Further on, in the Methodology section, we will explain the context, information used for the fieldwork and the process of data analysis. The data collected comprises 60 semi-structured interviews with students of 14 to 18 years old (20 interviews per selected school) and 9 interviews with teachers (3 interviews per school). These interviews were conducted based on a common discussion guide for all CHIEF partners. In the case of Catalonia, the guide was translated into Catalan and Spanish. The informants could choose the interview language. We coded and analysed the interviews using NVivo12 software. The interviews with students and teachers were analysed in parallel. Afterwards, they were contrasted during the discussions of the results, taking into account the different points of view of each group.

The next section presents the main findings. An analysis was made of how young people socialise culturally within the school context, within the family context, and with friends. Likewise, individual cultural practices of young people were considered. Thus, on the one hand, we explore how a formal education institution such as the school transmits culture to young people through classroom and non-classroom activities, the relationship between education and culture, how diversity is embedded in the learning of culture, and the relevance of European identity and knowledge in the formal educational context. Individual cultural practices of young people were examined, taking into account the relationship between peers, cultural consumption, and their hobbies or talents.

As regards the teachers' opinions, the analysis focuses mainly on the teaching methods and the educational resources employed by them. Cultural activities both inside and outside the classroom are considered, as well as activities outside the school, and the museums or cultural sites used. On the side of the teaching staff, it is also interesting to show how diversity is perceived with relation to the identities of young people, as well as the cultural practices of the young.



The final sections discuss the main findings that were presented, prior to trying to highlight the most outstanding evidence. We will finish by providing some conclusions that should be of relevance for future research and policy.

### 3. State of the Art

This section takes as its starting point the previous findings about cultural and educational policies in Spain and Catalonia (CHIEF project, 2018) and the analysis of the secondary education curriculum (CHIEF project, 2019a). We also take into account the academic literature on cultural education and cultural heritage (CHIEF project, 2019c) and provide some discussion about the roles of the map of cultural/heritage sites (CHIEF project, 2019b).

Firstly, we should mention that the term “cultural literacy” is not directly translatable into either Catalan or Spanish – the closest equivalents used are “cultural education” and “cultural heritage”. In this sense, we must consider two aspects of the curriculum: how it is oriented towards culture, and its characteristics; and how cultural heritage is considered, and what elements it contains.

Regarding the role given to culture in the field of education, the secondary education curriculum in Spain is focused on the development of competencies (particularly in compulsory secondary education, or ESO). It no longer focuses exclusively on the content of subjects, though these continue to feature in it. Therefore, we must understand that cultural education is linked to certain skills and abilities, such as writing skills, critical capacity, digital competencies, oral expression and literary references, in other words – social and digital competencies. Also, knowledge of local and national history – and also, though less so, European history – is encouraged. There are scarce allusions to the fostering of creative cultural practices in which students take an active role, whereas the curriculum does aim to engage them with culture (especially the various forms of classical culture) as users and spectators.

Cultural heritage is treated as one of the core mechanisms of cultural transmission in the curriculum. Culture is understood as a phenomenon, both local and global, that helps to understand the present through an understanding of the past. The relevance of museums as heritage sites, and the need to promote historical memory in order to gain a better knowledge of one's own culture, are also mentioned. The importance of learning culture and its roots appears often in the curriculum. This is stressed by the important role played by museums and heritage sites in furnishing extra-curricular activities for schools. As observed in the CHIEF Deliverable report on cultural heritage (CHIEF project, 2019b), these venues produce



more vivid experiences and help to understand the past. An important aspect to take into account here is how these cultural sites in Catalonia also reinforce this local/global perspective, even though they provide few explicit references to the European framework. It is through the insistence on universal values (peace, solidarity, and so on) that the move to a global world perspective is achieved.

Europe is rarely mentioned in the Catalan curriculum, and when it is mentioned, this happens mostly in relation to the Greco-Roman tradition, Europe's art and historical evolution, its social, economic and political systems, or the great conflagrations and wars of the twentieth century. The values of tolerance and respect for human rights are also cited as European values to be taught to the pupils. The subjects where references to Europe and its cultural heritage are more present are: History and Geography, Citizenship and Values, and Art History (the last is elective in the post-compulsory stage).

It appears that cultural participation is being enabled by the possibilities offered by the Internet for education. As mentioned in the academic literature (Bernete, 2007), the media and the new technologies are forcing us to adopt a new way of understanding education and cultural participation. Internet does not only represent a new technological environment, but it must even be considered as a new learning environment. As Ariño and Llopis (2016) pointed out, new technologies (or, as they call them, socio-technologies) are changing the way of generating culture.

Some scholars (e.g., Solé Blanch, 2006) point out the need for youth pedagogy to incorporate the cultural materials and spaces of creativity in which the youth can develop their own processes of constructing cultural identities. These scholars consider that, on the school's part, what is being promoted is heritage or cultural consumption, rather than forms of creation or expression for the youths themselves in culture. Legal documents outline several social goals linked to cultural literacy education, including the following: economic growth; a basis for social and personal wealth; a stronger commitment to democratic values and institutions; enhanced social cohesion and solidarity; and greater respect for cultural differences.

Thus, it can be argued that culture is being considered as a tool, not as a purpose in itself. In this sense, from the point of view of educational institutions, to participate in culture is to attain knowledge on the formal cultural heritage, or to get involved in cultural activities such as theatre, dance, concerts and so forth. However, the more the school promotes this kind of culture, the more it is connected to the upper-class culture, as was explained by the Bourdieu's concept of cultural distinction (Bourdieu, 1979). According to Ariño and Llopis



(2016), educational capital and social class are in direct correlation with the cultural interests and practices of the young.

In this context, the Catalan curriculum stresses the need for all students to learn about the local Catalan identity as it shows itself in the language, traditions and symbolic references, and to learn also, to a lesser extent, about the Spanish identity. Teaching the ability to understand diverse cultures is also explicitly mentioned, favouring an intercultural approach. Specifically, references are often made about how knowledge and respect for representatives of ethnic groups different from the pupils' own are to be acquired through mutual recognition, empathy and knowledge of their characteristics and traditions.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Context and information about the fieldwork

Three localities of Catalonia were selected for fieldwork: Site A<sup>80</sup> (a rural site), Granollers (a semi-urban site) and a district in the city of Barcelona (an urban site). Site A is a town in Central Catalonia with around 4,600 inhabitants. In the past, it used to be an important mining centre and there was a lot of internal migration to Site A from other Spanish regions where people did not speak Catalan. Now most of the mines are closed, and there is an economic stagnation in the town. Site A does not have a sizable population of foreign origin. Granollers is an average-size city located 28 km from Barcelona, with well-developed industrial and service sectors. Finally, in Barcelona we selected a district with one of the lowest levels of populations' income, which is also very diverse in terms of the share of the foreign-born population: Nou Barris. The contexts of these localities represent different spaces of cultural opportunities for the young. More detailed characteristics of the localities are shown in the Appendix of this report (see Table A3). All three secondary schools are public schools. This would have facilitated comparison of schools at the level of organisational and educational structure.

In the case of the rural site (Site A), we chose the town's public secondary school. As for Granollers, we made a choice of several public schools, we contacted them by email and telephone, and we chose the one that was more readily accessible. In the case of the city of Barcelona, we contacted the Nou Barris district' educational authorities and requested an overview of the local secondary schools. This information helped us to choose the possible candidate schools for the fieldwork according to the characteristics of the pupils, the neighbourhood, the school-based Education Project (PEC) and the opportunities for

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<sup>80</sup> As it is a small town with only one public school, we have decided not to name the settlement.



fieldwork access. Detailed information about the schools is provided in the Appendix (Tables A4, A5 and A6). In all three cases, we provided the representatives of the management team with detailed information about the CHIEF project.<sup>81</sup> For the selection of students, we asked the teachers to find students with diverse characteristics from the points of view of gender, age (grades), country of birth (or the parent's country of birth) and students' academic achievements. Hence the teachers asked different students to participate pointing out that their involvement was voluntary.

The fieldwork started in March 2019 and finished in June, 2019.<sup>82</sup> The dates for the interviews were chosen based on the availability of each school. Three or four researchers of the UPF team carried out the interviews at each school. We conducted 60 interviews with students and 9 with teachers, according to the plan. The students were in the third and fourth grades of compulsory secondary education (ESO) and the first year of non-compulsory secondary education (High-School degree). Detailed information about the informants is provided in the Appendix (Tables A1 and A2). During the fieldwork, there were no specific social or political events that might have influenced the responses of students or teachers, although it should be noted that Catalonia and the rest of the State are living through a turbulent period related to the territorial conflict and the lack of governance at the State level.

In general, both students and teachers were receptive towards the interviews. Among the students there was more diversity as regards their ability to respond, with some of the youngest informants having difficulties understanding some of the questions. Oldest students (those who were 16-17 years old) generally showed more discursive capacity due to their age, a slightly higher level of education and experience. However, there were exceptions, with some 14-year-olds expressing very interesting opinions. The questions about the use of textbooks proved to be the most difficult for the interviewed students – important to note, the textbooks are used for only a few subjects in Catalonia nowadays. The average duration of student interviews was 31 minutes, while the average duration of teachers' interviews was 40 minutes.

There were no problems at the ethical level. Under the Spanish regulations legislating work with minors, in the case of students under the age of 15 (i.e. the pupils in their third year of ESO at the time of the fieldwork) we had to ask for parental consent before the interview.

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<sup>81</sup> It is worth mentioning that doing fieldwork in schools is becoming quite laborious. In our context, teachers and schools have an intense schedule throughout the academic year, and they often prefer not to take part in activities or collaborations that might take time away from the usual dynamics of the school.

<sup>82</sup> The interviews in the rural school were conducted on 27-28 March 2019; the interviews in the urban school were conducted on 23-25 May 2019; and the interviews in the semi-urban school were conducted on 5-6 June, 2019.



Teachers were asked to contact the parents and make sure they signed the consent forms. Neither students nor teachers expressed any inconvenience at the interviews being recorded. The interviews were carried out in Catalan or Spanish, depending on the informants' preference. Specifically, all the interviews with teachers were conducted in Catalan, whereas, in case of the students, 45 interviews were in Catalan and 15 were in Spanish. The urban school, which also has the highest share of students with foreign backgrounds, was the one where the most interviews were held in Spanish. The following table presents the profile of the interviewees by gender, language of the interview, and, in the case of students, grade:

Table 1  
Profile of the informants, Spain

		Gender		Interview language		Grade		
		Male	Female	Catalan	Spanish	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade ESO	4 <sup>th</sup> grade ESO	1 <sup>st</sup> year of High School
<b>Rural school</b>	Students	9	11	19	1	5	9	6
	Teachers	0	3	3	0	NA	NA	NA
<b>Semi-urban school</b>	Students	9	11	19	1	5	10	5
	Teachers	3	0	3	0	NA	NA	NA
<b>Urban school</b>	Students	9	11	7	13	5	10	5
	Teachers	0	3	3	0	NA	NA	NA

Note: NA= Not applicable

All transcripts of the interviews were anonymised.

## 4.2 Data analysis

Analysis of the interviews' transcriptions was carried out using the programme NVivo 12. Initially, two researchers of the UPF-CHIEF team coded 5 interviews independently from each other, and then met to develop a preliminary coding tree. The transcripts were coded according to the thematic topics of the interviews. New topics that emerged during the interviews were included as contributions from the fieldwork. Given the marked differences between the nodes of the teachers' and the pupils' interviews, these two groups of interviews were coded separately.

There are five thematic areas in the student interviews: school experiences, notions of culture and cultural heritage, cultural identity, cultural participation and country-specific issues. In the case of the teacher interviews, the thematic areas are: professional career, school, notion of culture, cultural identity of young people, and educational concepts and methodologies.



In both cases, three levels of nodes were created, with the above-mentioned thematic areas representing third-level nodes. On the second level, nodes have been organised along the thematic axes, creating sub-topics. For example, for the item "cultural identity", the corresponding sub-topics are: youth culture, diversity in the classroom, diversity among friends, family diversity, perception of being a European, and topics of discussion with classmates – i.e. different aspects that have to do with cultural identity.

On the first level of codification, the informants' answers and comments were coded in a detailed way. The original first-level nodes were very scattered but also very illustrative and allowed for a very quick overview of the results. Therefore, once the coding of all interviews was completed and discussed by the members of the research team, the original first-level nodes were later re-coded, considering the relevance of each of the codes that appeared with relation to the set of codes.

In summary, a more concrete analysis and a more generic approach were combined in the coding process. Four members of the research team participated in the coding process, meeting regularly to discuss the coding.

Subsequently, a final analysis was developed using the two final coding trees (for students and teachers). Information gathered through the interviews with the 9 teachers contributed nuances and enriched the results of the analysis of the 60 student interviews. The analysis has been organised around the thematic areas listed as follows:

Table 2  
Organisation of the analysis

Students (60)	Teachers (9)
	Professional career
School experiences	School & Educational concepts and methodologies
Notion of culture and cultural heritage	Notion of culture and cultural heritage
Cultural identity & Cultural participation	Cultural identity of young people
Country-specific issues	

Demographic data collected during the interviews has also been incorporated in the process of data analysis. The main variables considered are: a) gender and b) settlement type (rural, semi-urban, urban). For some nodes, the birthplace was considered as well, in order to have information about the migration background.

Demographic data included
- Settlement type: rural, semi-urban, urban



- Gender: male / female
- Age in years
- Grade: ESO3, ESO4, High School 1
- Place of birth: Catalonia, the rest of Spain, abroad
- Birthplace of the father / mother: Catalonia, the rest of Spain, abroad
- Family Language(s): Catalan, Spanish, others
- Friends Language(s): Catalan, Spanish, others
- Association / Youth organisation: yes / no
- What organisation?

The data analysis performed helped to learn about cultural literacy practices in schools and about the ways in which young people acquire it.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 School experiences

The perceptions among the interviewed students with regard to their school experience are very varied. Socialisation, i.e. establishing friendship relationships with their peers, is the most valued aspect mentioned by the students from all schools. They also appreciate having good relationships with their teachers.

The interviews gave students a chance to suggest changes and improvements for their school. The most significant change they proposed had to do with the class environment and school organisation, as they especially mentioned the need for more dynamic lessons and proposed more out-of-school activities. Along the same lines, when the youth were asked about desired improvements regarding teachers, some of them pointed a finger at their attitude, stating that they should be more flexible, dynamic, and empathetic. Also, some students requested greater commitment and motivation from teachers. Some students expressed their concern about misbehaving students and their lack of motivation and participation.

When it comes to improvements in teaching methodologies, students gave many different answers: proposals were made to increase the number of foreign languages offered, allocate more time for artistic activities, history, ethics<sup>83</sup>, and other items. When asked about the subjects and content they thought were missing, many of them mentioned everyday life issues, such as sexual education, or economic counsels for daily life. However, some of the

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<sup>83</sup> Ethics in the Spanish curricula is an optional subject that works as an alternative if pupils do not want to follow the subject of religion (Catholicism, or different religions depending on the school). Families or pupils can choose one or the other.



interviewed teachers mentioned that they do try to discuss these issues with the students, separately from the general curricula.

*INF: [W]ell, most of the things that they [the teachers] teach us, we don't use them in real life. Almost all of the things we are taught, we don't use them.*

*INT: Okay, so you would like it to be more practical?*

*INF: That's how I understand it. Maybe it would be a good idea to have subjects that teach you practical things ... things for your everyday life. Maybe it would be nice to cook, that would be fine. Perhaps it's stupid, but, I don't know, cooking, or fixing a car, pumping a tyre, planting a tree, things like that, things useful in everyday life, it may seem foolish, but these are things that someday you'll have a use for.*

(Bruno, male, student, semi-urban school, Spain)

As regards the use of books, almost all of the interviewed students stated that they use books for some of their subjects. Some students had difficulties in evaluating their textbooks. In relation to this question, there is a wide range of opinions, which go from very positive to very critical. Nonetheless, there is a widespread opinion that books should be more visual, without so much text, and offer practical exercises. Some students said that they value textbooks for expanding their knowledge on a subject. In combination with the books—which are used only for some subjects, not all—there is a growing usage of digital resources, especially the ones involving PowerPoint presentations elaborated by the teachers themselves or the use of digital boards and activity dossiers which students are meant to answer. Some teachers say that books are becoming mere supporting materials, unlike what they used to be in the past.

*INT: Do you use schoolbooks?*

*INF: Well, we use them for support. We use them especially in the first grade, they [students] find it really useful, but I try to teach them how to search themselves for related bibliography and authors, develop autonomy in searching for information.*

(Davinia, female, teacher, urban school, Spain)

Students prefer to combine the use of books or other paper-based materials with digital resources. When they were asked how they see the future of education, many stated that it will be more technological, with a large group of students saying that textbooks will disappear and another group believing that their use will be considerably reduced.



Teachers mentioned that the changes in their methodology (meaning more participative classes, gamification, project-based learning, cooperative learning or flipped classroom, to mention some) are aimed at improving the learning process. From their point of view, they need to increase pupils' interest by using more dynamic and pro-active strategies in the classroom. They described how, especially in the urban school, they try to guide students with learning difficulties by using non-standard educational tools such as staging plays, debating, singing, listening to music, organising recreational workshops (i.e. "magic shows" in English), and visiting cultural sites. In relation to the experience of these activities, a teacher said:

*As for students with difficulties who have an as-yet undiscovered artistic side, well, we have noticed that... we've had many surprises because, to say the truth, we discovered a lot of talent in people who are getting bad grades but who could have a bright future awaiting them in this respect. (Cristina, female, teacher, urban school, Spain)*

Conversely, some teachers commented on the difficulties they found in the process of implementing new teaching strategies, which were due to the limitations of the curricula, time constraints, bureaucracy and so forth. Sometimes they also mentioned the lack of interest or the cultural difficulties on the part of some pupils, especially in the urban school with high rates of immigrant students.

## **5.2 Notions of culture and cultural heritage**

The definitions of culture as stated by the secondary school students are highly diverse, embracing a broad spectrum of issues that range from knowledge, customs, traditions and historical patrimony to ways of thinking and acting, cooking, or engaging in cultural activities. The underlying key idea is that these phenomena are passed on from generation to generation. Interestingly, few students alluded to the changing nature of culture, thinking of it rather as something that persists over time. Needless to say, the task of defining culture was quite tricky for most of the informants, but this happens to be the case for all of us, culture being one of the most "slippery" concepts in the social sciences. Still, it is interesting to note that, in our study, the students from the rural school showed more difficulties in defining culture than the students of the semi-urban or urban schools.

The frequent definition of culture as cultural and historical patrimony, which encompasses the history, heritage sites, museums, gastronomy, geography, and the language of a given place and/or society, concurs with a vision that is taught in certain subjects, such as History,



Social Sciences or Philosophy, and which is therefore linked to (and, most probably, influenced by) formal education. Curiously, such an understanding of culture was less prevalent in the case of the informants from the semi-urban school. We also find a broad spectrum of definitions among the teachers, who oscillate between, on the one hand, traditions, Catalan culture, historical heritage and so on, and, on the other hand, cultural diversity, respect, and tolerance.

Where do young people acquire cultural knowledge? It is worth noticing that many of the students, according to their own view, acquire cultural knowledge, above all, in secondary school (this is particularly the case for those students who related cultural knowledge to the content that they learn in subjects such as History, Literature, or Geography), and, to a much lesser extent, through family, friendships or personal activities, even through the Internet. This can be partly due to the situational context of the interviews—the study was carried out within the premises of secondary schools—and the study's focus on learning processes in a formal education context, but also to the fact that, for youths of this age, secondary school often constitutes the centre of their universe, a universe where the most important learning and socialisation processes occur, slowly replacing those that take place within the family during childhood. This fact, of course, provides a great chance for exploring new ways and possibilities of cultural learning within the context of formal education.

In the context of the school, cultural content is most of all acquired in the subjects of Human and Social Sciences, and not so much through activities outside the classroom. It is worth mentioning that this is, predominantly, the view of the students from the semi-urban and rural schools. Students from the urban school, according to their own statements, learn cultural content to a higher extent through activities outside the classroom, which include visits to museums, theatres, and universities, and cultural events on the school grounds. Apparently, the urban, semi-urban and rural schools that took part in the study each apply distinctive approaches and methodologies to the cultural learning processes. Overall, students evaluated learning activities outside the classroom as highly positive, because they enable ways of learning, participating and socialising that are different from those taking place within the classroom.

*INT: Did you take part in the city walk <sup>84</sup> organised by your school?*

*INF: Yes.*

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<sup>84</sup> Every spring there is a thematic walking tour for secondary schools of the city and all 14-year-old students take part in it. In 2018, the theme was the remembrance of the bombing during the Civil War and historical memory spaces of the city. In 2019, the theme was the presence of prominent women (intellectuals, scientists, artists, etc.) in the public sphere, such as in the street names.



*INT: And what do you think of it?*

*INF: I went there to meet again with many people from my old school, and that was nice. It was fine, I liked it.*

*INT: You liked it, why?*

*INF: Yes, well, because it's a way to learn without being inside a classroom.*

(Héctor, male, student, semi-urban school, Spain)

This is even more significant when we consider that, according to the results of the study, many young people carry out these kinds of cultural activities only within the framework of the school, and not with their families, their friends or individually. More than a few students voiced criticism against the fact that cultural contents remain restricted to the contents learned in class, and is predominantly linked to the past, demanding that more importance be given to current cultural processes.

It is also highly interesting that, while many of the interviewed students assess the learning of cultural content in secondary school highly positively, some of them, on the contrary, show little or no interest in learning such content. The latter seems to be proportionally more the case amongst boys than girls.

How do young people learn about culture with their friends? According to young people themselves, they learn cultural content with their friends mostly thanks to the collective use of the Internet and social networks. Many young people believe that they get to know different cultures and customs through their friends or classmates of different origins to their own, and that, thereby, they learn about other cultures, as well as opening their horizons when it comes to cultural diversity.

*For example, my friend Arman is Armenian, and I'd never had Armenian friends. I know that my culture is very different from his. ... He taught me that he's different from the Armenians I might know. Because he says that Armenians are sexist, racist, and homophobic, but he is not. He tells me things about his culture that I was surprised to hear about because he is not like the others. (Elisenda, female, student, urban school, Spain)*

It is worthy of note that urban youth mention to a higher extent that they are learning cultural diversity through their friendships. This is not unexpected as, in Catalonia, the foreign-born population is much more present in the cities than in rural areas. In addition to friendships, music and sports also turn out to be important cultural transmitters in the eyes of the young.



And how do young people get cultural education in their families? Young people interviewed point out that they learn within their own family about the diversity of customs and traditions, as they compare family members who pertain to different generations and geographical origins. This assessment is more common among students with a migrant background, because their family members probably show a higher degree of diversity in cultural and geographical origin. These families constitute a context where students have intercultural relations. Apart from this, young people also mention “talking about politics” in the family as an important tool through which they acquire cultural knowledge related to political and social processes. This includes watching the news together in the evenings or discussing concrete matters with family members (who, often, have different standpoints). Talking about politics seems to be more common among boys than girls. What is taking place in these cases is an intergenerational transfer of the practice of being interested and informed about politics and social processes, a practice that young people learn within their families. Last but not least, young people acquire cultural knowledge during trips and vacations with the family, visiting different places and sites: tourism turns out to be a major tool for cultural learning, and one we shouldn’t underestimate.

How do young people learn cultural content individually? Here, the Internet and the audio-visual formats made available through internet platforms prove to be the most important learning tools.

How do young people consider the European reality? That is one of the most interesting results of the study in Spain. Many of the interviewed students associate the essence of Europe and European culture with a diversity of customs, traditions and behaviours that can be observed in the different European countries. They do not consider Europe to be uniform or homogeneous, but rather as a mix of different influences, customs and cultures. Nevertheless, some students do perceive a “common way of thinking” across Europe.

Europe is often associated with the European Union and its various institutions, not all of which are evaluated in a positive way. Generally speaking, defining Europe and European culture proves a difficult task for many of the interviewed young people of Catalonia—Europe emerges as a rather abstract concept, distant from the lives and realities of the young. How the Catalan youth acquire knowledge about Europe is comparable to the results with regard to learning processes about culture in general: schools are named predominantly as the sources of knowledge about Europe. The students learn about Europe through subjects such as History or Social Sciences, or thanks to cultural activities related somehow to Europe that are organised by their school.



*INF: Lately we've been going out on trips in connection with European or Spanish history. I think they help you to learn more about the past of Spain and Europe.*

*INT: Where have you been to?*

*INF: We went to the Museum of History of Catalonia. We also went to see a play of Don Quixote. (...) It was good. I think I've learned more than I thought I could know about Spain or Europe in general.*

(Yashira, female, student, urban school, Spain)

The students also mention that they learn about Europe within their family context (during family travels or discussions at home) and through diverse sources, such as watching the news or other TV programmes, individually or with their family. On the contrary, not a single student with a migration background mentioned the family as a place in which to learn about Europe. And, even more remarkably, neither did the students from the rural school.

### 5.3 Cultural participation

Cultural participation embraces all activities related to culture carried out by the students. Thus, the interviewees mentioned activities they do in their free time as hobbies, family events, extracurricular activities and, of course, how they consume culture—which resulted in interesting findings about possible gender differences.

Some students tell us that they do not watch TV at all, arguing that they do not have enough time to watch TV. Despite this, we can observe how many of the interviewees comment that they consumed series and documentaries on the Internet.

Music consumption is one of the most frequently named cultural practices. We observe an abundant variety of interests: youth from the urban school often prefer to listen to English pop and urban music, such as hip hop and rap (Latino, in particular). Music in Catalan is hardly listened to at all, in contrast to youths from the rural and semi-urban schools who listen to it frequently. Reggaetón is one of the most consumed music genres among the students interviewed in semi-urban and urban schools, and some boys from the rural school; however, there are also those who state that they do not like it, mostly because of its sexist lyrics. Girls were more critical in this respect.

*INF: I like all kinds of music, but I don't like reggaetón at all.*

*INT: Why don't you like reggaetón?*

*INF: I don't know. Because it's like music where everything is sexist.*



*INT: So you don't like it because of its meanings?*

*INF: The rhythm is ok, but not the lyrics...*

(Aina, female, student, semi-urban school, Spain)

One of the remarkable findings of the research is that one of the frequent leisure activities done individually is reading, although it has been reported mostly by girls from urban and rural schools. It is equally noteworthy that boys from the urban school hardly read at all. Reading is one of the activities, along with playing videogames (the latter one being preferred by males), where gender seems to be an important explanatory factor, although more research is needed.

A small group —particularly, young people from the semi-urban school who get involved in sports competitions—argue that they do not have time for leisure or cultural activities; however, the students interviewed are already taking part in out-of-school activities, sports and cultural practices and would like to get involved in more activities.

Given the importance attached to one's group of peers during adolescence, many students name hanging out with friends as one of their main leisure activities. Moreover, activities such as participating in local festivities with friends offers them, on the one hand, entrance to free cultural events, such as concerts, performing arts, and popular culture activities, and, on the other hand, in some cases also offers them the opportunity to live such activities as a group, to construct a group identity and meet new people.

Worthy of notice is the very little prevalence of activities which involve spending money, which makes walking around, singing and dancing, and listening and playing music one of the most common activities that young people do with friends. Going to concerts is also a very common activity, which sometimes may involve some expense. In fact, some young people from the different schools stated that they would like to go to music festivals more often in the future (money and distance may be barriers at those ages).

Thus, we observed that music-related activities are very common among groups of friends (apart from listening to music individually), as well as all activities related to sports, from practicing to watching, and, above all, football. Boys also report very often that they play videogames (such as Fortnite and FIFA). Here it is important to mention that those who play videogames are willing to admit that they do it for long hours, in particular during the weekends. Somewhat interestingly, interest towards playing videogames seems to decrease with age. Some of the older boys (the 16-year-olds) admitted critically that they spent too



much time playing videogames when they were younger, arguing that they now prefer to socialise with friends outdoors.

#### **5.4 Extracurricular activities**

Extracurricular activities represent a general practice across all the youths interviewed. Sports and language learning are the most common of such activities. Amongst sports, football is the most played; for the young people interviewed, it maintains its traditional masculine character and has more prevalence in the rural area, where almost half of the boys interviewed practice it. In the semi-urban school, there are other sports that are done very often (three or four times a week), such as volleyball, handball, or swimming. The fact that the school facilitates intensive dedication (for instance, in the organisation of the student schedule or for the involvement in championships) to sports is a clear explanation of this phenomenon.

As regards language learning outside school as an extracurricular activity, it seems that families still give English a very prominent role, especially among the rural and semi-urban girls, with much less incidence in the group of boys, especially in the urban area.

Music learning is the main artistic activity named, with the guitar being the most popular, maybe because of its well-established tradition. Theatre and dance are not as widespread and were mostly named by girls from the rural school. In the urban school, some students mention urban dance (hip-hop and break-dance) as activities that they like to watch and that they do in their free time.

Being a scout is another out-of-school activity named by the students, and it seems to be more widespread in the rural area, where there are less leisure options offered, and it has more prevalence among girls. The fact that many students from the semi-urban school do competitive sports that usually require practice during the weekends may explain the low number of young people from this school engaging in scout activities, which are known to be important for young people in Catalonia. A large number of students of non-Catalan (and also non-Spanish) origin in the urban school explains, on the other hand, why scout activities were hardly mentioned in this school.

Very few of the interviewed students report having volunteered on their own initiative, the reason being that many of them have volunteered as part of the school programme, since two of the selected schools have volunteering programmes. Volunteering is considered a very positive experience, and some of the students seem keen to do it if they have opportunities.



### 5.5 Knowledge expansion through Internet and social networks consumption

It is hardly news that a lot of cultural consumption is taking place through the Internet and the social networks among students. What is remarkable is that most of the interviewed youths perceive the Internet as an important source of information and a place to expand their knowledge; Specifically, YouTube has been named as the most used platform, with a wide range of uses that often overlap, like searching for information, following influencers, listening to music, looking up practical information, seeking videogame tricks, cultural consumption, etc. A small group of students name Spotify as their main platform for cultural consumption. Arantxa represents an example of a girl who expands her cultural knowledge using YouTube:

*INT: So what do you think you learn from the Internet that is not taught in high school?*

*INF: You caught me there! Some things, when they are not clear to me, I go to YouTube or the Internet and it helps me understand what the teacher explained. Maths, for example: when I don't understand something, I look it up on YouTube.*

*INT: Yes, there are people who explain maths on YouTube, I've seen that.*

*INF: And then there are things from Biology class that I don't fully understand, so I look them up on YouTube, and if other people can explain that to me, maybe I will be able to understand it.*

(Arantxa, female, student, urban school, Spain)

When it comes to leisure activities on the Internet, there is a clear gender divide: while series such as *Elite* and *La Casa de Papel* are watched mostly by girls, only boys report playing videogames. As for Instagram which is quite widespread, the interviewees often state that they mostly look at others' activities, rather than publishing stories or posts themselves.

*I use Instagram a lot to see what other people are saying, and that's it... only to take a look. It's been two years since I published a picture.* (Theo, male, student, urban school, Spain)

Whilst the use of Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp is widespread, other social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat have been reported to be used much less. There are very few students who are critical of social networks and do not use them; interestingly, none of them are from the rural school.

*INF: I don't learn much [from social networks].*



*INT: You don't? Do you think it's possible to learn something from social networks?*

*INF: Well, it's just that lately everything is publicity... nowadays you go into YouTube and you have to see three ads before the video, and in Instagram it's the same. Everywhere it's ads and ads, that's what I think ...*

(Julia, female, student, urban school, Spain)

## 5.6 Cultural and leisure activities with the family

It is highly remarkable that tourism and travelling, as well as the very closely related activity of visiting museums and historical buildings, are the activities of greatest prevalence, by far, among family activities. However, it is significant that this set of activities is referred to by almost all of the girls, but considerably less mentioned when it comes to the boys.

We found families who attended paid activities, such as going to the theatre, cinema, travel, etc. Family travelling is often linked to paying a visit to relatives or friends who live in other parts of Spain or Europe, or, in case of families with a migration background, visiting their countries of origin.

Activities carried out by families do not necessarily have a cultural and educational purpose, though; a large number of the activities mentioned by students have as their main objective to simply spend time with the family, such as by sharing meals, strolling through the forest, participating in local festivals, etc. However, it is worth highlighting that there is a small group who maintain that they do not carry out any activity with their family. In many cases, this is due to a lack of time, which makes it very difficult to engage with the family, and in still other cases the problem lies in the relationship between family members.

*INT: What activities do you do with your family? You said you don't do anything, but surely you go on holidays with them?*

*INF: I don't go with my parents, sometimes I go skiing with my brother. With the school, we've been to Greece and Cantabria. Last December we went to Greece. With my parents I don't have any relationship, I go on my own and so do they.*

(Júlia, female, student, urban school, Spain)

## 5.7 Cultural access barriers

The students who identify barriers to accessing culture are mostly young girls from the semi-urban school. They argue that lack of time and their geographical location are the main limitations for them to gain access to culture. Some of them mentioned that they expect the future will bring more opportunities as soon as they will attend universities in Catalonia's main cities.



### 5.8 Cultural diversity

The idea of a youth culture that the young can regard as their own, with positive elements and values, including the ability to accept diversity and tolerance towards others' beliefs, but also acquiring personal independence, appears only tangentially in the interviews of young people. Rather, it is in the teachers' interviews where we find references to this youth culture based on respect and diversity.

In fact, the interviewed students live in an environment of cultural diversity, especially in the urban and semi-urban areas, though less so in rural environments. Diversity in the classroom is linked to this cultural diversity, and to the idea of respect for the cultures of origin. Informants also mention a diversity of values, musical tastes, gender issues, etc. The opinions, the interests and the ways of behaving are all aspects that those interviewed consider as relevant in defining diversity among equals.

*We [the students] have very different concepts about many points of view. [...] There're some people, for example, who care a lot about studying, care a lot about learning, and others who wonder what this is going to do for me in life. So, we discuss a lot there because... For example, history, I'm going to focus more on history. What [other students] say is, why should it matter to me knowing about the Spanish Civil War if it's already past and it won't affect me in the future? So yes, they are very different in that.*

(Yashira, female, student, urban school, Spain)

In some cases, the diversity of social class is pointed out as an important and positive aspect as well as the diversity in relation to academic marks. At the same time, respect in the classroom is an important issue worth mentioning, because it appears in different interviews, even with teachers. While there emerge negative comments about how the behaviour of troubled classmates or poor academic performance affect the informants, yet, on the other hand, there is a positive assessment of cultural diversity, especially in the urban school, where there is more diversity.

Compared to the students interviewed in rural and semi-urban schools, students from the urban school are the ones with most friends from culturally diverse backgrounds.

*I think we have similar cultures [with my friends]. [...] Let me see, how can I explain this. One likes one thing and the other another, one likes culture, what else, hip hop, and the other likes pop, but, in the end, we like much the same, I think.* (Jan, male, student, semi-urban school, Spain)



Diversity gets reduced in the semi-urban school where the students are mostly middle-class. Although in secondary compulsory education (ESO) and vocational education there is a presence of students with immigrant backgrounds, their presence decreases, however, in post-compulsory courses.

In relation to family diversity, it is interesting to note that cultural diversity also shows up there, since some of the families have experienced a migratory process, something quite common in Catalonia.<sup>85</sup> In addition, the generational differences spark differences in opinion, for example about gender roles as considered from the standpoint of the young people and of their parents or grandparents.

*[The parents and grandparents] come from cultures which are a little different, because maybe each one has a different way of thinking about what we do. As to my family, I don't see them much, because my grandparents live in Almeria, so... I don't know how to say what your culture is, would you know?* <sup>86</sup> (Paula, female, student, semi-urban school, Spain)

What we have observed is that the students living in the most diverse (urban) environment are those who report more experiences with cultural diversity in their relationships between peers. Students mention that gender, on the other hand, is a topic that appears in discussions between friends and in the classroom, both in the rural environment and in the urban environment.

*Now that we are doing Social Politics ... everyone thinks what they think, but everyone thinks what they think from what they hear at home. Then, when they find out whether you are pro-independence or not, if you don't already know that... yes, I do anyway. Topics, topics and big issues, or feminism and all that, it makes children complain—well, not all. They hold men in a very bad position, thinking they are all that way, you know, things of that sort...* (Queralt, female, student, rural school, Spain)

From the teacher's perspective, language diversity in the classroom is particularly important, since it can affect the proficiency in Catalan as a vehicular language at school. In the more diverse urban environment, some teachers point out that there is a certain resistance against

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<sup>85</sup> 70% of Catalans have a relative born outside Catalonia (Catalan Institute of Statistics, 2019).

<sup>86</sup> The student here refers to the feeling of mixed regional identities due to her family background. Almeria is a province of Andalucía, a region of the South of Spain.



learning Catalan on the part of migrant pupils. Some teachers expressed having certain difficulties with, or perhaps prejudices against, the students of foreign origin.

*I don't live in their house and there are many things that obviously I can't know. But I can see the general trend. That is, they don't have class awareness because they're very young, and they think their situation is normal. Students who are skipping classes because they have to stay at home to take care of their sick siblings... So, of course, you know, I say 'you are studying, and if you don't come to class, you don't do the work, don't do what you must do ...' There are other priorities.* (Cristina, female, teacher, urban school, Spain)

The teachers observe the students learning to be tolerant towards existing differences, although occasional conflicts can arise, especially when they are younger. Teachers, though, consider that students have to learn to manage these conflicts and accept diversity as part of their process of growing up.

*They are very tolerant, I am speaking of high school second grade students. Maybe the children of ESO, first and second graders, they don't yet know what this means, and they do a bit more mischief.* (Cristina, female, teacher, urban school, Spain)

From the point of view of teachers, diversity does not mean always “cultural diversity”, but a lot of things they related to education: social class, behaviour, emotional situation, age-related maturity, etc.

## 5.9 National vs European identity

Many students say, when asked about it, that they feel European. But there are no references to a subjective or emotional identity in this "feeling European", but rather the assumption of an officially established frame of reference. In the case of students born outside of Europe, they affirm their European identity, but combine it with their identity of origin or the Spanish identity. And they also treat European identity as a practical fact, rather than as an emotional bond to Europe. Students mentioned some reasons considering Europe as a place worth to live: more economic opportunities, freedom to move, etc.

*Well. I do feel European, but not totally European. I feel more like European and Spanish and Ecuadorian Latin. I feel this mixed way, but I feel happy with who I am.* (Martina, female, student, urban school, Spain)

*INT: Do you feel European?*



*INF: Yes.*

*INT: And what does being European mean to you?*

*INF: ... I don't know... That you live here. And maybe that I have some benefits, right? As a European individual, and maybe other people don't have that.*

(Emma, female, student, semi-urban school, Spain).

In the case of national identity, the students of non-immigrant backgrounds position themselves by choosing between the Catalan and Spanish identities, depending on their family origin. Both birthplace and language spoken at home have a bearing on their national identification, whether between Catalan and Spanish, or both at the same time. Interestingly, students from the rural school add to these references the locality they are from, e.g. their village. In the case of the students of immigrant backgrounds, other identities related to their family background are showing up.

*I feel Catalan. I know I am from Spain, but I feel more Catalan than Spanish.*

(Llum, female, student, rural school, Spain)

*Well, I feel both Catalan and Spanish.* (Bruno, male, student, semi-urban school, Spain)

*From the village of Site A and Catalan, and that's about it.* (Roger, male, student, rural school, Spain)

It must be said that sometimes a certain awkwardness shows up when asking the interviewees about their national identity, this being quite a conflictive topic in Catalonia for some people who prefer not to have to choose between either the Catalan or the Spanish identity.<sup>87</sup> In fact, that is the reason why there is a group of students who do not identify themselves with any national identity, and rather choose to speak of a "universal" or simply "human" identity. This position has been reported by the students of immigrant origin as well.

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<sup>87</sup> The Centre for Opinion Polling (CEO) of Catalonia asks the 'Moreno question' about national identity as part of the Opinion Barometer held every quarter. The results of the last available Barometer, of July 2019, show that 39% of the adult population feel equally Spanish and Catalan, 11% feel more Spanish than Catalan or only Spanish, and 44% feel only Catalan or more Catalan than Spanish. See: <http://ceo.gencat.cat/ca/barometre/detall/index.html?id=7188>. On the other hand, the last Participation and Politics Survey (EPP), done in Catalonia in 2017, showed that 6% of the young people (aged 16 to 34) regard themselves as citizens of the world and 4% said they felt indifferent to identity issues (both being optional answers that were not offered during the interviews), in a move away from the traditional Spanish-Catalan national identities, which was what the survey was specifically addressing. See: [https://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits\\_tematics/joventut/observatori\\_catala\\_de\\_la\\_joventut/enquesta\\_d\\_e\\_participacio\\_i\\_politica/participation-and-politics-survey/](https://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits_tematics/joventut/observatori_catala_de_la_joventut/enquesta_d_e_participacio_i_politica/participation-and-politics-survey/)



*First of all, I form part of the people, yes, but of course, technically speaking, in a nationwide sense I am Spanish because I was born here, and I also feel Catalan because I was born in Catalonia. But, well, I think it has nothing to do with nationalities, I think we are all the same. (Elisenda, female, student, urban school, Spain)*

*INF: I am a person.*

*INT: And that is all?*

*INF: Yes, because I don't like being either this or that.*

(Dikran, male, student, urban school, Spain)

Teachers are concerned sometimes about how to treat the political conflict on Catalan independence during classes. Students are very influenced by what they see in the media, and sometimes the subject is discussed in class as a way to engage in a debate from a more educational perspective. But there is also self-censorship among many teachers who try not to introduce the political conflict in the classroom.<sup>88</sup> Teachers generally avoid positioning themselves in class about this issue, but they are concerned that students have a simplified view on the subject and think that they could obtain a more comprehensive view if these issues were discussed within subjects like History and Social Sciences.

*[O]f course, I explain, I speak of these things in a very aseptic manner. I never state whether I am or not [an independentista], which I am, but it's also difficult to speak as a teacher neutrally. It's complicated, it's very complicated ... And, well, as a teacher, the recommendation that I always give is that they must be well informed, that they must worry, they must contrast things, not look at only one side of the story... (Hector, male, teacher, semi-urban school, Spain)*

As many informants feel this kind of discomfort, there are few of them who, when asked about national identity, clearly position themselves as either *independentists* or supporters of the unity of Spain.

*INF: I don't know, I mean, I feel Spanish, but that's because I've got all of my family here... but I think that, because of the things that Spain has done, independence should be granted [to Catalonia]. Or at least things should be made right, letting us vote, I don't know, I think that is a right [thing to do]. (Gema, female, student, semi-urban school, Spain)*

<sup>88</sup> The political conflict about the self-determination of Catalonia was very alive in the period of the fieldwork.



The teachers regard the relationship between migration and identity with a certain concern, because they see that the students are in a situation of indeterminate identity. At the same time, the immigrant label can make it difficult for them to be part of Catalan society.

*This [cultural position] is important because these are guys with one foot in two different worlds. Until their generation has had children, they will always bear the immigrants' label ... So, they must try to grow roots here. Otherwise, they will permanently be in a state of cultural identity that stretches either on one side or the other.* (Susanna, female, teacher, urban school, Spain)

*What worries me sometimes is this loss of identity, I'm not from here or from there.* (Davinia, female, teacher, urban school, Spain)

Apart from national identity, the ideological position and political identities of the students also appear to a certain degree. More than other issues that arise, such as atheism, ecology or social justice, feminism is a recurring theme. There is also much criticism of machismo and discussions taking place on this question in the classroom. There do not seem to be any differences between the students of the urban and rural schools on this question.

*Feminism. I find it has a lot of sense, a lot of strength, and it must be achieved. I very much agree that women must claim rights for themselves. They have to say, we are here, and we are equals. Yes, I understand, and I support them, but I didn't paint the walls.* (Ona, female, student, urban school, Spain)

Finally, students were asked about some specific issues in the country related to cultural consumption and the language(s) used for it. More specifically, our question was about the language in which the cultural products that students consume are performed. The reason is to explore the presence of English as a 'new' language for cultural consumption in Spain, and also the presence of the languages of immigration. In short, interviews show that the presence of English as a language of cultural consumption in relation to music stands out. In addition, the presence of English in television series on the Internet leads to a certain pressure to learn this language, as parents and teachers motivate young people to watch content in English. English teachers point out that this generation shows greater rates of people using English for listening to music and consuming audio-visual content. But the interviews show that there are really few students who learn English, as many of those who do watch series in English use subtitles.



*I think the language they mostly consume culture in is Spanish, without a doubt. But there are many things that are not in Spanish, they are in English, and thanks to this they are practicing English. (Joan, male, teacher, semi-urban, Spain)*

In this regard, it should be noted that linguistic diversity is seen as something inherent in Catalan society, and this is especially so in the case of the present generation, because it consumes cultural content in both Catalan and Spanish, although there are more products in Spanish. However, other languages also appear, given the diversity of cultural backgrounds of the interviewed students. Thus, the migration process comes out as a vital experience that produces cultural learning, such as the fact of living in families where different cultures co-exist.

## 6. Discussion

In this section we will discuss some of the most relevant evidence derived from the qualitative interviews with students and teachers. Some of the aspects mentioned in the State of the art section appear in our data. The Spanish (and Catalan) curriculum highlights the importance of learning about culture and the relevance of museums and heritage sites as experiential spaces to bring young people closer to culture. All the teachers interviewed assume this view and they are very aware of the remarkable role that museums and heritage sites play in transmitting culture to young people. The three schools organise activities outside the school in this direction. We also argued that in our curriculum are scarce allusions to the fostering of creative cultural activities in which students take an active role. Students are treated as users and spectators. Experiences of active cultural practices (dance, theatre, singing) in the context of formal education in the three schools exist, but they seem to be limited. Some of the young people interviewed acknowledged that it would be interesting to integrate these activities into the curriculum.

At the level of cultural practices of young people outside school, it is obvious, as the literature pointed out (Bernete, 2007; Ariño Lopis, 2016), that the Internet and social networks generate new spaces for learning and cultural consumption. It is interesting to highlight these two dimensions mentioned by previous authors: on the one hand, the Internet facilitates greater access to music, movies, series, and, on the other hand, it is also a space where students go to expand their cultural knowledge and to solve their doubts.

The schools where the interviews were conducted have been confirmed as active agents of cultural transmission, both because of the content and competencies provided to the students, and because of the activities carried out outside the classroom. On the one hand, at the level of subjects, an earlier analysis of the secondary school curriculum showed that the contents



related to History and Geography, and Literature and Languages are those that contribute most to cultural learning (CHIEF project, 2018). On the other hand, the school incorporates cultural learning through out-of-classroom activities as well, both inside and outside the school premises. Activities outside the classroom (for instance, going to museums, theatres or historical sites) allow for a more vivid learning among students and disconnect them from the day-to-day learning dynamics. These activities are highly valued by the students, including some artistic experiences like theatre or dance workshops at some schools. It is also important to emphasise the important role of Catalonia's network of museums, spaces of memory, and cultural heritage, which are used by all the schools for their out-of-classroom activities. In addition, for many students, attendance of plays or shows of artistic content organised by the school represents their first experiences of attending such performances.

A classic tool for transmitting content in formal education has been the textbook. What does our research have to say about its use? The evidence we have gathered tells us that the textbooks are still used in some subjects, and there are students who consider them useful for their learning process, although there is a lot of variation as regards their use depending on the teachers and schools. At present, the use of textbooks is combined with other educational resources, both digital and on paper, and new teaching methodologies. Teachers often act as producers of new digital material through presentations and class dossiers, but students can also play an active role by producing content and searching for information on the Internet, and, less often, using books as support. Consequently, given the impact of the new educational tools for cultural learning, we have to be aware that these tools are becoming increasingly diverse and context-dependent. Tools and sources are multiplying.

The interviewed teachers are aware that they need to use new methodologies to make the curricular content more attractive, competence-based, and implement the recent curriculum requirements as defined by the Catalan and Spanish educational ministries. They also agree that cultural practices themselves are a good resource for learning, especially when approached from a creative perspective and when students play an active role (for example, in theatre workshops, poetry, musical or dance performances, etc.). From a more critical point of view, the teachers have commented on the difficulties that they encounter due to the limitations of the curriculum and the growing educational bureaucracy when it comes to preparing reports, giving marks, and so forth. More flexibility and freedom should be given to schools in order to address education in a transversal way and with educational projects.

Besides schools, another source of cultural learning for young people is the experiences that they receive through their families who can expand their cultural learning. In the urban school, students who come from families with a migration background have had some other



additional experiences that also have to do with diversity. On the one hand, these students explained that it is in the company of their family that they participate in festivals or cultural meetings with other people that are not from their countries of origin. On the other hand, the fact of being in a school characterised by students' high intercultural diversity is considered to be a very positive experience. Both the teaching staff and the students interviewed emphasised the personal learning and the positive intercultural values that are involved when living in an educational environment that favours such cultural diversity.

As regards the cultural practices of young people, we have seen that they are very varied and that they are understood in a very broad way. An important part is socialisation with friends, be it going for a walk together, visiting a friend's house, or going to a party. A lot of cultural consumption takes place through music, which is often listened on YouTube, and video content, mainly – series and documentaries. As regards the latter, some students say that they watch this content through traditional TV, but many more do so through the Internet (via platforms such as Netflix, their own private television networks, or YouTube).

Young people are looking for information on the Internet, not just receiving it in a passive way. They understand the Internet as a place where they can broaden their knowledge and expand their interests. We do not know, though, as to whether they are aware that this knowledge should be built by means of a critical use of the various resources that the Internet can offer. This topic does not appear much in the interviews, but it is certainly an issue that ought to be considered. The students report a rather uncritical view of Internet sources. On social networks, e.g. Instagram, it seems that the students mostly look at what others are sharing, and they also see them as channels of social interaction.

Although more research is needed, there seem to be gender differences in cultural practices. The girls read a lot, and this high intensity of female reading is a very interesting result. Boys, on the other hand, do not report much reading. Quite the contrary, boys, especially those who are still in compulsory secondary education, spend a lot of time playing videogames. Some even confess that it is their main activity during their spare time or that they spend many hours playing games during the weekend. We know that video games include network games where friends and other people interact, and, therefore, there is often a relational dimension to this.

We were not able to determine whether there are class differences in relation to the cultural habits discussed, except for travelling and learning English, which seem to appear more often among students from middle-class families. There seem to be differences between the rural and urban “worlds”, not only in terms of the interests of the students, but also from the point



of view of the resources and cultural offers available within their environment that can also have an influence on some of their interests.

Young people who are active in any way – whether as scouts, or at a municipal music school band, or playing a musical instrument, or participating in a community experience – seem to be more pro-active while pursuing their cultural interests. Teachers say that students are worried about social issues, about what is happening in the world. Students show an interest in discussing current issues in the classroom.

Finally, in relation to territorial identities of young people, the relevance of hybrid identities resulting from the migratory processes of families, especially in the urban school, appears very clearly. For most of the interviewed students, talking about identity is equivalent to expressing the existing dichotomy (not necessarily a conflictual one) between Catalan and Spanish identities. Some of them define themselves as either Catalans or Spanish, and some others talk of a mixed identity, depending on their family origin. Some young people consider themselves citizens of the world. It would be very interesting to investigate whether this later position is the result of a non-positioning option in relation to the Catalan-Spanish identity conflict present in Catalonia, or, rather, an attempt to develop a globally oriented identity for some young people.

## 7. Conclusion

**The Curriculum is not enough.** The Spanish educational system, as an institutional framework, has established a curriculum that is based on transversal competencies, combined with contents that are organised into subjects. What we have observed, thanks to the analysis of the interviews, is that both students and teachers demand more dynamic and participatory classes, where learning formulas that go beyond pre-established content are promoted. The rules of the educational system can be a restraint for educational innovation in this regard. At the same time, cultural activities are one of the most interesting resources, offering a way to learn that is more flexible and adapted to the students, arousing their interest. The experiences gained through activities outside the classroom (theatre, dance, music, chorus, urban art, etc.) offer a learning framework that is valued by both teachers and students. These experiences are often based on active participation of the students, and constitute fundamental resources for the cultural education of the young.

**Family experience determines access to certain cultural practices.** The academic literature warned us that the family's social class can be very important when it comes to explaining the cultural practices of young people. That is, "high culture" is mostly accessible



to young people who belong to the middle- or upper classes (Ariño and Llopis, 2016), while working-class young people must settle for “mass culture”. What we were able to observe, albeit based on a limited pool of data, is that social differences can indeed have an influence on access to “high culture” (in particular, when it comes to going to the theatre, concerts, and so forth). In the cases of visits to museums, while there are discounts for young people, it is still families with a high educational background who more often visit them with their children.

**The concept of youth culture comprises a broad spectrum of possibilities.** The family can provide certain cultural resources that help mark out social differences, but the young people that we interviewed have been engaged in cultural experiences that go well beyond what the family can offer. Their conception of culture encompasses practices associated with both “high” and “mass” cultures, as well as learning about different customs and lifestyles. In fact, young people include in their concept of culture anything that might constitute a form of learning, from social science subjects at school to meetings and conversations with friends or playing videogames. They also understand culture as a heritage that must be transmitted from generation to generation.

**Virtual worlds do not exclude face-to-face relationships with friends.** As we said before, the cultural practices of young people are made up of many elements. When it comes to practices involving the company of friends, particularly leisure practices, we find a strong presence of activities carried out via the Internet and the social networks: videogames (in the case of boys), Instagram (mostly in the case of girls), using WhatsApp for social relationships, online consumption of series and documentaries, following fellow YouTubers, listening to and sharing music. At the same time, face-to-face relationships between peers is extremely important. Young people want to meet with friends and carry out activities with them: doing sports, walking, or simply going to a bar or strolling in the street are quite common activities. Individual leisure activities are equally very varied, including those carried out for practicing, doing sports, or developing an artistic talent (writing, painting, playing a musical instrument, etc.).

**Limitations of the rural context.** We have been able to ascertain that students from the rural school have more difficulty in defining culture, and that they also have less diversity in cultural and sports practices. Depending on their social class, they may participate in certain associative cultural practices such as going to scouts or being involved in the activities of the popular local festivities. But their options are more limited. They travel less and participate less than those who belong to “high culture” and urban culture.



**Cultural diversity is part of a normal way of life for young people.** This does not preclude conflict or occasional tensions arising between students of different cultural origins. But, as the teachers and students themselves explain, schools are places for cohabitation and learning about diversity, especially in the urban areas. Obviously, this varies depending on the social composition of the schools. In our study, the urban school is characterised by a high share of students from the families with migration backgrounds. The experience of family migration is one of the key aspects that students emphasised as a source of learning about cultural diversity and as a vital experience that has marked them.

**The territorial identity of young people is not only diverse, but also hybrid.** Using a concept coined by Feixa and Nilan in a 2006 article, there is a “global youth” characterised by hybrid identity in a plural world. In our study, we have been able to observe how young people’s territorial identity is not always univocal. In the Catalan context, young people live amidst a plurality of identities and define themselves in various ways. Some of them defined themselves as Catalans, others as Spanish, others claim both identities, others claim the identities of their (or their parents’) countries of origin and others see themselves as citizens of the world. In the face of this variation of identities, teachers express concern about the young people living in multiple worlds and sometimes suffering because of their lack of clear roots. On the other hand, it is a notable fact that some young people refuse to identify themselves in national terms and prefer a universalistic and simply human adherence (such as “citizens of the world”).

**Is there an individual European identity?** In the middle of all this pluralism, European identity appears as a mere “practical” attachment for many young people: “*My country is a part of Europe*”, “*I live in Europe*”, “*I am European because I was born here*”. That is, we have not found a subjective identification with Europe implying any emotional adhesion. On the other hand, young people attribute to Europe certain characteristics related with values (freedom) or with distinct advantages over other parts of the world (economic opportunities).

**Culture is gendered.** As described above, there are certain cultural practices that differ between boys and girls. At the same time, the experience of girls and boys at school is largely marked by their perception of the gender conflict. Women's struggle for equality and against harassment is one of the issues that most sparks conversations and debates in and out of the classroom among young people. Concern for a better world includes this claim of more equality for women and for people with diverse sexual orientations.

**Cultural learning is active both inside and beyond the school system.** Teachers argue that if the youths are interested in what is happening in the world, this is due to social causes. We



discovered that plenty of them look for information on the Internet, through documentaries, following YouTubers, or asking questions in the classroom. They want to know. This leads us to conclude that, while the school has a great impact on the cultural formation of young people, cultural literacy goes beyond, thanks to the possibilities offered by the medium of the Internet and the interaction with different socialising actors (family, peers, non-formal spaces of learning cultural practices, and so on). Also, there is a great potential for schools in terms of incorporating the new cultural practices of this generation within the classroom.



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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Country of birth	Parents born in a foreign country	Language used with the family	Language used with friends
1.	WP2_E_YP_Silvia_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Russia	No (adopted child)	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
2.	WP2_E_YP_Anar_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Catalan Spanish	Catalan Spanish
3.	WP2_E_YP_Joan_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Catalan Spanish	Catalan Spanish
4.	WP2_E_YP_David_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
5.	WP2_E_YP_Roger_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Male	16	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan
6.	WP2_E_YP_Baltasar_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Male	17	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan
7.	WP2_E_YP_Berta_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Female	14	Spain	father, Cuba	Catalan Spanish	Catalan Spanish
8.	WP2_E_YP_Jordi_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Male	14	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
9.	WP2_E_YP_Chairb_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Male	16	Morocco	both, Morocco	Arabic	Catalan Spanish
10.	WP2_E_YP_Victoria_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
11.	WP2_E_YP_Llum_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
12.	WP2_E_YP_Cristina_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Female	17	Spain	No	Catalan Spanish	Catalan Spanish
13.	WP2_E_YP_Natalia_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
14.	WP2_E_YP_Quera_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan
15.	WP2_E_YP_Marina_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Catalan Spanish	Catalan
16.	WP2_E_YP_Bernat_R	3/28/2019	Catalan	Male	14	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Country of birth	Parents born in a foreign country	Language used with the family	Language used with friends
17.	WP2_E_YP_Patricia_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
18.	WP2_E_YP_Marc_R	3/27/2019	Spanish	Male	15	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
19.	WP2_E_YP_JosepLluís_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
20.	WP2_E_YP_Neusa_R	3/27/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan
21.	WP2_E_YP_Theo_U	5/24/2019	Spanish	Male	15	Bolivia	both, Bolivia	Spanish	Spanish
22.	WP2_E_YP_RosaMaria_U	5/24/2019	Spanish	Female	15	Spain	No	Spanish	Spanish
23.	WP2_E_YP_Marta_U	5/23/2019	Spanish	Female	14	Spain	both, Dominican Republic	Spanish	Spanish
24.	WP2_E_YP_Aranxa_U	5/23/2019	Catalan	Female	17	Spain	No	Spanish	Spanish
25.	WP2_E_YP_Judit_U	5/23/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	father, Italy	Spanish	Spanish
26.	WP2_E_YP_Ona_U	5/23/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
27.	WP2_E_YP_Julia_U	5/23/2019	Catalan	Female	17	Ukraine	both, Ukraine	Ukrainian Russian	Catalan Spanish
28.	WP2_E_YP_Yashira_U	5/23/2019	Spanish	Female	15	Honduras	both, Honduras	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
29.	WP2_E_YP_Fidel_U	5/23/2019	Spanish	Male	16	Nicaragua	both, Nicaragua	Spanish	Spanish
30.	WP2_E_YP_Marcelo_U	5/23/2019	Spanish	Male	16	Argentina	both, Argentina	Spanish	Spanish
31.	WP2_E_YP_Eliseinda_U	5/23/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Spanish	Spanish
32.	WP2_E_YP_Victor_U	5/23/2019	Spanish	Male	15	Spain	mother, Equatorial Guinea, father (unkno	Spanish	Spanish



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Country of birth	Parents born in a foreign country	Language used with the family	Language used with friends
							wn, single mother)		
33.	WP2_E_YP_Sofia_U	5/24/2019	Spanish	Female	15	Poland	both, Poland	Polish	Spanish Polish
34.	WP2_E_YP_Martina_U	5/24/2019	Spanish	Female	15	Spain	both, Ecuador	Spanish	Spanish
35.	WP2_E_YP_Pedro_U	5/24/2019	Spanish	Male	15	Rumani a	both, Romani a	Romani an	Spanish
36.	WP2_E_YP_Izan_U	5/24/2019	Spanish	Male	16	Spain	No	Spanish	Spanish
37.	WP2_E_YP_Manolo_U	5/24/2019	Catalan	Male	16	Colom bia	both, Colom bia	Spanish	Spanish
38.	WP2_E_YP_Nico_U.	5/24/2019	Spanish	Male	17	Spain	No	Spanish	Spanish
39.	WP2_E_YP_Sol_U	5/24/2019	Spanish	Female	16	Domini can Republic	both, Domini can Republic	Spanish	Spanish
40.	WP2_E_YP_Dikran_U	5/24/2019	Catalan	Male	18	Armeni a	both, Armeni a	Armeni an Spanish	Catalan Spanish
41.	WP2_E_YP_Aina_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	14	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
42.	WP2_E_YP_Biel_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Male	16	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
43.	WP2_E_YP_Hèctor_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
44.	WP2_E_YP_Emilia_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	14	Spain	No	Catalan English	Catalan Spanish
45.	WP2_E_YP_Bruno_3_S	6/5/2019	Spanish	Male	17	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
46.	WP2_E_YP_Olivia_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
47.	WP2_E_YP_Nora_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
48.	WP2_E_YP_Valentina_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Country of birth	Parents born in a foreign country	Language used with the family	Language used with friends
49.	WP2_E_YP_Daniela_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan
50.	WP2_E_YP_Paula_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan Spanish
51.	WP2_E_YP_Carla_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
52.	WP2_E_YP_Luis_S	6/5/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Spanish	Spanish
53.	WP2_E_YP_Abril_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Female	15	Spain	No	Spanish	Catalan
54.	WP2_E_YP_Xavi_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Male	14	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan
55.	WP2_E_YP_Jan_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan
56.	WP2_E_YP_Magda_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Female	17	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan Spanish
57.	WP2_E_YP_Gema_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Female	16	Spain	No	Catalan Spanish	Catalan Spanish
58.	WP2_E_YP_Alex_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Catalan	Catalan
59.	WP2_E_YP_Ot_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Catalan Spanish	Catalan Spanish
60.	WP2_E_YP_Pol_S	6/6/2019	Catalan	Male	15	Spain	No	Catalan Spanish	Catalan Spanish

Note: In the case of Spain, the country of birth of the informants and their parents is more informative than the informant's citizenship. Many of the students have Spanish citizenship but come from a foreign background. Another variable used for the study of identities in Catalonia and Spain is the language(s) that people speak at home. We did not ask about religious affiliation.

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in
1.	WP2_E_T_Silvia_R	3/27/2019	Female	49	Catalan, Spanish
2.	WP2_E_T_Lluisa_R	3/21/2019	Female	42	Catalan, Spanish, French



No.	Interview code	Date of the interview	Informant's gender	Informant's age	Languages the informant is fluent in
3.	WP2_E_T_Maria_R	3/21/2019	Female	44	Catalan, Spanish, English, German
4.	WP2_E_T_Susanna_U	5/24/2019	Female	45	Catalan, Spanish, French
5.	WP2_E_T_Cristina_U	5/23/2019	Female	49	Catalan, Spanish
6.	WP2_E_T_Davinia_U	5/24/2019	Female	42	Catalan, Spanish, French, Arab
7.	WP2_E_T_Roger_S	6/5/2019	Male	44	Catalan, Spanish
8.	WP2_E_T_Hector_S	6/5/2019	Male	36	Catalan, Spanish, English
9.	WP2_E_T_Joan_S	6/5/2019	Male	41	Catalan, Spanish, French

Note: All interviewed teachers were Spanish citizens, and all interviews with teachers were conducted in Catalan. Similar to the case with students, we did not ask about religious affiliation.

**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

	Ethnic diversity	Income diversity	Median income	Deprivation (unemployment)	Cultural infrastructure	Regional political indicator
<b>Nou Barris, Barcelona (Urban)</b>						
Nou Barris district: 166,805 inhabitants; (source: Continuing census 2017)	high: 16% foreign nationals 22.9% born in a foreign country 30% born in other regions of Spain	Working-class district, some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city	significantly below average	NA	Five libraries and four civic centres. No museums or theatres. Outstanding communitarian creation and arts centre. Some cultural communities' initiatives.	Electoral turnout 2017 Catalan Parliament elections: 72.2%
<b>Granollers (Semi-urban)</b>						
60,695 inhabitants (source: Continuing census 2017)	average	Great diversity of social profiles	average	average	Culturally dynamic city. During the summer, they celebrate the local festivity with a high participation of the population. Many cultural associations and sports facilities and groups. Good public cultural	Electoral turnout in 2017 Catalan Parliament elections: 77.6%.



					infrastructure (a theatre, two libraries, a local museum, a centre for the arts and cultural creation, a youth centre, etc.).	
<b>Site A (Rural)</b>						
5,000 inhabitants (source: Continuing census 2018)	low share of foreign population; during the 1960's internal migration from more deprived areas in the south of Spain.	high	average	high	Important historical site. Caves in a salt mountain that are a unique natural phenomenon.	Electoral turnout in 2017 Catalan Parliament elections: 76.5%.

**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school)**

#3 School description		Urban
School type		Public secondary school 4 grades of compulsory secondary education (ESO), 3 groups per grade. 2 grades of Batxillerat (High school), Social-Humanities, Sciences-Technology.
School size	# students	ESO: 450 Batxillerat: 100
	# teachers	55
<p>Languages: Main teaching language is Catalan; students are expected to graduate with an excellent knowledge of Catalan and Spanish and good knowledge of English.</p> <p>School's relevant projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperative work on an interdisciplinary project (ESO1, ESO2, ESO3)</li> <li>- Curricular diversification project (4<sup>th</sup> grade of ESO); for students who need a different schooling to take them into adulthood, they organize stays at various entities and companies two days a week</li> <li>- Reception class (<i>Aula d'acollida</i>) for new migrant students, in particular, those who do not speak Catalan and Spanish</li> <li>- Work in the scenic arts; they promote the performing arts (music, drama, visuals, and visual creation) in all optional ESO courses by organising activities related to drama (ESO1), creation of comics and mangas (ESO2, ESO3), performing arts (ESO4), as well as the MUSE Project (music for promoting integration) where art professionals (actors, dancers, audio-visual professionals) collaborate in setting assignments and at the centre</li> <li>- Program "Account with me", a programme to promote coexistence among the students of the centre and promote values of non-violence</li> <li>- External coordination: Networks for educational change, Tools for change, New school 21, Network 0-18, Green schools</li> <li>- Throughout the course, pedagogical trips are made to different spaces (museums, theatres, research</li> </ul>		



centres) and places in Catalonia

- Full-time School Programme
- They take part in events, literary prizes such as the Sambori prize (Òmnium Cultural), artistic shows and contests like the Cangur prizes devoted to mathematics, as well as the Flower Games of the district.

**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Semi-urban school)**

#2 School description		Semi-urban
School type		Public secondary school 4 grades of compulsory secondary education (ESO), 2 groups per grade 2 grades of Batxillerat (High school), Social-Humanities, Sciences-Technology Several grades in Vocational Training courses
School size	# students	350 (ESO and Batxillerat)
	# teachers	90 (including teachers of Vocational Training)
<p>Languages: Main teaching language is Catalan; students are expected to graduate with an excellent knowledge of Catalan and Spanish and good knowledge of English and French.</p> <p>School's relevant projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusiveness and multilingualism</li> <li>- Cultural activities and projects</li> <li>- International exchange programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Involvement in an Erasmus project during ESO: travels to Romania, France or Denmark</li> <li>✓ In the fourth grade of ESO, travel to an English-speaking country (e.g. UK, Ireland)</li> <li>✓ Student exchange with a school in Italy or France (1st year of Batxillerat)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Community service (4<sup>th</sup> grade of ESO)</li> <li>- Project on sexuality and sexism (3<sup>rd</sup> grade of ESO)</li> <li>- Workshops throughout all of the ESO on gender equality, inclusiveness, Internet and privacy.</li> </ul>		

**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Rural school)**

#3 School description		Rural
School type		Public secondary school 4 grades of compulsory secondary education (ESO), 1 group per grade 2 grades of Batxillerat (High school), Social-Humanities, Sciences-Technology
School size	# students	140 (all grades)
	# teachers	19
<p>Languages: Main teaching language is Catalan; students are expected to graduate with an excellent knowledge of Catalan and Spanish and good knowledge of English. French is also taught.</p> <p>School's relevant projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involvement in the competencies network ("Xarxa Competencial")</li> <li>- Communitarian services (for instance, teaching old people about Internet and the new ITs)</li> <li>- International exchange programs</li> <li>- Arts activities: theatre, literary contest, photography contest</li> <li>- Sant Jordi's Day: theatre performance open to the public and popular paella rice meal</li> <li>- Christmas Day with sports activities, chorus, and workshops</li> <li>- Skiing days during the second term.</li> </ul>		



## **Cultural literacy practices in formal education (Turkey)**

**Yıldırım Şentürk & Ayşe Berna Uçarol**

### **1. Executive summary**

This report explores cultural practices, cultural literacy, and the learning experiences of young people in upper secondary education in Turkey based on our qualitative field research made in three public high schools.

Today's youth have more opportunities to use digital communication platforms and information technologies. They thus also have greater opportunity to interact with different people, places, and cultures and to use new learning techniques to improve themselves in their interests and aspirations.

Common social categories that had been previously used in Turkey to identify the characteristics of young people (such as secular/modern versus conservative/pious) have become insufficient. Young people have different expectations and objectives according to their social backgrounds.

The report explores how each school presents a specific “package of cultural participation and literacy” through a flexible combination of curriculum, re-interpretations of the curriculum, extra-curricular courses and activities, and the use of student clubs.

Although youth commonly participate in various cultural practices, they often do not self-define these activities under the concept of “culture.” Therefore, the concepts of culture and cultural heritage need to be redefined as a field of practices, encompassing the everyday life and interests of the youth.

### **2. Introduction**

This report aims to narrate cultural practices, social activities, field of interests, and the learning experiences of youth in the formal education setting. Previously we had examined how educational policies in Turkey have changed in the last fifteen years with regard to current upper secondary education curriculum (Şentürk et al., 2018; Uçarol et al., 2019). Our findings largely overlapped with those of other studies on this subject in Turkey (Gök, 2007; Çayır, 2014; Eroler, 2019; Lüküslü, 2016). In recent contemporary debates regarding youth



and education in Turkey, a tendency toward youth becoming more “conservative” and “religious” has begun to receive greater emphasis (Eroler, 2019; Lüküslü, 2016).

However, such debates often deal with “top-down policies” designed by those not subject to their effects. The youth who are affected directly by these policies often do not receive sufficient attention. Any concern regarding their practices, tendencies, and attitudes is usually secondary. Instead, debates are made over an abstract perception of “youth,” generally fixed as having the same properties regardless of time and space. However, young people have different expectations and objectives in accordance with their social background. Therefore, while we try to grasp how the recent education and cultural policies have taken place on the ground, we aim to understand the education experience, interests, aspirations, and cultural participation of young people more closely.

We argue that young people have more potential to *use new digital communication and information technologies to interact with other people and cultures and to improve their knowledge and skills*. Regarding this new culture and interests of young people, institutions related to youth, especially the one on education, are inadequately prepared.

Besides, young people have an intense “anxiety for their future” and try to give different responses to this pressure according to their social background. As long as these social differences are ignored, all concepts and models based on a narrowly idealised definition of the youth will offer a highly abstract approach. Therefore, it is necessary to develop ways and perspectives to understand the cultural practices and interests of the youth together with the young people themselves.

### 3. State of the Art

The educational policies of Turkey have presented a significant field of tension and contradiction for a long time, even as the content of those policies has changed. One could say that the continuing power struggle between distinct political and social groups has been more influential as a source for these contradictions rather than abstract pedagogical reasons. Some of the significant controversial themes and issues underlined by the scholars in this regard include: class differences in access to educational resources and reproduced social distinction (Gök, 2004; Gök, 2007; İnal & Akkaymak 2012); practices of nation building and Modernisation/Westernisation processes (Akın, 2004; Altınay, 2004; Gümüş, 2015; Tekeli, 1998; Akşit, 2013; Bahçekapılı, 2015); competing teachings on the subject of Islam/religion and the extent they are included in curriculums (Eroler, 2019; Lüküslü, 2016); the definition of both being Turkish and how the different identities in Turkey (for instances the Kurdish,



Alevis and non-Muslims) are represented (Çayır, 2014; Çayır, 2016; Eroler, 2019; Kaya, Aydın & Vural 2016); and how gender-based roles are reproduced in education (Akşit, 2013; Altınay, 2004; Gök, 2007).

In this context, the struggle with the “conservative/religious” education model against the “modern/secular” education model shows itself as one of the dominant points of tension in the creation of education policies. Research and debate about the influence of the latter was at the forefront during the long process of modernisation and nation-state building (Akın, 2004; Altınay, 2004; Gümüş, 2015; Tekeli, 1998; Akşit, 2013). This focus shifted, especially after 2002, in parallel with the governments established by the conservative and religious Justice and Development Party (JDP/ Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi- AKP), at which time research and debates about becoming conservative and religious in education became more prominent (Eroler, 2019; Lüküslü, 2016; Ural, 2015; İnal & Akkaymak, 2012). Of course, it may be misleading to suggest that these two political standings in Turkey completely exclude the concerns of the other. In fact, both models can contain aims of aspirational nationalism, albeit with their own particular interpretations.

It is no coincidence that education is a significant area of struggle between different classes, political, and cultural groups, as it seeks to determine what will be taught to whom and how. In fact, any attempt to define which knowledge will have social recognition also redefines the power relation among social groups and their social positioning in relation to each other. Thus, it is possible to speak of a struggle that confers validity and social legitimacy to the knowledge and skills that are assumed to be taught, rather than a system where existing “absolute” and “true” knowledge, skills, and tastes are passed on to the youth (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Reay, 2017). In this way, certain values can be imposed on individuals and aimed toward “new generations”. As a consequence, it is possible to track signs of power relations, struggles and contradictions among social groups within the ongoing education policies and practices (Apple, 1982; Reay, 2017).

When we explore the setting of formal education in Turkey with the above conceptual approach, two themes need to be highlighted: 1) In Turkey education is rarely dealt with as purely a pedagogical question. “Political” motivations are found behind even the simplest education policies, even when they seem at first glance to be articulated only “technically.” For this reason, individuals and institutions concerned with education, as well as families and youth themselves, often approach such proposed changes in education with suspicion. 2) Although the politicisation of education issues is an ordinary situation in Turkey, recent interventions and practices in education have increasingly displayed more overt political concerns. Those individuals and parents who identify as more secular and Western-oriented



feel mostly powerless in the face of these changes. This unease is behind the recent increase in the number of medium scale private schools and the tendency for more families to register their children to such schools. Parents appear to be demanding more of a say in the content of education rather than a demand for other qualities private education aspires to provide, such as more qualified or competitive education. Thus, parents may be seeking to express power through their “right to speak” as customers in the education marketplace, in place of an agency they think they have been losing more recently as citizens. Of course rather than offering a general solution, this makes class and social distinctions sharper among those who can partially protect themselves from recent education policies and those who have to continue their children’s education within an education setting more directly under the auspices of government policy.

In fact, the concerns of parents may have merit when we consider the education policies of the last fifteen years. On the one hand, there have been frequent changes in the education policies. On the other hand, contradictory policies and practices come to the agenda when new programmes are declared; and these policies are usually introduced by referring to new and popular discourses among the experts of education. However, it is possible to say that the tendency of becoming religious and conservative started to show its influence more strongly in the education institutions over time. Statements of the top Justice and Development Party (JDP/AKP) politicians to raise “a pious generation” as a political goal establish a more legitimate ground for such practices (Eroler, 2019). We were considerably concerned about controversial policies and practices when examining the national education policies and curriculum (Şentürk et al., 2018; Uçarol et al., 2019). Here are some examples of how the implementation of even positive education policies has changed over time:

- *Values education* (Initially aimed to teach all students essential “universal values”; meanwhile, religious-based values became over-emphasised including recent cooperation with religious foundations);
- *100 essential literary works* (Its content has changed depending on who designs this list, which authors and books are selected and how the foreign books are translated);
- *Cooperation and stakeholdership with civil society organisations* (Organisations supporting the government get more support and funds);
- *Strengthening the local and national culture* (Generally cultural practices with a conservative and religious interpretation of the local and national culture);
- *Increasing the number of elective courses* (Although there are more options to offer various courses as elective, some school administrations tend to make mainly the courses about religion and Islam open and “available”).



However, as it is valid for other social issues, whichever educational policies seemed to be implemented from above, the individuals, social groups, and organisations in the field influenced by such policies are not altogether “passive” agents. We will explore this in the findings section in detail. Before that however, we will briefly summarise the qualitative field study and our data analysis process.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Context and Information About Fieldwork

Three schools – in urban, semi-urban and rural regions – were selected for the study. The urban and semi-urban regions were selected within Istanbul, the largest city of Turkey. Istanbul is commonly divided into two regions geographically: The European and the Anatolian side. The urban school is located on the European side of Istanbul whereas the semi-urban is located on the Anatolian.<sup>89</sup> Istanbul is the most developed city of Turkey in terms of cultural and educational opportunities (such as museums, theatres, libraries, galleries, and universities), predominantly located in the urban region. It is a district with social-economic, cultural and social diversity. The semi-urban district is easily accessible by Istanbul’s main transportation networks. It was previously an important industrial centre of Istanbul (1950-1980) but during the post-1980 deindustrialisation, was transformed into mainly a housing-residential area. The cultural opportunities are not as plentiful as in the Urban region. The Rural region is selected near Istanbul.<sup>90</sup> Although the rural region contains a smaller population, it has experienced intense internal and external migration movements from Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, and from the Eastern provinces of Turkey. The reason for intense migration to this place is its close proximity to Istanbul and its relatively easier life conditions. As it gradually became a migrant receiving region, the increased cultural diversity has started to shape the region’s life as well. The region has limited cultural opportunities and facilities (for instance, the city has one university and two theatre halls).

The urban school is a “high quality public high school”<sup>91</sup>, accepting students using the central examination system. The semi-urban school also has the status of a high quality public high school, but since the 2018-2019 academic year its status has been degraded and it became a public high school accepting students according to the address system.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, the rural

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<sup>89</sup> The distance between the urban and semi-urban region is 28 km.

<sup>90</sup> Rural region is some 93 km away from Istanbul and can be reached by ferry in one hour.

<sup>91</sup> 6th, 7th and 8th grade success point averages and the central examination made by the Ministry of National Education at the end of the 8th grade (High School Transition Examination - LGS) determine the type of the high school to which the students shall attend.

<sup>92</sup> The meaning of the address system is that schools accept students without a centralised exam success. The only condition here is residence in a neighbourhood close to the school.



school's status as a high quality school has been degraded since the 2018-2019 education year and it also became a state high school accepting students according to the address system.

The field study was conducted on March 29–May 9, 2019 at the urban and semi-urban schools and on May 13–May 22, 2019 at the rural school. Apart from the Provincial Directorate of National Education also the school administrators individually gave their approval. After obtaining approval, the content and objective of the research was explained to the head teachers. All student and teacher interviews were conducted by two researchers who are part of the CHIEF team. A total of 88 student and teacher interviews were conducted (**See Table**).

**Table: Number of interviewees**

	Urban School	Semi-Urban School	Rural School	Total
Interviews students	28	23	28	79
Interviews teachers	2	2	5	9

Teachers or administrative staff assisted in selection of the interviewees. In the urban school, the school's head teacher directed the research team to the student guidance unit for assistance in conducting research in the school. We observed that those students who were proposed by the teacher for the interviews were sensitive about especially, gender and democracy issues and that they had diverse cultural participation interests. In the semi-urban school, the vice head teacher was effective in the selection of the students and we observed that the more academically successful students were selected for interviews. In the rural school, the students were selected as a result of a negotiation made with the school director. It is our observation that the interviewed students were mostly the leading ones of the school and those most active in the area of cultural participation.

While two periods were given for the interviews in the urban school, in the other two schools it was only one period. However, in these schools in cases where the interviewees wished to continue the interviews, the interviews were prolonged after obtaining the approval of the administration.

The interviews with the students were conducted in the guidance room in the urban school, in the school library in the semi-urban school and in the mathematics section room in the Rural School. Before starting the interview, information was given to interviewees about the



subject, objectives and interview framework of the project and its topics. Then each student was asked to select his/her pseudonyms for the study. Some students gave the names of various celebrities they liked and others selected a pseudonym somehow meaningful to him/herself. During the interview, recording was stopped when the interviewees requested, usually in relation to sensitive issues or when questions they did not want to respond were posed. Issues such as political tendencies, religious belongings, ethnical identities, and sexual orientations are delicate because of the current administrative regulations in respective schools. In order to avoid disruption of the field study, we tried to avoid such questions. However, when the students had a desire to talk about such delicate issues, we tried not to interrupt their narrations. During our field research, both researchers kept their own fieldwork diaries too.

#### **4.2 Data Analysis**

Anonymised interview transcriptions and the observation notes have been coded using NVivo 12 and following the field work manual.

The coding tree was developed by coding 15 interviews, 5 from each school. While developing the first version of the coding tree, 5 level nodes, sub-themes and child nodes connected to the sub-themes were formed, by considering the semi-structured question blocks in the fieldwork manual. In the second stage of the coding, 15 more interviews were coded, 5 from each school. At this stage, inconsistencies for each of the levels were checked and some nodes were merged. After the checking and merging procedures, the coding of the remaining interviews continued. After completing the coding of all interviews, some nodes were merged for the last time. Researchers held meetings and discussed every development stage of the coding tree. The agenda was enriched by debates over various theoretical approaches that could be used to interpret the key findings. The final coding tree contains a total of 572 nodes. From the data, three analytical topics emerged: *School experiences; Cultural participation of young people; Culture, cultural heritage, and identity of young people*. The key findings have been explored based on these themes.



## 5. Findings

We have tried to summarise in the graphic below the basic dynamics within a formal education setting in which youth have access to digital communication and information technologies (See Figure). In this section, we explore how these dynamics are effective through the school experiences and cultural participation of young people.

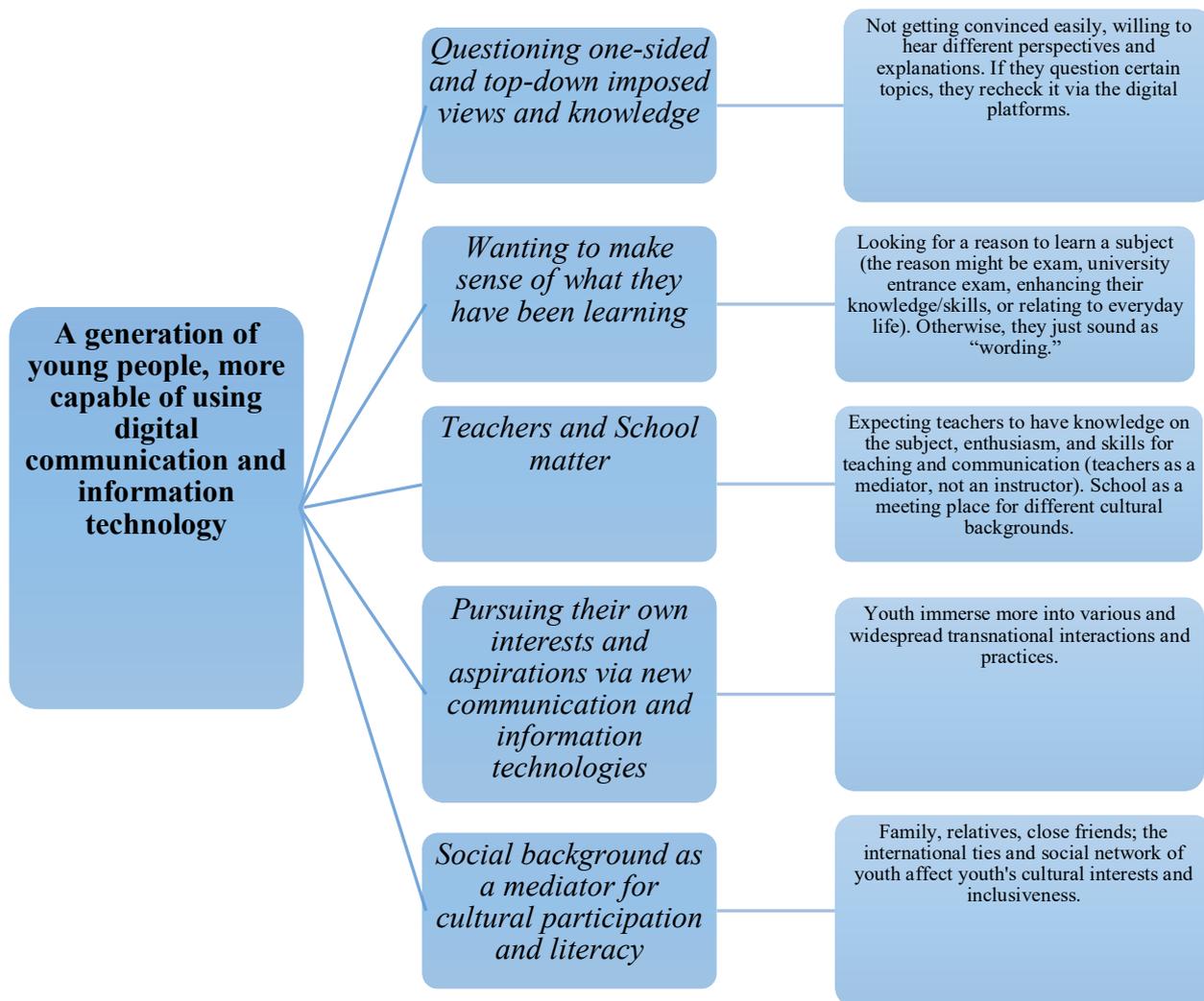


Figure: Youth and Digital Communication and Information Technologies

### 5.1 School Experiences

In high school, relationship modes between students and teachers change, compared to secondary school. Many students report that high school was a positive transition for them, when teachers treat them like “adults”, through conversations about daily life. They describe their student life using phrases such as “becoming mature”, “bonds of friendship”, “close relations with the teachers,” and “better concentration in lectures.” Thus, in the urban school, the administration and the teachers seek to provide students with a more participatory setting that enables them to express themselves better. For example, students choose the music used



to indicate class interval rings; although the school has a basic uniform, they are allowed to modify it to express their own styles. The female students may have light make-up; mobile phone usage is free in the school and the classrooms. In the semi-urban school, however, students have to conform more rigidly to the school uniform; the library is locked during lecture hours, and discipline is an atmospheric element felt by all students in the school setting. The rural school is the school setting with the strictest rules compared to the two other high schools. (*ABU Fieldwork Diary, 17 May 2019*).

The courses offered in the curriculum significantly shape the high school experience of the youth. Here, students take more courses compared to the secondary school, both compulsory and elective, and the content of the courses is more intensive. As mentioned by many students during the interviews, a large number of topics are covered and the topics are frequently changed. Most of the students said they had difficulties, especially during the early periods of their high school life. Therefore, the 9th grade<sup>93</sup> is used mostly as a phase of adapting to high school life where they learn to balance intense schoolwork and the variety of activities now accessible to them as high school students. For some this adaptation stage continues into the 10th grade. By the 11th grade, especially among those who aspire to get a better score in the university entrance exam, students begin to limit their extracurricular social and cultural activities or habits (mobile phone, computer games, social media usage, hanging out with friends) in order to improve their course scores. In the 11th grade, some students start to take private university exam preparation courses in addition to their regular school courses. In the 12th grade, the university entrance exam takes priority. While private courses, trial exams, and additional studies are mentioned, current conversations of the students focus on topics such as exam stress, university preference, and their anxiety over future and career. Any time-consuming activities, including cultural ones, are postponed until the end of the university entrance exam.

In this regard, the significance, which both the school and individual student attribute to university education, is a determining factor. Especially in the urban and semi-urban school, the pressure on students is more intense. A “stressful” process starts where many 12th grade students attend additional courses for preparing for the university entrance exam. This exam take centre place in their lives. In these success-centred schools, they concentrate on Science-Mathematics courses more because they are considered key for getting into a better university and department. Some of the students we interviewed complained about this situation:

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<sup>93</sup> First year of high school



*I don't like that only mathematics, science and similar activities are abundant at school, because life is more than them. Life is not only the quality of the university that you will enroll. Of course these are important., but general culture, life, social activities are also important. (Mora, female, student, urban school, Turkey)*

At the rural school, the objective of attending university or getting into one of the universities with the highest scores is less expressed among the students. Students here are more concerned with finding a reliable job. Interestingly, unlike the other two schools, there are students considering joining police or military forces as a profession. This interest among the youth is supported by the relatively stronger nationalist and conservative sentiment in the rural setting, but also by the employment security provided by these professions. Indeed, the vice head teacher we interviewed says that over two years ago, some 70 of their students applied to universities that are favoured in recruitment by military and police forces (Tugtekin, male, teacher, rural school, Turkey).

During four years at high school, students take courses with diverse content from natural to social science. The interviews conducted in three schools show that it is not possible to say that the students have a priori distanced approach towards any branch or course topic. An important criterion for youth to show interest in any one course is directly related to the teacher offering it. Students need to be convinced why they are supposed to learn a subject in the first place. In this regard, the teacher matters as a mediator. Students usually question one-sided and top-down imposed views and knowledge. Instead, they are willing to hear different perspectives and explanations. If they mistrust the information they have received, they sometimes seek to confirm it via digital platforms. Therefore, they are expecting the teachers to have enough knowledge on the subject they teach, enthusiasm for the course subject as well as skills for teaching and communication with the students. They prefer teachers who are able to narrate their course subjects by establishing connections with daily life, being open to interaction with students and his/her experience and skills in making difficult topics enjoyable when necessary. In this respect, English language courses are among the most enjoyable ones in all three schools where teachers are more open to games and alternative teaching techniques in the language learning process. At the urban and semi-urban school, the Philosophy course is one of the primary courses that provide inter-classroom debate opportunities to students. In both schools, students relate that they participated in inter-school Philosophy debates with their teachers and prepared theatre activities (for example, Plato's book, Socrates' Defence). With these methods, teachers enable active participation of students while teaching about such basic universal values of "justice, equality, freedom". In our curriculum review we mentioned that the Philosophy



curriculum is the one with the largest capacity to narrate universal values to students (Uçarol et al., 2019). However, as we saw in our field research, each teacher may interpret the curriculum differently. In the rural school, students are not as interested in Philosophy and complain that their teacher emphasises Islamic issues.

While students may be more interested in the content of some courses due to their worldviews and lifestyles, they find others troublesome, criticise them, or remain indifferent. For instance, students who take a more exclusivist approach to cultural activities and cultural identity are more positive about the nationalist narrative in History class:

*I cannot tell that I am so much interested in history of other nations but Turkish history attracts my attention, because Turks, our understanding is so different, there is the love for conquest. Thus they want to dominate the world. For this reason, things such as the events, wars, migrations pull my attention. (Zed, male, student, urban school, Turkey)*

On the other hand, students with a more culturally inclusive approach criticise the content of the same course, as it is a history told more narrowly from the single perspective of the Turks and the Ottomans, for example Hikmet, who has a special interest in history and reads history books:

*The history course is only about our own history. We learn almost nothing about other countries and regions such as China, India, Europe. We see them very superficially and focus more on our own culture. (Hikmet, male, student, urban school, Turkey)*

In all schools, students with either a culturally exclusivist or culturally inclusive approach, said that they learned about culture and cultural heritage mostly from History courses. The other courses that deal with culture and cultural heritage are literature and English language. One point that students care about is the connection between the courses and everyday life, in other words, the matching of the subject and the purpose of learning. Students question the subjects taught for exam preparation by asking “what they will do in their life”. At this point, they say that the courses they most like are the ones that increase their curiosity:

*I agree very much when sometimes examples from daily life are given during the lectures. For instance, giving the airplane as an example, explaining the mechanism of the airplane when examples are given about let's say about friction, I really agree with that in that case. And if there is anything, I am*



*curious about, I search it by myself when I go home.* (Lusaac Smp, male, student, urban school, Turkey)

Students not only pay attention to the content of the course and teacher's narrative style, but also have thoughts about how to make the course practices “more efficient.” In this context, in all three schools the need for illustrative visual materials and concrete examples is an outstanding issue. The students want lectures to be supported with concrete examples and physical experiments. Although there are laboratories in all three schools, they are not used. Students, especially in the History and Geography courses, say that narratives with catchy video content can be an element in making them learn better.

Course books are distributed free to the schools by the Ministry of National Education, and it is not compulsory to use them. At the urban and semi-urban school, teachers generally find Natural Science books distributed by the state inadequate and recommend additional resources to students, meaning purchasing additional books, which puts more economic pressure on some students' families. At the rural school, teachers do not offer additional resources due to the low income level of many families; instead, teachers dictate lecture notes to students. At all three schools official course books are followed in Social Sciences, which the interviewed students often found “boring”, “repetitive” and based on “long expressions”. At the urban and semi-urban schools, Philosophy teachers recommend utopia-dystopia novels to their students while Literature teachers use Turkish and World Classics. At the rural school, Literature teachers mostly recommend Turkish Classical Novels. Teachers' interests, perspectives and skills play a significant role in the choice of resources.

## **5.2 Cultural Participations of Youth**

### ***5.2.1 Schools as a Package of Cultural Participation and Cultural Literacy***

High school represents a new phase in terms of cultural participation of youth. Each school presents a particular “package of cultural participation and literacy” as the result of a flexible combination of the curriculum, its partial re-interpretation by the teachers, extra-curricular courses and activities and student clubs in their bodies. In fact, at the very beginning, when students enrol in the upper secondary education institutions, they begin to get the impression of these packages. Whether students are trying to register for a school based on their exam score or their home address, they try to make a choice by evaluating the potential of the schools they can apply for, while consulting with their families. Although a school's success in university entrance exams is the primary criterion for many, the possibilities and recognition of the school in terms of social and cultural activities are also effective in making this decision. Thus, the exterior school garden, interior design, general appearances, sports and other facilities are also effective in forming a perception about the school in students'



minds. For instance, on the garden walls of the rural school, while there are pictures of historical characters (such as Atatürk, Fatih Sultan Mehmet and II. Abdülhamit Han)<sup>94</sup> and other figures evoking a nationalist historical perception, there is an attempt to make them more lively by supplementing them with symbols (mathematical symbols, musical notes, etc.) and human figures representing various sports activities (*YŞ, Fieldwork diary, 15 May 2019*). A few of the interviewed students related that these kinds of images, which cannot be found in other public schools around their neighbourhood, make them feel closer to their school. At the urban school, walls are decorated in a manner rarely seen in other public schools, with pictures of youth-centred daily life in the city centre of Istanbul. There is also a mural of a pair of multi-coloured angel wings that is used during graduation for memory photographs by students, teachers, and families. The images on the walls in that school and its garden are agreed and implemented by students together with their teachers. As a result, the appearance of the urban school seems to represent the taste and style of young people better. Many school activities are also reflected on posters and images on its walls: maxims from various authors, promotional texts about the screening of Tim Burton films, short writings and notes over classroom doors about gender equality etc. (*YŞ, Fieldwork Diary, 17 April 2019*). An impression that the school is a “good and deep-rooted” public school is given with numerous cups and medals exhibited in the entrance of the semi-urban school building. In addition, social media posts about schools also gain influence, sometimes shared by students or alumni, sometimes also by the school administration. Video-style productions are also used in social media. For instance, a musical video published eight years ago about the semi-urban school has been watched over 7.5 million times and created a positive image of the school among potential students. To what extent such fictional school presentations and images reflect school reality remains questionable. For instance, a student club promoted on the school wall may sometimes not be that active or not even known by most students.

The package of cultural participation and cultural literacy presented by the schools depends on various factors. Firstly, although all the schools are public, *the opportunities and physical facilities of these schools are not equal*. This inequality affects schools’ conditions especially in terms of social, cultural and sportive activities. For instance, as the semi-urban school building was rebuilt in 2008 with the sponsorship of a private company, it has better facilities (a sports hall and areas for various branches, laboratory, music instruments, music hall, camera, table tennis equipment at each floor, etc.). School grounds within the cities are commonly small, so developing building facilities for sports and other activities remains

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<sup>94</sup>Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is the founder of the modern Turkish Republic; Fatih Sultan Mehmet is the sultan who conquered Istanbul and was represented in the periods when the Ottoman Empire was strong; II. Abdülhamit Han is one of the controversial sultans of the Ottoman Empire in the final phase, who is especially liked by the conservative-nationalists.



unsettled and challenging, demanding long hours of negotiation with relevant administrators and bureaucrats. Although located in a central part of Istanbul, the urban school is the one with the most limited facilities (built in 1967). Some students admitted after being successful in the entrance exam stated that they cried when they first came here, because its neighbourhood is not a well-developed urban setting. But they also added that over time they began to like the schools' atmosphere. Another important resource is the *endowments of the parents*. The parents of students who enrolled in the school by examination have a greater tendency to make donations to the school in order to get a better education. There is an obvious decrease in school donations from families with students based on address-enrolment due to low income level. This directly limits the opportunities of schools in terms of social and cultural activities, including formal education and operation. Therefore, even though public schools take their basic financial resources from the state budget, both the material opportunities of the parents and their wish to support the school by making donations are important factors for increasing the capacity of the school.

Secondly, each school has developed *different methods and strategies* for arranging cultural and social activities as well as providing the participation for students. For instance, at the semi-urban school, some student clubs are at the forefront. Teachers may organise activities in clubs with interested students, as they do in the Astronomy Club, for instance. At the rural school, they have a Chess Club. In contrast, at the Urban School, student clubs are not as important, instead some teachers with the support of the head teacher and in cooperation with students organise various activities such as issuing a magazine in English, field trips, and scientific projects as well as intercultural days with costumes and food, (*YŞ, Fieldwork Diary, 17 April 2019*). However, such intercultural events always pose the risk of stereotyping, thereby reproducing essentialist perspectives on cultures.

The school administration also has a significant influence over these activities. For example, urban school teachers, said that while they were open to such activities, it was the new head teacher who facilitated the environment for them (*YŞ, Fieldwork Diary, 3 May 2019*).

The rural school's head teacher states that, as their students are mostly from low-income families, they encourage and support their students to participate in sport activities, despite the school's limited resources. He considers that sport helps both to discipline young people and to prevent them from "having bad habits" (*YŞ, 15 May 2019*). When students were asked about cultural activities they attend at school, most of them thought about parade, choir, music, i.e., activities organised together with other schools and organisations at the school or in the city centre as a part of national ceremonies. At the urban school, a more open environment was prepared for graduation events, festivals, inter-school music competitions



and theatre shows where students and teachers can come together and students also take an active role in creating the content of these activities.

Moreover, how the courses in the curriculum are reinterpreted and taught can be also seen as a part of the cultural participation and literacy package. For example, the Turkish Language and Literature teacher at the urban school pays extra attention to World literature books by providing a list of 25 books to be read by the students. Interviewed students stated that they initially had difficulties reading these books, but then they liked them, learned reading faster and began thinking about the conditions of people living in different periods (*Mora, female, student, urban school*). They start to understand different cultural settings through these works. Stating that she has learned to read more carefully by underlining, Darci emphasises that this experience has improved her own perspective and understanding by saying, “*for example, I think I have better taste even when watching movies*” (Darci, female, student, urban school, Turkey). At the semi-urban school, a Philosophy teacher gives project homework to read works of Western thinkers such as More, Orwell, Sartre and Camus, and gladly explains that students began asking questions after class and wanted to talk with her about them (Baykuş, female, teacher, semi-urban school, Turkey). In our interviews here, we saw how students started to realise with surprise that many topics had already been discussed by thinkers in the past. These philosophical readings help them to gain a more inclusive approach to different cultures and eras. At the urban school, the students did not mention the names and works of specific thinkers that much. Instead, they stated that they can have discussions with their teachers in Philosophy class and the subsequent meetings on topics such as gender, equality, freedom, belief and identity, some of which were directly related to their own daily lives. In contrast, at the rural school, the Philosophy course was taught by a teacher of religious culture and moral knowledge: “*In the Philosophy course, the teacher teaches the lesson as if he is teaching the religious culture and moral knowledge*” (Yaşar, male, student, rural school, Turkey).

If we look at the above example of reading classical works and philosophical texts, teachers can be important *mediators* in introducing students to certain cultural fields. However, teachers can be effective as long as they develop a method to attract students’ attention. For example, a student who enjoys reading classical books also states that he finds it absurd when such “*beautiful and enjoyable works*” are read only thinking about their possible role in exam questions, and all “*the pleasure that could be taken from them is destroyed*”. We found a good example to encourage students without creating anxiety about grades at the semi-urban school: A student without any previous training or experience in music states that with the encouragement of his music teacher he started playing the drums and the teacher showed



confidence in him by giving him the keys for the music hall and enabled him to practice (Kalem, male, student, semi-urban school, Turkey).

Each school also tries to “**manage the mobility and temporality**” of their social and cultural activities based on their facilities’ capacity and location. School administration needs to take many particular factors into account, such as transportation of students from school to sites; the schedule of shuttle; preventing the overlap of cultural activities with the programme of core-courses; choosing to focus on either extra-curricular activities or university entrance exams, etc. Therefore, we should not consider the schools only within their own walls. The urban school in the city centre has better access to various museums, exhibitions and concerts. At the rural school, access to such areas is very limited. Managing the above factors and producing alternatives can become more difficult. Therefore, students at the rural school express their desire to organise trips to the nearby cities more than the other schools, as there are not enough cultural sites and alternative practices around them. Indeed, the school has organised trips to cities with attractive sightseeing such as Eskişehir and Bursa in recent years, but a limited number of students were able to attend these trips. At this point, there is another issue that needs to be emphasised: At first glance, when a school administration lists the activities carried out over the past years, it seems impressive, but sometimes a limited number of and only certain students can participate in these activities due to the financial conditions of both the school and the students’ families. Some students are not even aware of these activities and the extent of this must be questioned as how the school manages cultural and social activities. Another factor in the participation in cultural and social activities is the *temporal management* of the events. Many of these activities are defined as extra-curricular activities. For this reason, while the courses to be pursued as required by the curriculum are not disrupted, some students are led to these activities and have to waive their normal courses. This poses a stronger problem, especially for students and families who attach more importance to university exams. Alternatively, students may remain at school for a few more hours after class, but this is difficult especially for students who live in remote areas and come to school by shuttle. Also, parents are not always happy with after class activities.

As a reflection of the national education policies (Şentürk et al., 2018) more importance is attached to extra-curricular activities at schools, and it is strongly emphasised that the certificates acquired by participating in such activities will have some positive effect on university enrolment as well as careers. However, how these extra-curricular activities should be included in the school program remain uncertain. For now, both teachers and students find intermediate solutions and try to continue with these activities. Meanwhile, some students are disappointed when extra-curricular activities do not live up to expectations. For example, a student from the rural school was excited and prepared diligently for a debate event at the



university in their province on “globalisation and the use of technology.” However, she emphasised her disappointment when an invited company manager instead used the time to promote his own company and young people were not given any room (Aife, female, student, rural school, Turkey). In other words, while extra-curricular programmes and events sometimes start with good intentions, they can turn into a “mere formality” and eventually do not find the attention they expect from young people.

It is also important how teachers manage the process and get students involved in all kinds of social activities and cultural participation processes. Generally, administrators and teachers decide on the content and basic stages of the activity held, based on their own experiences and get students involved in the process by assigning duties to them. At the urban school, we observed that teachers try to include students more actively in determining the content and stages of activities. Meanwhile, administrators and teachers are trying to find solutions together for problems that may arise. For example, in the week of the May 2019 graduation celebrations, students wanted to have a water fight, and this was allowed only when everyone agreed to wear black on the day of the game. Thus, they together took a precautionary measure against students’ clothes becoming transparent after the wetting and possible criticism coming from outside the school. Similarly, students wanted to use coloured water, but it was understood that these dyes will not be permanent ones, and students also took responsibility for cleaning the entire school after the celebrations. In short, when administrators and teachers share some concerns with their students through their experiences, while trying to create solutions with students and sharing the responsibilities instead of bringing direct obstacles in this regard, they create a more effective communication channel between students and administrators. This helps get rid of the formal image of school and administrators, which is often seen as an “obstacle” preventing students from having fun at school (*YŞ, Fieldwork Diary, May 2019*).

Finally, one thing we observe at all three schools, is the presence of certain clubs and activities where students have been pursuing their activities with increasing interest, although it is known to be extra-curricular and will not contribute directly to the university entrance exam. Both students and their parents predict that these activities will positively improve the skills and careers of the participants in the long run. There is a particular interest in activities that allow young people to learn and practice a foreign language such as German, French, and especially English at an early age. In this context, the Model United Nations (MUN) organisation is the most ambitious one among the schools.<sup>95</sup> MUN, an international organisation, also has an active student group involved in the organisation of the event,

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<sup>95</sup> For Turkey organisation of MUN see <https://www.munturkey.com/>



especially at schools that focus on English language learning. Students hold a mock UN session, they research how the countries they represent as delegates approach global issues, and debate according to the UN format and style. MUN is an organisation that encourages learning by doing direct research on different countries and different social issues. Of course, it is made more attractive for young people by including social events, interactions, and games. However, students of the schools which are more ambitious in English language learning have more chances to attend this event. Similarly, coding courses or debate clubs offer education programmes as extra-curricular activities. In public, some people who encourage these activities define them as "21st Century skills" of leadership, innovation, critical thinking, creativity, communication and cooperation.<sup>96</sup> It is necessary to question the imposition and celebration of these skills as the "absolute" skills required for the 21st Century. However, young people involved in these activities develop their cultural literacy while developing their skills to communicate with different cultures, especially Western ones. The opinion that such skills should be developed has become stronger at the urban and semi-urban schools. At the rural school, this approach is limited to learning English to improve students' job opportunities.

### ***5.2.2 Youth Aspirations and Cultural Participation: Interaction, Fun and Excitement***

Students' cultural participation is not limited to what the schools have to offer. Sometimes students have hobbies and interests before enrolling in high school, which they sometimes continue in- and outside the school. Students are most interested in sports (such as football, basketball, volleyball, martial art) or playing a musical instrument. Those interested in sports, can easily be included in the sports teams of their schools and thus establish a stronger bond with their schools. Selim, who learned to play basketball in a secondary school with a good infrastructure (opportunities) in Istanbul, joined the basketball team of the rural school after his family moved to the region for financial reasons and has become the Sports representative of the school in a short time. Selim said that in this way, he made friends from different grades at the school, and he confirms the contribution of basketball in establishing a close relationship with the teachers, especially the physical education teacher. Similarly, students interested in music and especially those who play a musical instrument gained a direct and effective role in the activities and shows organised by their schools. While the number of students playing guitar at the urban and semi-urban schools was more prevalent, some rural school students played the *baglama*, one of the important stringed instruments of folk music. Other young people play drums, piano, percussion, flute, and harmonica. Young people are also interested in listening to different types of music. Various genres of Rock, Metal and

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<sup>96</sup> It is seen that the discourse continued under the 21st Century skills in Turkey reproduce the themes in the following web page: Partnership for 21st Century Skills <http://www.battelleforkids.org/networks/p21>



Rap music are especially common among young people. Young people who consider music as an indicator of cultural literacy slightly disdain other young people who listen to native pop music. It seems important to follow current music groups. Rarely do students also listen to classical or folk music, and the interest in these two genres is either transferred from their family and social backgrounds or due to the musical instruments they learnt (such as the piano and *baglama*).

There are also students who are interested in different cultural activities such as drawing, photography, dance, theatre, writing, and documentary. However, it is more difficult to observe a certain regularity and tendency in the formation of these interests. Those who were interested often referred to their social backgrounds in the formation of these interests. For example, Miray mentioned that in her family, her grandfather, father and older brother were interested in painting and that her grandfather's paintings were hanging on the walls of the house (*Miray, female, student, semi-urban school*). Even if young people are spending relatively limited time and activities with their families during their adolescence, it is possible to say that cultural literacy and interests they have acquired during childhood years can be potentially relevant. On the other hand, the social background of young people makes it possible for them to not immediately adopt the mainstream cultural practices they encounter both at school and outside, and to approach them critically. For example, they may have a sibling with a high cultural literacy, a family with a liberal or oppositional approach, or an ethnic or religious origin other than the dominant Turkish identity. Ultimately, the social background of young people is involved in the process as a mediator in their cultural participation.

The fact that young people want to continue and increase their friendships in this period also has an effect in shaping their social and cultural activities. Making friends, spending time together, and having fun both in the club activities inside and outside school become important. As a matter of fact, “spending time with friends”, “going to shopping malls”, “going to the cinema”, “sitting in the cafe”, “sitting in the park and talking” are the expressions that young people think of right away to explain their free time activities. Depending on the neighbourhood of the respective school, they try to spend time together in environments where they will not be disturbed and can act freely. Students make their close friendships according to their fields of interest - sports, books, music, computer games, cartoons, movies, TV series etc. Therefore, the dynamics of friendship relations also shape the cultural tastes of young people. A student interviewed at the urban school defines the cultural setting of the school through the "school's alpha" to use the name among the youth:



*Friendship environments generally have an 'alpha'. This alpha is often a dominant character. He listens to such [music], and it spreads from him to the others, then to others, a certain section in the school becomes inclined towards that. I was, for example, before coming to this school was listening to Rock in English. Then I came to this school, the dominant section in this school led me more for instance to some groups in Turkish rock. (Lusaac Smp, male, student, urban school, Turkey).*

Therefore, these friendships are instrumental in both helping young people to get to know each other's cultures and for cultural exchange. Young people define their identities, interests, and tastes through the relationships and conversations they have established during this period. In all schools, there is an interest in discussing and talking with students different from them. Many issues such as religion and atheism, sexuality, LGBT individuals, non-Muslims, politics in Turkey were brought up, it is inevitable that sometimes profound and intense debates can happen. Ultimately, upper secondary education can provide a setting for different identities to come together, be recognised and transfer cultures through friendship. For example, while the rural school appears more limited in terms of cultural diversity at first glance, there are students coming from countries such as Iraq and Iran, including some Iranian Christians. Therefore, as students gradually meet these people, they also start to get an impression of the cultures of those countries. As the urban school is in a district in Istanbul where there are relatively many non-Muslims, Muslim students may start getting to know the non-Muslims otherwise unknown and unspoken of in Turkey. Again, other identity encounters such as being Kurdish, Alevi, Leftist and nationalist are also experienced in schools. On the other hand, the experience of a student who moved to the rural school from Istanbul, and says he holds left-wing political views like his family, indicates that it is still more difficult to talk about such topics openly in the rural school (Zethe, male, student, rural school, Turkey). As mentioned earlier, there is a stronger nationalist and conservative tendency in the surroundings of the rural school.

Friendship and communication, which young people establish in this upper secondary education process can also be considered as a part of cultural sharing and transfer. While enjoying time spent with friends, young people also have the opportunity to meet people with different interests, cultural participation and literacy. In particular, a direct impression of cultures and identities outside the mainstream discourse within the country is made through these encounters (although this is not always easy).

In terms of social and cultural activities, the potential of the neighbourhood where young people live is also important. Such offers are limited around the rural school, and the families'



financial means are more limited. Therefore, students can attend courses run by public institutions such as Youth Centres that work mostly under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. However, Youth Centres have recently started to be given more roles in communicating the government's nationalist, conservative and religious policies with the youth (Şentürk et al., 2018). Students can also access the activities of organisations that have direct organic links with the conservative-religious Justice and Development Party (JDP/AKP), such as TÜGVA (Turkey Youth Foundation)<sup>97</sup> and TÜRGEV (Turkey Youth and Education Service Foundation). Therefore, young people at the rural school can only participate in activities provided by a narrower option of organisations and institutions. In the urban and semi-urban schools, students with various interests have more chances to pursue their activities in an institution suitable for their own worldview and lifestyle, while they can access different, private or non-profit courses in Istanbul more easily.

Apart from that, digital home-based activities shape the social and cultural life of youth, such as; communicating with friends or different people over the internet, following social media, watching TV series and movies, listening to music, and especially setting up an online team and playing computer (especially among the male students). As a matter of fact, when we look over these activities, we can say that cultural literacy of the youth is fed from different channels when compared to adults. For example, since youth follow news events on television less, their sources of information about the world can differ greatly in both content and format. Instead of listening to a long story, their news is shared with short videos or images in circulation. Precisely due to these new digital technologies, youth can gain an impression about different cultures and societies, get information and become interested in some aspects of these cultures. For example, during the aforementioned Cultural Days at the urban school, Sao Paulo, who has a good English accent, started corresponding with Dutch followers in English when he opened a fan account on Instagram for the wife of football player Wesley Sneijder; he then started to watch series and videos to improve his English. Sao Paulo also had an interest in Latin American culture and started learning Spanish and making online friends. Similarly, there are young people who start learning Russian and Korean. These young people sometimes learn a new language unintentionally. For example, when young people are interested in Korean music and start following Korean TV series, they gradually pick up some language. Kim from the rural school explains how interest in K-Pop (Korean Pop) recently increased among young people in Turkey:

*Now there is a 'Korean wave', they already name it ...The music groups of Korea are very interesting. Because they dance. As in Turkey we suffer from a famine of*

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<sup>97</sup><http://en.tugva.org/>



*dance, look at half of the clips in Turkey, you just stand before the houses or stand before the white screen and dance, and it is over! But in Korea there is nothing like that, even the smallest dance has a choreography, you make another movement for every second. The lights, those stage lights, are satisfying for the eye. That started to spread very much nowadays. (Kim, female, student, rural school)*

Therefore, those who have more potential to use digital communication and information technologies are interested in materials with more visuality and mobility. When we examine the materials shared by popular YouTubers such as Barış Özcan and Ruhi Çenet, who are frequently mentioned among the youth, while the narratives of these people are supported by images, establishing fast and interesting connections between different topics, they provide information that may capture the attention of youth.

Young people's curiosity drives them to research many areas and improve themselves. We have encountered students whose aspirations were developed from their initial experiences in different subjects in each school. These students obtained further information in these areas especially through digital platforms and established connections with different people and cultures while in pursuit of their aspirations. For example, a student at the rural school was interested in cars, watched different online videos to learn how to modify cars, connected with people who shared those videos, and finally was modifying cars himself. He said that it was a great pleasure to hear the new sound of the car engine after everything was over. Later he learned professional videography to share images of the cars he modified (Bahadır, male, student, rural school, Turkey). Another student learned how to make a guitar by watching it on the internet after he started to play the guitar (Zethe, male, student, rural school, Turkey). Similarly, there are students who learned coding by watching videos and are now earning income from it (Emir, male, student, rural school, Turkey). An Iraqi student who, after coming to Turkey, started a bodybuilding course and became an instructor in the same hall in two years, now intends to open his own shop while preparing for national competitions. He follows bodybuilders from different parts of the world and especially wants to go to Los Angeles because it is prominent in this area (Serhat, male, student, rural school, Turkey). In sum, when young people have aspirations for certain topics, they become more prone to improve themselves, to learn very detailed information and to establish links with different people and cultures using digital platforms. Thus, while developing their cultural participation and literacy, they also have a more culturally inclusive approach. However, when the male students at the rural school choose their fields of interest, they tend to focus more on areas that can directly bring money because their financial conditions are relatively



limited. As a matter of fact, although some of these students have interesting and promising interests, they point out the jobs that come to the fore in their environment.

### 5.3. Culture, Cultural Heritage and Identity of Young People

As shown above, youth have many fields of interest, both inside and outside of school, that reflect their cultural participation. Nevertheless, when we begin to talk directly about “culture” and “cultural heritage” with them, we noticed that they do not consider many of their own activities and interests as a part of culture. For them, the concept of culture either only includes certain activities as a part of “high culture,” (for instance going to museum and classical music concerts)<sup>98</sup> or it is perceived as the “essence” or “heritage” of “our” identity (Turkish in this example). Often culture is seen as a stable knowledge that is not so much related with people’s daily practices but can be acquired by certain courses.

For young people who grasp culture as more inclusive than “high culture”, they consider it as a learned knowledge about different cultures and societies (especially about the West) from Philosophy, Geography and English courses. They want to learn more about subjects like Renaissance and revolutions in History course and criticise it for placing emphasis mainly on Turkish and Ottoman history. However, students who define culture as a part of their ethnic heritage say that they are proud of hearing the successes and legacy of Turks (military, architecture, music, scholars, books etc.) in History courses.

Students with greater cultural literacy can conduct deeper inquiries on subjects they are interested in as indicated in the quotations below:

*Actually I learn through the school but the school does not teach me. The school is only a mediator as it introduces me to friends. So, I am introduced to some other people in my friendship circle (...) Culture is thus those differences, different things, and also, I think I acquire culture with my accompanying research. (Tim, male, student, semi-urban school, Turkey)*

*That’s why I read such books [Dan Brown] for such things. Because as I said for gaining knowledge about the world, I don’t have any knowledge about Christians, I have no knowledge about Europe and the Middle Ages. In the History course, I see Ottoman history, Turkish history, Middle Ages, Mid-Asian history, Islamic history etc. we don’t see the middle ages, the history of the*

<sup>98</sup> Among the young people we have interviewed the number of those who go to a museum, exhibition, classical music concert and theatre are few and we saw that youth rather prefers to go to a café, walk or to a cinema. For the study supporting our finding, see Erdoğan (2016).



*American discovery, the history of colonialism etc. But in order to see those I read such books. Or... I enter in the Wikipedia and look. Wikipedia... I think is quite a good resource. (Ozenc, male, student, urban school, Turkey)*

Thus, in the formal education setting, topics about culture that the youth encounter should gain meaning in their daily lives. The relationship with friends has a priority in sharing interests, knowledge, tastes and favourite subjects. Young people, especially by using digital communication and information technologies on topics that attract their attention in the formal education setting, actually make cultural literacy more current, usable, and interpretable. Meanwhile, when we were conducting our research, direct access to Wikipedia was legally prevented in Turkey. However, young people still use this platform for searching.<sup>99</sup> This is a very concrete example of the discrepancy between the institutional and youth's approach towards access to knowledge.

The perspective of the youth on “European culture and cultural heritage” is directly related to the issues of culture we have discussed above. Young people who are closer to a culturally exclusive approach and give weight to their own culture are less interested in European culture. Especially at the rural school, there is less knowledge about European culture. Young people, who are interested in different cultures, have a more culturally inclusive approach and have different cultural participation; they have a more positive approach to European culture and give more concrete examples. For example, students who are interested in topics such as music, painting, philosophy, and architecture, while talking about European culture, try to explain European cultural heritage by giving reference to these areas.

The young ones especially with a more culturally inclusive attitude attribute positive qualities to European culture such as “education level”, “freedom”, “respect”, “welfare level”, “order”, “democracy” and “technological development”. However, when they make negative definitions about European culture, they compare it with social characteristic: Like “we” are more “frank”, “warm” or “hospitable” compared to “them”. Actually most of them did not directly live in Europe, and only a few had visited abroad before. They acquire their impressions about Europe from the narrations of their acquaintances who went to or still live in Europe.

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<sup>99</sup>From 29 April 2017 to 15 January 2020, Wikipedia was blocked in Turkey. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Block\\_of\\_Wikipedia\\_in\\_Turkey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Block_of_Wikipedia_in_Turkey)



At this point, they do not see themselves directly as Europeans, or in other words, they do not think they have to be included in such a broad identity and culture definition. Instead they think that they have to have their own unique identity and culture. But how this own culture is defined may change according to the young person being culturally inclusive or exclusive. There are young people who base their “own culture” on an ethnic identity like being Turkish and there are those who define it more freely. For example, one student says:

We live in Turkish territory, all right I am Turkish, if necessary I will struggle but I think I exist for the world... The world owns me and I own the world. (...) and if only everyone knew this actually, I think there will be nothing like wars. (*Mızız, female, student, urban school, Turkey*).

It would be more relevant to ask young people whether they can live in another country, and would they like it rather than asking them about “belonging” to a place or group as a culture or identity. Many young people who think themselves as separate from European culture say that they could live in Europe comfortably. Thus young people often want to go abroad through the opportunities which the formal education setting will provide for them. They not only desire to improve their foreign languages like English but also live in a more freedom-friendly and developed place. Both school administrators and students are interested in international education and mobility programmes like Comenius and Erasmus. For instance, Olivia Dunham who went to Finland with the Erasmus programme said “*it is nice to learn different cultures and look from different angles*” (Olivia Dunham, female, student, urban school, Turkey). But these international bonds are not yet at a level to be included in the education programme and to have an effect on schools’ packages of cultural participation.

## 6. Discussion

This study first led us to rethink the construction and implementation of education and cultural policies. Although in the recent year, there is a tendency towards becoming conservative and pious in the education and culture policies (Şentürk et al., 2018), when we look at the practices of individuals and institutions within the formal education setting, the process seems more complex. Actors in the formal education setting, primarily teachers, administrators, youth, and parents are not passive implementers of education and cultural policies. For this reason, it is necessary to examine the influences of these actors’ practices over the cultural participation of the youth more carefully.

Findings in three different state schools showed how the different practices and approaches of each of these actors and institutions may cause different results and enable us to understand



the dynamics in this field in a more comprehensive manner. Especially the increasingly active use of digital communication and information technologies by the youth is an important element shaping formal education setting experience of these young people. As the youth has increased access to cultural knowledge platforms, they learn both different *contents* and different *methods* through these technologies. Widespread knowledge as *content* is not limited anymore to what teachers allow or the course books tell. Similarly, while more rapid, interactive knowledge transmission *methods* are used more frequently with visually rich videos and diagrams, subjects and skills are not learned in a classical lecture format. At the same time, young people follow different individuals and cultures through these tools and platforms and interact with them.

It is necessary to try to understand how youth is positioned within the formal education setting in relation to all of these developments. The top-down education and cultural policies in Turkey recently aim to "encode" certain knowledge and approaches, which are more concerned with promoting rather conservative, religious and nationalist content. Thus, those social groups with the political power assume that they know what is right and acceptable from the beginning and they are inclined to impose that "knowledge" and "approaches". Consequently, institutions that are directly related to the youth as organisations are insufficient from the start to respond to the expectations, interests, and aspirations of youth. However, teachers and administrators in direct interaction with youth in formal education setting cannot stay totally indifferent to the expectations of youth, as they have to include the youth into their programmes. Therefore, they have to interact with them in one way or another. Ultimately, even though all the state schools follow the same curriculum, each school presents a relatively unique "package of cultural participation and cultural literacy" to its students.

## 7. Conclusion

We can complete our report with some proposals on how to improve cultural participation and cultural literacy in a formal education setting. First, the "cultural package" that schools offer should be made known and schools should be encouraged to broaden the scope of this package and to enrich its content. There has been a recent emphasis in youth education policies for youth to be led to specific fields of interest and to improve themselves through elective courses and extracurricular activities (Şentürk et al., 2018). However, for the schools to make more meaningful steps in this direction, the complexities they face should be simplified. School administrators and teachers still spend long hours "managing the mobility and temporality of their social and cultural activities" in efforts to sustain such activities. All steps that simplify these processes will be valuable. Second, the university entrance



examination that young people take after four years of high school, profoundly determines the shape of the later formal education setting process as well as impacting young people's high school experience. Young people give more weight to time spent with their friends as they deal with novel cultural and social activities during the first two years (9th and 10th grades). In the 11th and 12th grades, they withdraw from these activities, and this is especially true of those who want to achieve a good result in the university entrance exam. University entrance exams can determine the manner of teaching in schools to a great extent, as teachers must teach their subjects in a shorter format and with content in greater informative detail to match the specific format of the exam. This may restrict the teachers, at the onset, from selecting more open or preferred lecturing styles. Young people are more inclined to learn new educational content by relating it to their daily life and with a delivery that attracts their attention and curiosity. The university entrance examination format, as currently implemented, makes learning a considerably demanding accumulation of informative knowledge, both for teachers and students, and destroys the enthusiasm for learning. However, our field research presents strong examples that youth often improve themselves by applying resources outside the formal education setting, especially when they are interested in a topic. Therefore, it is important to develop access to the kinds of alternative areas and resources where youth can pursue their cultural practices outside school. However, there exists significant inequality among schools and students in accessing such courses of study. Due to the limited resources in the rural area, the state or pro-ruling party institutions are the main providers of cultural activities, yet, at times, they have issues of bias and incline to impose their political engagements to the youth. All institutions related to working with youth should be autonomous from political agendas of the government and political parties. Especially at the rural school, young people are turning to digital communication and information technologies for personal development and in the face of limited opportunities. However, these technologies offer "potential" and an "opportunity," but are not a guaranteed solution for all shortcomings of the formal education setting, or something to be romanticised for their own sake. In fact, many young people navigate social media in order to "kill/spend time" or play computer games for the same reason. Even young people who professed more dedication to preparing for the university entrance exam, confessed that they spent too much time on social media or their mobile phones. As a result, when talking about youth, opportunities and challenges of these digital technologies also needs to be considered.

Considering the influence of these technologies, cultural participation, literacy and interaction spheres of youth in Turkey reach beyond the familiar Western/secular versus conservative/Islamic distinction. Cultural practices of youth do not easily conform to the familiar categories of adults. For instance, young people both from secular and conservative families may be fans of the same rock group. Similarly, they may be interested in new



cultures, societies and geographies, as in the case of K-Pop and anime. As they are not totally conforming to the familiar positioning and coding in Turkey, youth have the potential of becoming interested in diverse fields. Finally, it is possible to say that young people with various interests and aspirations are open to establish connections with distinct people and institutions and develop a cultural inclusive approach while they develop their knowledge and skills in these fields.

Of course, when making such a statement one should be maximally careful not to define youth as a “homogenous” category and present a single “prescription” to all young people. As in the case of definitions made under the “21st Century skills,” we may be imposing certain skills and features on all youth while excluding their other qualities and challenges. Such an approach may ignore the variable material conditions of young people. Thus, in the three schools where the research was conducted, while an intense anxiety for future was felt by youth, there were clear differences among the ways and resources young people consider to use for shaping their future. At the rural school, enrolling in university is not so prominent; instead they are looking for a relatively “secure” employment within their own conditions. At the urban schools, since students have begun to feel that enrolling in a good university is no longer sufficient for a promising career, the stress stemming from examination preparation and their future has become more prevalent. This is the exact reason more effort is needed to understand the world of culture and interests of today’s youth, for youth with all their different social backgrounds.

The social background of young people is an important mediator both for their cultural participation and for their future aspirations. Young people are also introduced to certain cultural practices by their families and friends. At the same time, their social background based cultural literacy enables them to question cultural content offered by different institutions, including schools. This allows them to make a distanced evaluation.

Finally, youth usually perceives “culture” and “cultural heritage” as fixed and stable. They often do not define their activities or interests under the concept of “culture”. Therefore, “culture” and “cultural heritage” needs to be redefined and presented as a field of practice which has a place in our daily life. Culture is the part of our activities and practices which can be reproduced, interpreted and enjoyed; it is an area of practical endeavour that may enhance our lived experience. A similar approach may also be suggested regarding our concepts of European Culture and Heritage. Young people do not see themselves as being European directly as a single, comprehensive identity. However, many young people want to know about different cultures and societies, primarily Europe and North/South America, to interact with them, to live in those places, and enhance their standard of living as well. For this



reason, if it is desired to encourage youth to develop an inclusive cultural approach, it is necessary to open more space to opportunities of interaction with different societies and cultures in the formal education setting. These opportunities need to be a permanent part of the “cultural package” offered by schools.



## 8. References

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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

Interview code	Date of the interview	Area	Age	Gender	Language of interview	Languages fluent	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Members of Household	Citizenship
WP2_TUR_YP_Ali_U	8.05.2019	U	17	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Not available info	Not available info	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Alquam_U	18.04.2019	U	15	Male	Turkish	English-Turkish	Teacher	Social Consultant	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Asyas_U	25.04.2019	U	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Consultant	Teacher	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Belial_U	19.04.2019	U	16	Male	Turkish	English-Turkish	Trade	Housewife	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_C_U	30.04.2019	U	18	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Retired-Taxi Driver	Housewife	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Darci_U	22.04.2019	U	17	Female	Turkish	English-Turkish	Retired Soldier	Literature Teacher	Mother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_G_U	18.04.2019	U	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Textile	Cook	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Gaye_U	29.04.2019	U	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Manufacturer	Housewife	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Gulay_U	29.04.2019	U	17	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Photographer	Film Producer	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Hikmet_U	29.04.2019	U	17	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Private Driver	Accountant Manager	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Kulbukul_U	26.04.2019	U	16	Male	Turkish	English	Taxi Driver	Housewife	Parents, younger brother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Kurabiye_U	19.04.2019	U	15	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Not Working	Teacher	Parents, sisters	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Lusaac Smp_U	8.05.2019	U	18	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Trade	Retired Bank Employer	Parents, sisters	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Mızımız_U	29.04.2019	U	18	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Worker	Teacher	Parents	Turkish



Interview code	Date of the interview	Area	Age	Gender	Language of interview	Languages fluent	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Members of Household	Citizenship
WP2_TUR_YP_Mora_U	24.04.2019	U	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Engineer	Government Official	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_OliviaDunham_U	29.04.2019	U	18	Female	Turkish	English-Turkish	Architect	Retired Bank Employer	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Ozenc_U	8.05.2019	U	15	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Accountant	Housewife	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_P_U	19.04.2019	U	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Accountant	Housewife	Parents, 3 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Rhiannan_U	22.04.2019	U	17	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Labourer	Housewife	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_SaoPaulo_U	24.04.2019	U	15	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Worker	Retired	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Skywalker_U	24.04.2019	U	15	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Retired Soldier	Technician	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Su_U	25.04.2019	U	18	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Textile	Housewife	Parents, 3 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Tokyo_U	26.04.2019	U	14	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Shopkeeper	Housewife	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Ugurbocegi_U	18.04.2019	U	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Employer	Employer	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Vaveylar_U	30.04.2019	U	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Retired	Worker	Parents, brother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_X_U	29.04.2019	U	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Free	Housewife	Parents, twin siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Yalcin_U	8.05.2019	U	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Soldier	Teacher	Father	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Zed_U	8.05.2019	U	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Electrical Technician	Teacher-Not Working	Parents, 2 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Abuzer_S	7.05.2019	S	17	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Engineer	Housewife	Parents, 2 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Alfa_S	3.05.2019	S	15	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Programmer	Housewife	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Asu_S	15.04.2019	S	15	Female	Turkish	English-Turkish	Engineer	Worker	Parents, brother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Aurora_S	15.04.2019	S	17	Female	Turkish	English-Turkish	Not available info	Housewife	Mother, 2 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Ay_S	6.05.2019	S	16	Female	Turkish	English-	Soldier	Accountant	Parents, sibling	Turkish



Interview code	Date of the interview	Area	Age	Gender	Language of interview	Languages fluent	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Members of Household	Citizenship
						Turkish				
WP2_TUR_YP_Can_S	16.04.2019	S	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Retired Bank Employer	Bank Employer	Parents, sister, grandmother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Cano_S	15.04.2019	S	18	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Not available info	Not available	Parents, 2 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Ellie_S	16.04.2019	S	15	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Retired-Working	Housewife	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Emir_S	16.04.2019	S	18	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Cook	Cook	Parents, brother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Emre_S	16.04.2019	S	15	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Architect	Chemist	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Fake_S	9.05.2019	S	16	Female	Turkish	Russian-Gagauz-Turkish	Not available	Care Worker	Mother, sister	Moldova
WP2_TUR_YP_Hakan_S	6.05.2019	S	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Trade	Employer	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Ismail_S	15.04.2019	S	15	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Computer Engineer	Doctor	Parents, brother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Jack_S	15.04.2019	S	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Waiter	Housewife	Parents, sister, grandmother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Memo_S	3.05.2019	S	18	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Operator	Operator	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Miray_S	16.04.2019	S	17	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Manager	Retired	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Muslera_S	9.05.2019	S	16	Female	Turkish	German-Turkish	Employer	Trade	Parents, 2 siblings	German-TUR
WP2_TUR_YP_Selcuk_S	3.05.2019	S	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Trade	Housewife	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Sindirella_S	16.04.2019	S	14	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Cook	Housewife	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Tim_S	15.04.2019	S	18	Male	Turkish	English-Turkish	Estate Agent	Trade		Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Victor_S	15.04.2019	S	17	Male	Turkish	English-	Captain	Worker	Mother	Turkish



Interview code	Date of the interview	Area	Age	Gender	Language of interview	Languages fluent	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Members of Household	Citizenship
						Turkish				
WP2_TUR_YP_Yasemin_S	2.05.2019	S	17	Female	Turkish	Romanian-Turkish	Accountant	Music Teacher	Mother, step father and brother	Romania-Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Kalem_S	7.05.2019	S	17	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Trade	Retired Labourer	Parents, 7 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Afife_R	13.05.2019	R	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Craftsman	Care Worker	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Asena_R	16.05.2019	R	18	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Not available info	Care Worker	Parents, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Aslan_R	14.05.2019	R	16	Male	Turkish	Arabic-Turkish	Government Official	Worker	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Astro_R	21.05.2019	R	16	Male	Turkish	Pashto-Persian-English-Turkish	Engineer	Not available	Parents, 3 sisters	Afghan
WP2_TUR_YP_Bahadır_R	13.05.2019	R	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Operator	Housewife	Parents, 3 siblings	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Bariton_R	20.05.2019	R	17	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Retired Labourer	Housewife	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Bersen_R	13.05.2019	R	17	Female	Turkish	Kurdish-Turkish	Farmer	Housewife	Parents, 5 sisters	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Beyda_R	14.05.2019	R	17	Female	Turkish	Kurdish-Turkish	Not available info	Cook	Mother, 2 brothers, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Chet_R	16.05.2019	R	17	Male	Turkish		Retired	Housewife	Parents, brother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Deız_R	16.05.2019	R	19	Female	Turkish	Arabic-English-Turkish	Engineer	Housewife	Parents, 2 brothers	Iraq
WP2_TUR_YP_ElcinSangu_R	14.04.2019	R	17	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Trade	Housewife	Mother, 2 siblings, sister in law	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Emir_R	13.05.2019	R	16	Male	Turkish	Kurdish-	Government	Housewife	Parents, sister	Turkish



Interview code	Date of the interview	Area	Age	Gender	Language of interview	Languages fluent	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Members of Household	Citizenship
						Turkish	Official			
WP2_TUR_YP_Karga_R	21.05.2019	R	17	Female	Turkish	English-Turkish	Retired Doctor	Trade	Mother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Kedi_R	14.05.2019	R	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Craftsman	Housewife	Parents, sibling, grandmother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Kim_R	13.05.2019	R	17	Female	Turkish	Arabic-Turkish	Not available info	Retired	Parents	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Melis_R	14.05.2019	R	17	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Contractor	Secretary	Mother, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Metalhead_R	20.05.2019	R	15	Female	Turkish	English-Turkish	Estate Agent	Housewife	Mother, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_MrWild_R	15.05.2019	R	17	Male	Turkish	English-Turkish	Private Sector	Housewife	Parents, 2 brothers, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Patates_R	15.05.2019	R	15	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Retired	Call Center Worker	Parents, brother	Bulgarian-Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Sef_R	13.05.2019	R	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Not available info	Housewife	Mother, brother	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Selim_R	14.05.2019	R	15	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Shipyards Worker	Graphic Designer	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Sena_R	15.05.2019	R	19	Female	Turkish	Arabic-English-Turkish	Retired	Housewife	Parents, 2 siblings	Iraq
WP2_TUR_YP_Serhat_R	14.05.2019	R	18	Male	Turkish	Arabic-English-Turkish	Engineer	Engineer-Not Working	Parents, 3 siblings	Iraq
WP2_TUR_YP_SiyahKugu_R	15.05.2019	R	15	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Waiter	Housewife	Parents, 2 sisters	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Umut_R	13.05.2019	R	16	Female	Turkish	Turkish	Employer	Employer	Parents, sibling	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Unknownloce_	14.05.2019	R	15	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Shipyards Worker	Worker	Parents	Turkish



Interview code	Date of the interview	Area	Age	Gender	Language of interview	Languages fluent	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation	Members of Household	Citizenship
R										
WP2_TUR_YP_Yasam_R	14.05.2019	R	16	Male	Turkish	Turkish	Retired	Worker	Parents, 2 brothers, sister	Turkish
WP2_TUR_YP_Zethe_R	16.05.2019	R	18	Male	Turkish	English-Turkish	Labourer	Labourer	Grandmother-Grandfather	Turkish

\*Religious/spiritual affiliation, Languages (growing up/home/ friends) not available information

**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

Interview code	Date of the interview	Language of the interview	Gender	Age	citizenship	Languages fluent
WP2_TUR_T_Erhan_U	8.05.2019	Turkish	Male	50	Turkish	Turkish
WP2_TUR_T_Ayse_U	8.05.2019	Turkish	Female	35	Turkish	Turkish
WP2_TUR_T_Kibele_S	9.05.2019	Turkish	Female	45	Turkish	Turkish
WP2_TUR_T_Baykus_S	9.05.2019	Turkish	Female	40	Turkish	Turkish
WP2_TUR_T_Ali_R	22.05.2019	Turkish	Male	35	Turkish	Turkish-Persian-English-Arabic
WP2_TUR_T_Elif_R	22.05.2019	Turkish	Female	50	Turkish	Turkish
WP2_TUR_T_Gul_R	20.05.2019	Turkish	Male	54	Turkish	Turkish
WP2_TUR_T_Serenat_R	21.05.2019	Turkish	Female	31	Turkish	Turkish
WP2_TUR_T_Tugtekin_R	20.05.2019	Turkish	Male	42	Turkish	Turkish

\*Religious/spiritual affiliation not available information



**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

	Area	“migration” “ethnic diversity”	income diversity	med. income	deprivation (unemploy- ment)	Cultural infra- structure	regional political indicator
1.	Urban	Medium	Medium	Unknow n	Unknown	High	Election 2019, %48, Social Democratic Party
2.	Semi- Urban	Medium	Medium	Unknow n	Unknown	High	Election 2019, %53, Social Democratic Party
3.	Rural	High	Low	Unknow n	Unknown	Low	Election 2019, %52,36, Conservative Party

**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected schools**

<b>#1 School description</b>		<b>Urban</b>
School type		Public
School size	# students	556
	# teachers	40
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		<p><b>Languages Offered:</b> English, German</p> <p><b>Cultural Activities:</b> Domestic Trips, Theatre, Cultural Days, Concert</p> <p><b>International Project:</b> Philosophy Bridge</p>
<b>#2 School description</b>		<b>Semi-Urban</b>
School type		Public
School size	# students	1573
	# teachers	88
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		<p><b>Languages Offered:</b> English, German</p> <p><b>Cultural Activities:</b> Domestic Trips, Concert, Theatre, Student Clubs: (Model United Nations [MUN], Astronomy)</p>



#3 School description		<b>Rural</b>
School type		<b>Public</b>
School size	# students	622
	# teachers	47
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		<p><b>Languages Offered:</b> English, German</p> <p><b>Cultural Activities:</b> Domestic Trips, Concert</p> <p><b>Immigrant Students:</b> Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan</p>



## Cultural literacy practices in formal education (UK)

Eleni Stamou and Anton Popov

### 1. Executive summary

As part of our research inquiry on the development of cultural literacy in formal educational settings, empirical qualitative evidence was collected in 3 case-study schools to explore secondary education teaching practices and learning experiences regarding culture, heritage and belonging. The data were generated through semi-structured interviews with teachers and pupils, in an urban, a semi-urban and a rural locality.

Teachers' critically engaged with education policy and narrated their teaching practices as bounded by the opportunities and constraints facing their schools and localities. We captured them going beyond their roles and connecting their teaching to wider issues and learning objectives. Yet, throughout their narratives they often evoked conceptualisations of culture as external to pupils' embodied experiences, thus reproducing dominant hierarchies of cultural value and foregrounding forms of cultural capital related to strategies of distinction. Secondly, and in relation to the above, we identified teachers' narratives underlined by a 'deficiency' model, preoccupied with establishing a given values-system, underpinned by normative accounts of culture and multiculturalism.

Students' narratives of school experiences echoed their multiple social positioning. In terms of class, we observed habitual elements in their accounts of their learning strengths and weaknesses, their ideas of future pathways and their perceptions of horizons of possibilities ahead. In terms of ethnic positioning, we captured young people who identified as ethnic minority backgrounds, being significantly more engaged with issues of culture and identity compared to their peers who identified as belonging to the ethnic majority. Schools were constructed as inclusive places, though inclusion emerged as either being couched on single-dimensional, essentialistic notions of culture or superficially focusing on certain manifestations.

Overall pupils and teachers' narratives revealed the limits of inclusivity in the school contexts through: (a) a lack of consideration of the multiple interplay of differences entwined in cultural belonging and (b) the deployment of essentialistic, ethno-cultural understandings, which yield a focus on accepting difference rather than putting forward a quest for more dynamic inquiry, in-depth understanding, recognition and incorporation of diversity at institutional level.



## 2. Introduction

The current political and socio-economic developments dominating the UK social context have placed a number of key issues surrounding CHIEF research at the forefront of public debate and concern. The departure of the UK from the European Union, following an extended period of fierce debate and political instability, has raised discussion on issues of cultural heritage and identity along with national, post-national frames of reference. Additionally, debates around immigration, sovereignty and economic austerity have brought to the fore questions of culture (understandings of culture) and diversity alongside issues of equality and social justice. Against the bedrock of rapidly changing conditions and public concern, marked by deepening age gap in political orientations and beliefs, young people in the UK develop their cultural literacy.

CHIEF's timely research inquiry involves the exploration of cultural literacy in formal, semi-formal and informal settings. Research on the formation of cultural literacy in formal education settings, constitutes a multi-scalar exploration of the policy context, the framing and content of pedagogic knowledge and the actual pedagogic practices developed within and through the above contexts. Our research, so far, has systematically reviewed education policy in each country and has looked into secondary school curricula regarding cultural learning, as well as bringing together the analyses of policy and curricula at country level, and comparatively across the 9 countries. The present report outlines and discusses the findings of research in schools, with a focus on teaching practices and learning experiences regarding the formation of cultural literacy in secondary schools in England.

## 3. State of the Art

Intensifying divisions over issues of nationhood and sovereignty, immigration and diversity, have defined contemporary political environments in the Western world. Manifestations of these trends are particularly pronounced in the UK, where the departure from the European Union, along with the effects of economic austerity, predominantly feature in the current UK policy context. On the one hand, the emergence on new nationalisms (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, 2019) and the spread of Euroscepticism (Leruth, Startin and Usherwood, 2017, Harmsen and Spiering, 2004) along with debate on immigration and free movement have signalled a retreat from post-nationalism. On the other hand, the increasing internationalisation of economic production, of culture and of higher education and conditions of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007) in the demographic make-up, challenge traditional forms of national belonging. Within this landscape of contradictory trends and



developments, issues of cultural identities and diversity are at the forefront of policy and public debate. Recent education policy has reflected the above, through a retreat from multicultural models and a focus on Britishness (Fookes et al., 2020; Stamou et al., 2019). Indicatively, as part of the agenda of the prevention of radicalisation, schools are required to teach the five Fundamental British Values (FBVs: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs).

Related to the above trends, educational researchers (Osler and Starkey, 2018) have identified a number of challenges for teachers and schools, as hindering learning on democratic cosmopolitan citizenship. These include the securitization of education, islamophobia and new forms of racism and the wider implications of superdiversity (ibid). Yet, other research has demonstrated how school can play a significant role in the development of cosmopolitan dispositions (Keating, 2016). Youth research, exploring attitudes towards diversity over time, has identified young people being more tolerance towards racial difference and homosexuality, but less accepting of immigrants and foreign workers (Janmaat and Keating, 2017). At the same time a significant amount of educational research has indicated how class and racial positioning has an ongoing effect of young people's educational experiences, pathways and life chances (MacDonald, Shildrick and Furlong, 2019, Reay, 2017, Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2016, Shildrick et al, 2012, Allen 2016, Ingram 2009).

Within this wider context, our aim here is to explore the development of cultural literacy in secondary schools in the UK, by looking into teachers' and pupils' accounts of school learning. Our broader objective is to offer a bottom up conceptualisation of cultural literacy, drawing on empirical insights of young people's learning experiences. We therefore adopt an expansive notion of cultural literacy, going beyond its initial conceptualisation by Hirsch (1988). The latter focused on knowledge and 'hard facts' as opposed to skills, yet it received thorough critique in terms of its theoretical underpinnings and implementation (Aronowitz and Giroux, 2003). Working from a radically different viewpoint, we deploy a wide understanding (Maine, Cook and Lahdesmaki, 2019), focusing on embodied and enacted forms. In line with the above, we approach culture, drawing on critical and post-colonial frameworks, as fluid, contextualised, relational and dynamic (Hall, 2000); that is, as related to groups of people with shared meaning rather than along with national boundaries (Halbert and Chigeza, 2015). Following Hall's (2000) critique of cultural identity as a 'continuous, self-sufficient, developmental, unfolding, inner dialectic of selfhood' (p.42), we seek to embrace his 'new logics', which point towards an 'open-ended and continuous process of construction' (Hall, 2000, p.16). Similarly, we understand cultural heritage in terms of process and 'discursive practice' of collective memory (Rowlands, 2002), rather than



heritage-as-object. Furthermore, we view it as ‘ideologically loaded and politicised’ (Franquesa, 2013) and feeding into the formation of cultural identities.

Our understanding of the making of culture and identity recognises the workings on inequality and social positioning, drawing on Bourdieu’s work (1979, 1980). While focusing on the level of social practice, Bourdieu examines the making of inequalities, moving beyond economic accounts and showing how certain forms of culture as exchangeable and intertwined with privilege and distinction. In this respect, he provides a valuable set of tools (Ball, 2006) for understanding young people’s cultural accumulations and practices within the nexus of wider social divisions and hierarchies. The main concepts that Bourdieu, had developed across his analyses and which we will be deploying to interrogate our data, include the concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field. Cultural capital is used to make sense of the accumulations that social subjects gain through practice, and may take objectified, embodied and institutionalised forms. Bourdieu puts forward a wider conceptualisation of culture embracing material and non-material forms, and its multi-sited and multi-scalar manifestations. Irrespective of the forms it takes, cultural capital is never understood as neutral or static, as it is examined along with its exchange value and its potential to work as asset. Habitus on the other hand is always embodied and enacted and refers to the workings of cultural dispositions in the structuring of subjects’ practices. Habitus and cultural capital are relational concepts, and need to be approached and understood in their interactions with a given field at each time.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Context and information about fieldwork

Our qualitative research inquiry on formal educational settings, explores teaching practices and learning experiences regarding culture, heritage and belonging in secondary education. To this end we carried out case studies in three schools. Case study allows examining complex phenomena within their contexts and is particularly useful in studying social practices and obtaining insights on interactions and negotiations taking place within a given context (Merriam, 1998, Hamilton and Corbett-Wittler, 2013). A purposeful sampling (ibid.) was deployed to identify the three case study schools aiming at selecting cases that were typical or exemplary of other, more widely shared pedagogic practices and school experiences. The selection criteria were as follows: a) their location, with a view to including an urban, a semi-urban and a rural school, b) their socio-demographic characteristics and c) the predominant political orientations, as these were expressed in the recent EU referendum. Based on these criteria we sampled schools from rural, urban and semi-urban localities within



the CHIEF region of study. Additionally we looked into the socio-economic deprivation, ethnic characteristics and the EU referendum results of the localities where schools operate. Finally, we took into account the socioeconomic status and ethnic characteristics of the school population in each of the qualifying schools.

The case studies were designed to encapsulate our ethnographic and exploratory focus and therefore, deployed semi-structured interviews with teachers and pupils in each school. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as an appropriate research instrument that best serves our research inquiry, that is, to gain insights on pedagogic practices as well as teachers and pupils' lived experiences of cultural literacy teaching and learning, respectively. Bryman (2001) highlights that 'semi-structured interviews allow genuine access to the worldviews of members of a social setting' (p.317), while Cohen, et al. (2000) outline how semi-structured interviews allow researchers to 'view situations through the eyes of the participants, to catch their intentionality and their interpretations and their meaning systems of frequently complex situations' (p.291). Following the above remarks, we regard semi-structured interviews as a technique that is in line with the constructionist approach, reflexive outlook and ethnographic focus of our inquiry.

Six researchers took part in fieldwork, carrying out interviews. We were all trained and experienced qualitative researchers and we had all received full clearance from the UK Disclosure and Barring Service. Conducting research in schools and researching young people involves numerous ethical issues, which we took into account and adjusted our practice accordingly. First of all, we ensured that teachers as well as young people and their families were well aware of the details of our project and their role in it. We provided detailed information about CHIEF through the teachers and ensured that we answered all queries and obtained parental consent prior to our visits. Data anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed throughout the process. Our overall approach to the interview events was marked by a reflexive stance, ensuring that we establish relations of trust. Among our primary concerns was to make young people feel safe and comfortable to open-up and share their thoughts and experiences. We considered interviews as interactional moments, which may 'leave marks on people's lives [and] have the potential for creating transformational experiences' (Denzin, 1989, p.15 cited in Fontana & Fray, 2003, p.81). In this respect, we approached the process with a heightened sense of caution and responsibility, trying to allow our interviewees to have control over the agenda, ensuring they were as empowered as possible. Throughout the process, we were committed to making the interviews as positive and constructive experiences as possible for our participants.



Research in the urban school was conducted during the autumn term 2019-20, while research in the semi-urban school started in the spring term 2018-19 and was completed in the autumn term 2019-20. Finally, research in the rural school started in the winter term 2019-2020 and is still in progress. During this period of time, the UK has been through a phase of political instability and uncertainty regarding the future of the country in the European Union. Debate regarding the so-called Brexit dominated the news and a snap election took place in 23 May 2019. In a short period of time, a snap parliamentary election took place in 12 December 2019. On 31 January 2020, the UK officially departed the European Union. Public debate of this period, focused widely on issues surrounding the UK departure from the European Union with frequent remarks highlighting the divisions that this has created at societal level. Along with the Brexit debates, issues around immigration, sovereignty and austerity were also dominant in the public sphere. In relation to issues affecting young people in particular, knife crime has been one of the predominant worries and challenges of this given period. With knife crime victims rising across the country, concerns heightened among young people, families, the media and politicians. Additionally, issues around austerity, future economic prospects and employment as well as their effects on young people lives, were present in the public discussion and in some cases, in the everyday experiences of young people. Finally, issues around young people's safety in relation to the use of the internet and social media have attracted a lot of public attention and discussion. The excessive use of mobile phones, internet security and issues regarding social media and body image, have particularly attracted media focus and public discussions.

In the context of CHIEF we consider these aspects of public debate and concern both in terms of the wider context within which young people's cultural learning occurs and as part of our research inquiry. That is, we incorporated questions about the above issues in the interview schedules with teachers and young people in schools. These questions formed the final part of the interview schedule, where country-specific issues as well as those related to the local community were discussed. As part of the interviews, we referred to these topics but also allowed teachers and young people to raise any other issues that they consider to be timely and important for them. In all the above cases, as researchers, we cautiously engaged with our research both in our fieldwork as well as in the ways we approached the analysis of data; that is, we reflexively engaged with the implications of the representations and categories constructed through our research, leaving open the possibility for young people to 'elude and escape the categories which attempt to regulate them' (Kelly, 2000).

Initially, a member of the research team would contact the school principal through the school office to introduce the project and request access. A special section with information for schools was designed on the CHIEF website and was sent to schools too. This aimed to



allow schools to obtain information in a concise, accessible and easy digital format. Following this initial communication, we focused our efforts on identifying a key contact that would work as our access point in each school. In the case of the rural school, we contacted all the members of the senior leadership team directly, as their emails were publicly available on the school website. In this particular case, one of the school's deputy heads expressed interest in participating and worked as our key contact person. In the case of the urban and semi-urban schools the drama teacher and the social sciences' teachers were our entry points. In none of the three schools did we have the opportunity to meet the head-teachers, due to their limited availability and heavy workload. The planning and organisation of our visits to the school and our fieldwork were organised by our key contacts, yet we occasionally contacted the head teachers with updates about progress and invitations to participate to local workshops organised in the context of CHIEF.

Following the positive responses from our key contacts in the three schools, we organised initial visits. Three members of the CHIEF research team visited the schools to provide detailed information about the project, discuss the requirements regarding the school's participation and explore ways of 'giving back' to the school. These included the organisation of university 'taster sessions' for students' familiarisation with higher education, or feeding back some of our findings in accessible ways to help the school grapple with Ofsted'<sup>100</sup>s newly introduced requirements regarding the development of pupils' cultural capital. Upon the schools final confirmation and agreement to participate in our research, we were in contact with them to agree a suitable time-schedule for our fieldwork.

Despite schools' granting us access and enthusiastically agreeing to take part in CHIEF, in the course of the fieldwork, a number of obstacles occurred in relation to the schools' consistent participation in the research and adhering to the mutually agreed schedule. The challenges around accessing, recruiting and retaining schools in educational research are well rehearsed in educational research in the UK context. The research team took these into account in the design and implementation of the recruitment plan, putting in place a number of strategies to mitigate risks. These included an early start in contacting schools and planning the initial visits, the use of all available networks and contacts to identify alternative access points to schools, offering incentives for schools to participate, and designing a section to the website customised for schools, to allow easier communication of the project particulars.

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<sup>100</sup> Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) is the body responsible for inspecting educational institutions.



Despite our efforts, we were unable to complete the data collection targets within the timelines of our research. This was largely due to schools' inconsistency in participating in the research. In the case of the semi-urban school, although we started the data collection early, the school decided to opt out after the first phase of interviewing pupils was completed and without continuing with teachers' interviews due to their busy programmes and heavy workloads. To respond to these obstacles we employed a number of strategies aimed at accessing teachers' through different routes, which were not successful. In the case of the rural school, inconsistency was due to a series of unforeseen, consequent and urgent events, which the school had to deal with. In both cases, we proactively identified other schools in the locality that met our sampling criteria, but were unable to recruit them. As a result of the above, our urban case study is complete, while our semi-urban case study is based only on interviews with pupils. In our rural case study, the pupils' interviews are still ongoing. In short the present report draws on interviews with teachers from 2 schools (one urban, one rural) and interviews with pupils from 2 schools (one urban, one semi-urban).

The challenges we experienced relate to a number of factors explained above, but overall showcase a series of significant challenges facing teachers and schools in the UK. On the one hand, the designated study area of the project limited our opportunities for drawing on our contacts from previous research with schools. Beyond that, and through our contact with schools, we witnessed the problems and struggles of the teaching profession in the UK, which involves heavy workloads, working extra time and limited opportunities for reflection, recollection and development in their daily professional lives. Our struggle with recruiting teacher participants for the CHIEF local multi-stakeholder partnerships, confirmed teachers' overwhelming workloads and lack of time, despite their expressed interest and good will to take part. The above issues have increasingly been an object of research, and public debate highlighting the risks of teachers' burnout and the problems regarding teachers' retention and turnover (Bamford and Worh, 2017, Foster 2018). Additionally, existing neo-liberal regimes of performative accountability, featuring performance target-setting, universal assessment criteria and school ranking have been identified as eroding teachers' autonomy, undermining democratic professionalism (Biesta, 2017), and fuelling managerialism (Skinner, Leavey and Rothi, 2019); these issues have been vividly illustrated as the 'terrors of performativity' and their effects on teachers' souls (Ball, 2003). Finally, all the above also provides some contextual information within which teachers' narratives and accounts of pedagogic practices need to be considered.



## 4.2 Data analysis

Following the completion of the tape-recorded interviews with pupils in the semi-urban and the urban school, as well as with teachers in the urban and rural school, the sound files were anonymised according to the research protocol rules and were sent for transcription. The data were stored adhering to the rules outlined in the WP2 research protocol. Subsequently, three researchers of the CHIEF research team were involved in the development of the coding frame. We understood coding as a first step of the analysis, that is, of making sense of the data and of choosing analytical directions. As Miles and Huberman (1994) put it, it is a way of ‘forcing you to understand what is unclear, by putting names to incidents and events, trying to cluster them communicating, enveloping concepts against each other’ (p.63). Acknowledging the complexity of the process we will provide an account of the steps undertaken in the data analysis and we will also provide information on the context of each case study schools, to allow a better contextualisation and therefore understanding, of the findings.

Starting with the pupils’ interviews, three members of the research team were involved in developing the coding framework/tree by initially selecting and coding 2 interviews each. Working manually and carrying-out ‘open coding’ (Bryman, 2001, p.392) of the interview transcripts, focusing on the ‘what’ and the ‘hows’ (Seale, 1998) of the narratives. We then exchanged our initial interpretations and brought together our codes into one framework. Once finalised the coding framework manually, was further tested by coding one more interview each. An NVivo coding tree was developed based on this finalised coding frame. We then worked with this codebook, with the assistance of two PhD students, to code all of the pupil’s interviews. All interviews coded by the 2 PhD students were double-checked by the CHIEF researcher. A similar, parallel process was followed for coding the teachers’ interviews.

The main analytical directions were finalised upon the completion of the databases, by the three CHIEF researchers, who were involved in the process. These were decided inductively by identifying key themes and issues emerging out of the data coding, through sharing and exchanging our overall interpretations. To a great extent, these analytical directions, which were initially discussed in developing the coding frameworks, were further developed, expanded and reified drawing on an overview of the data. In structuring our analysis and report, we tried to stick to the main categories of the interview schedules and the subsequent categories provided by the research manual, in order to ensue some consistence across the country analyses and reports. Yet these were very broad categories and worked as a wide frame within which our inductively developed analyses were organised.



## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Teachers

Our interviewees talked passionately about their subjects and generally referred to going beyond their roles, working creatively and taking initiatives to meet their pupils' needs with a focus on linking their subjects to wider social issues. To a great extent, teachers highlighted pupils' disadvantaged positioning and saw their roles as empowering them and enabling them to achieve against all odds. Teachers' answers, regarding teaching their particular subject, pointed towards a combination of knowledge, skills and general values that they want their students to take-up out of their classes. They particularly demonstrated how their subjects connect to wider social issues and help raise awareness of these.

*It teaches you about society, it teaches you about culture, it teaches you about different places and different time periods. I think you learn a lot about yourself through reading and you learn a lot about society. ... The reason I enjoy teaching that is because you can, to all students, you can teach really high level stuff.* (Nina, English literature teacher and deputy head, urban school, UK)

Teachers also stressed the importance of developing critical thinking and in depth understanding of wider social issues, particularly in the current context of an overflow of information and even fake news, from the media and social media. In addition to the above, teachers described their subjects and teaching as aiming to contribute to the development of pupils' skills base with a focus on transferrable skills, creativity and adaptability.

*I'm passionate about making sure that all of our students have the opportunity to be able to be successful in whatever it is they do in life. I strongly believe that my job goes beyond being a drama teacher. ...My job is making sure that they can work in a group, they're able to speak and listen, they can work to a deadline, they can work on a project, I can give them a theme and they can create. And they have those opportunities to be able to access those soft, those transferrable skills that all employers, regardless of what it is they want to go to, that if they want to be a doctor or a lawyer or if they want to work at Tesco on the checkouts and everything in between, it's important that we are allowing those students to be the best communicators and the most rounded people that are empathetic, that are caring, that are kind and considerate as well as the drama curriculum and the drama stuff that they need to be able to do to pass their exams.* (Ben, drama teacher and head of drama, urban school, UK)



Finally, as the final lines of the above quotation showcase, teachers talked about their subjects and teaching approach, focusing on instilling certain values to young people; these often included kindness, empathy, open-mindedness, respecting and accepting diversity. Overall, teachers' understandings of their subject, as well as their teaching objectives, encompassed expansive notions of learning.

At the same time, teachers highlighted the heavy workloads, tight schedules and tough working conditions, which were related to wider pressures facing the sector. They particularly referred to the pressures they experience in terms of league tables and the focus on performance and results. Apart from adding pressure to their working lives, these also impacted how schools were forced to think about the curriculum. The general direction was towards being sceptical or limiting the activities that do not directly translate into boosting attainment and involve more general learning experiences, i.e. 'pulling them off timetable to watch a play'.

In the rural school, teachers outlined a number of significant infrastructural issues such as problems with their school buildings and facilities and related school funding problems, with which they struggled. The teachers highlighted problems with old buildings, which were 'falling apart', problems with their heating, lack of insulation and broken windows as well as their limited or not up-to-date equipment for practical lessons. All the above posed obstacles to their teaching practices and pupils' learning, and in turn, set limitations to teachers' efforts.

Beyond the school-specific issues, which were discussed as contextual elements of learning experiences, our interviewees also referred to locality-related characteristics as influencing the possibilities and barriers to student experiences and learning. In the case of our rural school, a lack of ethnic diversity and significant levels of socio-economic and educational deprivation were highlighted as the main challenges in narrowing pupils' learning horizons. In the case of the urban school, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity and a range of inner city problems occurring in the immediate locality (such as gangs, knife crime, drug abuse) were identified as exposing students to risky cultures. They therefore talked about ways of dealing with these challenges and the strategies they follow to prevent pupils' engagement with the local street culture.

*They live in an area of intense social deprivation, they live right in the middle of a massive drugs culture, gang culture, prostitution, it's all there literally on the doorstep. They walk through this, or they live in it. (Vicky, Drama teacher and senior vice-principal responsible for inclusion, urban school, UK)*



In relation to the wider context of teaching and learning, teachers highlighted and critically engaged with different aspects of education policy and the curriculum, as definitive of the conditions where cultural learning takes place. The recent changes in the curriculum involved a shift to knowledge-rich curricula, that featured slimming down the teaching content, focusing it towards the acquisition of hard facts and core knowledge as well as replacing the national curriculum with a set of guidelines, which allow schools to decide on the particulars of the taught content. The latter has reportedly created strains both to schools and to teachers' workload followed by government's announcement to offer designated funding, to support schools in building up their curriculum content and related resources.

In some cases, teachers talked about the challenges, the additional work and time investment that the first phase of implementing the new curriculum has required. They highlighted this as indicative of the tendency of each successive government's introducing its own policies and changes in education, creating disruption and discontinuity. That is, they highlighted the need for stability in education policy and longer term planning. Overall, our participants appeared to be positive towards the change in the curriculum format, highlighting the heavily prescriptive and bureaucratic nature of its previous form.

*Piles of folders, thick folders and piles and piles and piles of them, with the national curriculum, down to almost what issue you'd be teaching in each lesson, you know? Really, for the whole curriculum, it was ridiculous. It was so prescriptive, it was crazy! Obviously, rightly, gradually, that was refined and refined. (Luna, teacher of English literature and deputy head, rural school, UK)*

While welcoming the new curriculum format, our interviewees did raise some critical remarks mainly in relation to its predisposition towards particular subjects, namely English, Maths and Sciences. They explained how this focus resulted in other subjects becoming marginalised or squeezed out of the curriculum.

*Now it's gone much more towards STEM<sup>101</sup> ... This morning I heard it on the radio coming to school, 20% increase in the film industry during the last couple of years. I mean the market is there, the jobs are going to be there, in the media, in the arts, in those kind, there are going to be opportunities and the arts actually earn phenomenal amount of money for this country, they really do. I think that*

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<sup>101</sup> STEM is a widely used acronym to refer to subjects related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.



*that shouldn't be overlooked. Yes, we're going STEM, STEM, STEM, STEM.*  
(Vicky, Drama teacher and senior vice-principal responsible for inclusion, urban school, UK)

Undermining of the value of certain subjects, was also discussed, by some teachers, as an outcome of the new assessment procedures, which predominantly focus on exams, in contrast with the previous combination of assessment techniques (essays, exams etc.). Additionally, in some cases, the new assessment methods were critically discussed as creating a lot of stress for pupils; we captured examples of teachers describing them as fit for private rather than state schooling as well as implicating declining interest for students to take up the subject.

*So it has actually prohibited a lot of my students from doing A Level languages. They've made the subject so much more difficult, compared to other subjects. ....Why would you make the choice to do languages, where you'll get a four, when you'll get a seven in everything else? ...Well, the government has kind of shut the door on language learning in this country...It's a very monolingual society that our education system is developing.'* (Lila, languages teacher, rural school, UK)

Finally we also encountered cases where teachers criticised changes in the actual content of knowledge. Indicatively, some interviewees pointed out how contemporary literature and international texts were pushed out of the English curriculum, and were replaced by older English literature, which they criticised as elitist and least appealing to their students. These points echoed some of our observations, from the review of the secondary curriculum, which was conducted as part of previous CHIEF research.

*At GCSE<sup>102</sup> you have to teach English authors, we don't have a choice. There's no writers from other cultures on the spec, so we can't, there's nothing we can do. But we teach it at Key Stage 3<sup>103</sup> and then at Key Stage 5 it's a bit more diverse. We teach metanarratives at Key Stage 5<sup>104</sup>. We teach post-colonialism, we teach feminism, we teach Marxism and we cover a range of writers from different social classes, genders and races through that module. Also, we teach*

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<sup>102</sup> GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) is an academic qualification taken by students in England, at the end of compulsory, secondary education and is based on exams taken over two or three years.

<sup>103</sup> Key Stage 3 is the term used to refer to the three years of school (years 7, year 8 and year 9), for pupils aged 11 to 14 years old.

<sup>104</sup> Key Stage 5 refers to the two years of school (year 12 and year 13) for pupils aged 16 and 18 years old



*Margaret Atwood, she's Canadian (laughs), so yeah, there's more flexibility.*

(Nina, English literature teacher and deputy head, urban school, UK)

Notions of culture, cultural heritage and diversity were narrated as central to the school lives and were often discussed as the main reasons that attracted teachers to work in these particular schools.

Overall, our interviewees talked about issues related to cultural heritage and the development of cultural literacy as involving certain values, emphasising openness to diversity and respect. They generally understood culture in relation to ethnicity and religion, while, in some cases, culture was also connected to class background. Additionally, they generally understood cultural heritage as involving a local and national dimension, as well as a set of wider humanistic values, which were often articulated drawing on human rights discourses.

*The values that we really need to embed would be accepting differences, accepting different cultures...And it's actually about being a good human, not really about being British. (Jannis, Teacher of English, Rural School, UK)*

*Obviously bringing together the different cultures and the different ethnicities and the gender differences is very important to us. ... We work with those values and everything that we do we try to relate to those values. (Mary, Art teacher, Urban School, UK)*

In this sense, the approaches to culture, heritage and diversity, which we identified, predominantly drew on liberal political theories and legal conceptualisations. While welcoming and celebrating diversity, teachers referred to the need of having shared values, which may not be necessarily linked to Britishness, but do frame co-existence and guide young people's behaviour in this context. From this viewpoint, teachers also understood the introduction of Fundamental British Values (FBV), as a positive addition to the learning experience. While, in some cases, they questioned whether they constitute British-only values they still positively embraced them as involving a set of fair and useful principles that all students should share. They often unpacked these five fundamental values and discussed them as humanistic values in their essence and therefore accepted them as positive and useful signposts for pupils' cultural identities. In other words, they focused more on the content of those FBV rather than questioning the underpinning logics and potential effects of claiming this set of values as British and establishing them as a presupposition of national identity and belonging.



*Particularly because of the nature of our students, to try and ensure that they understand some of these principles that we believe are fundamental for everyone to understand, particularly if you are part of the United Kingdom. They are becoming higher up and they are being explicitly referred to, so students know about liberty and about democracy and about the rule of law, which are important cornerstones of society... We do remind them of it, particularly about the law, the importance of law and how actually what is expected in this country, the bottom line is the law of the land. So that cultural practice, if it flies in the face of the law of the land, is not acceptable. ... For example, you don't go around using the word 'gay' disparagingly. You're not horrible to people because they're homosexual or transgender. You respect. Now, culturally that's difficult for some of our kids. (Vicky, Drama teacher and senior vice-principal responsible for inclusion, urban school, UK)*

Going beyond the celebratory discourses of diversity, and moving beyond legal and humanistic approaches, we can also capture how perceptions of culture interweave with perceptions of ethnicity and religious belonging. Teachers' accounts of inclusive practice as well as their discussion of the challenges entailed in dealing with cultural diversity, predominantly focused on religion. In their narratives, certain attitudes were constructed as interwoven with religious belonging and in some cases class positioning was also added as another layer reinforcing these connections.

In their accounts of inclusive practice in the school, the teachers talked about recognising and respecting diversity, in terms of celebrating major festivities from different religions.

*We have a room devoted, for example, room 101, which is their worship room, where they can go and do their Friday prayers. They have different time periods for the girls and the boys. They have their wash room where they can do their ablutions. We've tried to accommodate it in the school. During special periods of time, for example during Ramadan, we're allowing 16+ to wear their religious wear underneath their jackets. It still meets the school expectations, but we're compromising so they can express who they are and what's important to them. (Josh, social sciences teacher and assistant principal, Urban School, UK)*

*We celebrate virtually every holiday. The majority of our students are Muslim, so we do a lot of celebrations at Eid and obviously we have to work with the community, with Ramadan because it falls around exam period at the moment ... Then we celebrate all the festivals really. We do Diwali in November; a lot of*



*the staff here celebrate Diwali. So we have Diwali parties and obviously we celebrate Christmas, we study A Christmas Carol in Year 11 in the run-up to Christmas. Yeah, loads of celebrations and stuff like that.* (Nina, English literature teacher and deputy head, urban school, UK)

To a great extent, we observed inclusion to be perceived in terms of allowing young people to practice their religion in the school space. Recognising and respecting their differences and making space to accommodate their needs, were the main features in their descriptions, with religion being the main focus of their inclusive ethos. Furthermore, while elaborating on the challenges they face in the everyday realities of the school life, our interviewees often talked about cultural diversity in terms of cultural barriers, perceiving these as embedded in their pupils' religion and ethnic background.

*I think in a school like this, I've been here a long time and culturally, within families, particularly within Islamic culture, there is a big barrier to any kind of performing arts. That is a wall here, it really is. It's a difficult wall for people to break through, for staff to break through, it really is.* (Ben, drama teacher and head of drama, urban school, UK)

In the above, we observe processes of racialisation of educational orientations and wider social practices, as, belonging to an ethnic minority group is assigned certain cultural dispositions. Ethnicity is therefore essentialised as a normative and unifying feature, that is predominantly constructed as overshadowed by religious identity. Furthermore, these are understood as posing barriers to empowerment and reinforcing fixity in educational and social terms.

### **5.1.1 Cultural identity, Cultural participation**

In the different research sites, teachers highlighted different aspects of cultural identities and experiences of cultural participation. In our rural school, teachers highlighted as key challenges the lack of ethnic diversity of the local population, the high deprivation of the area and the socio-economic disadvantages facing families. These factors were discussed as limiting pupils' cultural horizons, as well as leading to low aspirations. Furthermore they referred to a strong connection with the locality -despite poor future prospects - which they described as 'narrow-mindedness'. In this context, starting with these assumptions regarding lack of skills, their teaching priorities consisted of exposing pupils to cultural experiences, working on raising their career prospects and aspirations and developing their critical thinking in relation to the media and news.



*Their cultural identity around here is very, very narrow. If they live in [name of rural location], they possibly haven't been into the town centre, and they certainly wouldn't have been across town to the other school that I used to teach in, or [urban location nearby] – [urban location nearby] is seen as a big adventure. And that hasn't really changed in the time that I've been working in this county. And even when I lived in this county, you didn't really leave your town or your village. (Lila, languages teacher, rural school, UK)*

In the urban school, teachers stressed the challenges of teaching a highly diverse student population in terms ethnic, religious, cultural, socio-economic background. Their priorities focused on exposing pupils to diverse cultural experiences, as well as enriching and raising pupils' cultural knowledge. In several instances, teachers talked about families' cultures as restrictive and narrow, due to expectations that their children would follow certain professions, while discounting aspects of their wider learning related to arts and culture.

*For example, we were just talking about homosexuality, which is traditionally an area of concern for quite a lot of our students. It's something that's been brought up with which is wrong, so we've got to bring down those barriers. So in that sense when we're broadening their horizons, trying to educate them about that and not sticking to their principles or their foundations, which they might have had at home. (Josh, social sciences teacher and assistant principal, urban school, UK)*

Although differently framed, the teachers generally pointed out the narrow cultural horizons available to young people and identified limitations in young people's development of cultural literacy skills. Irrespective of the particulars, they all understood the role of the school as exposing young people to wider cultural experiences and forms of participation, which they more or less, lack. Thus their starting point of teaching practices was based on an identified deficiency regarding cultural learning.

## **5.2 Young people**

### **5.2.1 School experiences**

Young people talked about their school experiences and their views about school more generally, with reference to their preferences and frustrations regarding school life and to their ideas about the future. We encountered different opinions about the school, ranging from young people being perfectly happy with their school lives to young people who



highlighted their negative experiences and frustration. The latter were either related to personal preferences or were connected to particular incidents, resulting in disappointment or a sense of unfairness with how the school dealt with these incidents. Generally, across all the interviews, pupils' appeared to be overwhelmed with the pressure and demands of the school life, especially in relation to their forthcoming exams. They all reported tiredness or even exhaustion from their preparation for the exams, while also highlighting the limited free time available.

*I do a lot of revising. I think that's probably my main thing that I go to when I have any free time, because I have loads of exams coming up and I want to make sure that I'm getting as much information known to me because I can. Then on the times that I'm not revising or my mum says to me that I need a break and stuff. (Ronnie, 15 years old, Semi-urban school, UK)*

*I have no idea what I want to do when I'm older. Working really hard for the exams that are coming up. Obviously I want to do well but I can't see myself in the future. I'm not even sure what I want to do yet, whatever. (Courtney, 15 years old, Semi-urban school, UK)*

Interestingly we observed that in most of the cases, our interviewees did not necessarily link these exams to their future plans for studying in further/higher education or to their employment prospects; instead they mostly talked about them as stressful events and purposes in themselves, that is, not as part of a longer-term trajectory to which they aspired. In this respect, exams were rather constructed as aims in themselves, rather than means towards desired goals. This may exemplify the increasing presence of an exams-culture and attainment-focus occurring in secondary education in the UK.

Within this broader context, pupils talked about their most and least favourite subjects. Their discussion of preferences was often linked to their learning strengths and weaknesses, while, in some cases, it was linked to ideas about future education and employment. Their narratives evoked their family experiences and reveal parental ambitions. In these cases, we observed reluctance in thinking about the prospect of higher education and when they did, they would refer to the university or even further education college, which was in closest proximity.

*I've picked three sciences for my GCSE.... My mum always bought me science books when I was smaller. Then she bought me my first science kit. When I was smaller, I was really girly. I guess it was the idea of making cosmetics and things*



*like that. But now it's more working with chemicals and acids and seeing what happens then. (Zara, 14 years old, urban school, UK)*

Generally, young people appeared to be less confident and comfortable with the idea of the university, in cases where parents had no university education.

*I'm not sure what I want to do because my mum would still like me becoming a hairdresser and I know it would improve my concentration because you have to keep steady and stuff ...my dad does it... It's easy money, kind of like, and it just helps you with your skills. (Raj, 15 years old, urban school, UK)*

*I know that I want to eventually go to college; I don't really think I could handle university. ... My aunty went and she just said, like the money that you get, then you have to pay it back, that I just don't think I could, that would stress me out a lot. My grandparents think I should get an apprenticeship.... I want to be an assistant care person, I can't remember what it's called but I need to go to college for that, do health and social and then I can hopefully go onto that. ... I think I will search later. There's a few around me. There's one in {name of local town}, one in {name of urban area nearby}, one here, there's quite a few. (Anne, 14 years old, semi-urban school, UK)*

We generally captured pupils' outlook to the future, emerging in the context of the financial and educational resources available to them, in their immediate family and local environment. This discernible differentiation in young people's accounts, could be by and large, considered and related to the material and symbolic conditions, young people find themselves in. In this respect, our interviewees' framing of their learning strengths and weaknesses as well as their ideas on future education and employment, can be read as reflecting wider social hierarchies and manifest their unequal positioning in terms of resources.

### **5.2.2 Cultural participation**

The influence of family background was also evident in young people's experiences of cultural participation. In some cases, the location of their residence also played a role in the choice of activities available. In this respect, we identified some examples of class reproduction, with middle class pupils participating in a wider range of hobbies and after-school activities. These activities were costly and in most of the cases required parents' active involvement, as for example with their kids' transport etc. Pupils from less disadvantaged backgrounds also appeared to engage with certain activities in a more consistent way and



throughout longer times. Young people who did not engage in structured activities described spending time with friends at parks or at home.

In terms of their school lives and the opportunities they have to practise their culture in the school context, our interviewees portrayed their experiences in positive terms. Once again, their narratives focused predominantly on religious practices and beliefs. Departing from this viewpoint, they described how their school respects and accommodates their needs, making special arrangements and providing space and time for religious practice. They also conveyed a sense of non-judgmental and accepting ethos dominating the school institutional setting.

*You could walk around school and you'd hear about people and their experiences and stuff like that, especially to do with festivals and stuff like Eid, because I'm Muslim and Ramadan and stuff like that.*

*We do talk about it and the serious events that happen around, outside of school, we talk about those and we have the minute silences. I don't think anyone is very judgmental, I think from being here with each other we learn that we're all, we might be different skin colour, different religion, but in the inside we're all the same people. (Safia, 15 years old, urban school, UK)*

*We can practise our culture in school. Like, for example, we are allowed to wear scarves, which is very important for us because some schools, if it was a non-cultural school or a non-religious school, then you may not be allowed to wear a scarf, or you might get picked on for wearing it. In certain schools there are some incidents like that. In our school, I think they're very open-minded about it. Also, we have a prayer room. For my culture, we pray five times a day and some of those prayers happen during school time. For example, one would happen during our lunch time, so we have this prayer room which we can go and pray in, but the boys would go first and then girls would go after. So, we would have our own separate times. (Aisha, 16 years old, urban school, UK)*



### 5.2.3 Europe/European Culture

Our interviewees showed no familiarity with the term ‘European culture’ and they all struggled to define the UK in terms of Europe. In pupils’ narratives, Europe was predominantly as a geographical determinant and in cultural terms, it was constructed as distant to the UK. In most of young people’s accounts Europe was related to other countries, such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The UK was highlighted to be different and not really ‘European’ - even by those who talked positively of migration and supported UK remaining in the EU. Below are some indicative examples of young people’s responses when asked what Europe means to them and if they would also, perhaps in addition to their nationality, identify themselves as European.

*Like France, just other countries....even though we are in Europe, I’d say we’re very different to like other European countries. We’re very independent if you know what I mean, obviously we can’t help that, this is how the world is, um, they’re very close together, but the UK’s just like a little island by itself and I just feel like there’s difference, for example, with the currency we have. We use pounds. (Rita, 16 years old, semi-urban school, UK)*

*I think I’d think of France first. I don’t know why I think of that and then like Germany and Spain. ....So I wouldn’t classify myself as a European. Like I’d say I’m British if someone asked me. (Liz, 14 years old, semi-urban school, UK)*

The above illustrate our observations regarding how young people, irrespective of their ethnic background, identified themselves as British, yet felt reluctant to talk about themselves as European. In many cases the same pupils’ talked about their experiences of immigration, their multiple ethnic identifications framing their cultural belonging, their own or their families’ experiences of migrating to the UK and often talked positively about diversity and free movement. Yet, even in these cases, we were unable to capture elements of European identification, among our interviewees. On the one hand, the above offers insights on the political dynamics in contemporary Britain. On the other, these accounts may highlight the limitations and gaps of European unification at societal and cultural levels with the limited presence of collective, post-national frames of reference with which young people identify with. Additionally, Dorling and Thomlinson (2019) provide a historical account of how dominant ideas around the British Empire have evolved and showcase their relation to the vote to leave the European Union, as well as stressing the limited and partial knowledge that education offers about Britain’s imperial past.



#### 5.2.4 *Notion of culture and cultural heritage*

Young people talked about culture in both direct and indirect terms; that is, directly, by giving their own definitions of culture in more abstract terms, and indirectly, by identifying certain aspects or manifestations of culture and reflecting on them. Additionally throughout the interviews, they were asked to discuss culture generally as well as particularly in connection to their self-identifications.

The most common approach to culture that we encountered, was in terms of family origins often related to ethnic background as well as in terms of religion. Ethno-cultural definitions of culture were generally dominant in young people's accounts. Additionally, religion was also identified as a dominant marker of culture and in many instances it has been constructed by young people, as synonymous to culture.

*AISHA: For me, I believe in Islam and that's my culture, but if someone else was Christian or Sikh I would not be like, "Oh, you should convert to Islam", because for me that's their thoughts and their opinions and that's their religion and that's what they believe in.*

*INT: So, is culture only restrained to religion or is it something else?*

*AISHA: I think it could be something else, but I mainly believe it's more religion.*

(Aisha, 16 years old, urban school, UK)

Throughout these widely shared, dominant approaches, we captured culture as being understood by young people, along with the deployment of rather essentialist schemes, which focus on a single and rather visible parameter of belonging at the expense of multiple reference points entailed in cultural identifications. In some cases, we also witnessed wider understandings of culture that touched upon aspects of everyday lives and experiences.

*Your background, your beliefs, your morals, what you think is right, and what you think is wrong.* (Liz, 14, semi-urban school, UK)

*It depends on probably where you're from, your family background, the people you associate yourself with, stuff along those lines. Or if you... even to do with religion probably, as well.* (Rita, 16 years old, semi-urban school, UK)

*Just like how we live and how they live their lives is different to other people, and like how things are different in different places. So if you go to France, things are run differently and things happen differently and if you go to America, things are run differently.* (Becky, 15 years old, semi-urban school, UK)



In other cases, culture was discussed along with language, while, in some few cases, culture was related to arts and participation in cultural activities.

*Culture to me is like artsy stuff, like going to the cinema, like theatre, that's what I think of really when I hear culture, but I don't know exactly, like I wouldn't be able to define it, write it down. (Rahma, 17, urban school, UK)*

We generally observed young people, who identified themselves as belonging to ethnic majority groups, appearing less aware of issues related to culture, diversity and belonging.

*I have a friend, actually, who is Spanish, I think, or French. I always get mixed up. She's either from Spain or France. The amount of stuff she knows is amazing and I think she's so clever. She's half the language, because her mum's English and then her dad's side is that. I know people that are Muslims. I have some classmates who are Muslims. When we're in our RE lesson, I find it crazy how they know all that stuff and I don't know anything about it. (Rita, 16 years old, semi-urban school, UK)*

On the other hand, pupils who identified themselves as of ethnic minority heritage, displayed greater engagement with 'struggles of identifications' (McDonald, 2000) and cultural belonging. This may indicate how identities are inextricably connected to experiences of diversity (Hall, 2000). Overall pupils showed awareness of cultural diversity, though, predominantly in terms of ethnic and religious background. Their awareness was mainly constituted on the basis of tangible, - embodied or objectified - manifestations of cultural difference. Through youth narratives we captured the lived experiences of ethnic and cultural diversity being formed, by and large, in the private sphere, in the context of their family lives and traditions. Their learning experiences in formal as well as in semi-formal settings were narrated as predominantly involving events celebrating a certain country (i.e. Chinese new year, Brazilian day, Somalian day) or a theme (i.e. refugee awareness day). In the former case, the examples of events that pupils' referred to, had more or less the same structure and format, including national flags and food. In effect, the majority of these learning experiences appeared to focus on the visible, objectified markers of culture and diversity, which points towards a rather limited and superficial engagement with 'otherness'. This also indicates the predominant focus and framing of inclusive practice in schools, as this is perceived and accounted for, in pupils' narratives.



*Yeah, I think when you're putting your sum on, to check your money for buying food and stuff, there's little posters, like world, I don't know, this is an example, World Brazilian Day or something and there'll be like we're selling, and they'll sell like Brazilian food in the restaurant and stuff. The posters are cool but I don't think they actually do anything, it's just for show. I've seen it once, like the posters are nice but the actual thing is a bit of a let-down. I remember to celebrate Chinese New Year they were like selling Chinese food or something, but it was just like the same as normal food, just in different pots. (Laughter). (Rahma, 17 years old, urban school, UK)*

Religion emerged as the main locus of inclusion in the public sphere - alongside being a main definitive feature of cultural belonging identified across young people's interviews. Thus, inclusion in the public sphere appeared to involve the recognition of religious belonging with occasional opportunities for experiencing diverse cultural artefacts. In the school context, the above confirm contemporary debate and critical remarks regarding the lack or the limits of incorporating diversity at formal, institutional settings as well as calls for diversifying the content and modalities of pedagogic practice (with examples including calls for de-colonising the curriculum, incorporating black history in formal learning and rethinking teaching practice and learning interactions in the classroom).

### **5.2.5 Country-Specific Issues**

Young people also referred to contemporary challenges in their local communities as well as more generally in the country. In this context, they talked about knife crime as one of the burning issues regarding youth lives in their locality. Young people were all aware of the problem, yet the sense of danger that they experienced varied according to the locality of their school and their residence. Pupils in the urban school referred to first-hand experiences surrounding the emergence of gang culture and knife crime. In many instances, young people expressed their fear and talked about their efforts to avoid spending time in particular areas. Overall, although some young people were affected in more direct and immediate ways than others, it appeared to be an issue of concern for all our interviewees inhibiting their presence in the public space and interrupting conviviality in their local communities.

All of our interviewees were using social media and they all used online platforms and applications to listen to music and watch videos and other digital content. Challenges and risks related to the use of social media were raised in the course of the interviews and young people showed awareness of these wider issues. For example, issues of body image and social media were discussed, but generally (with few exceptions) our interviewees referred to these problems as concerning others and constructed themselves as being in control and managing



the risks and dangers involved. Thus, these issues were acknowledged in general terms, with reference to others and were therefore constructed as happening ‘out there’ rather than posing immediate and ongoing dangers from themselves.

While discussing wider contemporary social issues facing the country and affecting their lives, young people also talked about the EU referendum and the country’s departure from the European Union. Their responses varied and they often expressed their confusion over the political developments. Some pupils reported their dislike in keeping-up with political events, while others explained that they only recently informed and familiarised themselves with issues around Brexit. We observed an interesting variation in pupils’ views and approaches - pupils coming from families who supported the UK remaining in the EU, appeared to be a lot more vocal and articulate about their views. In these cases, pupils’ reported discussing a lot at home about their parents’ views and related updates and events. Pupils, whose families supported the departure from the EU, were generally less vocal and reluctant to discuss their views. This may reflect, what has been described by the media, as the ‘silent majority’ of Brexit supporters. In some cases, they appeared to agree with their families’ views, while in some cases they distanced themselves from older members of their families. Overall, we observed young people predominantly connecting their discussion of the EU referendum, with immigration.

## 6. Discussion

The narratives of teachers’ and pupils’ school experiences, offer insights on the experiential elements, as well as the particularities and complexities of teaching and learning about culture, cultural heritage and belonging in contemporary UK secondary education. These findings may not capture fully the state of cultural literacy experiences in schools nevertheless; they provide rich illustrations of formal learning practices and exemplify widely spread types of experience. Drawing on our findings, we captured teachers developing their practices by navigating their way through changes in the curriculum guidelines and assessment methods, as well as within the dominant culture of measurement (Biesta, 2017) and the financial constraints posed by fiscal consolidation policies in the UK public sector.

Within these conditions, teachers’ enactments (Braun, Maguire and Ball, 2010) of policy regarding cultural literacy, were also bounded by the opportunities and constraints, specific to their institutions and were mediated by their professional identities and life histories. In the rural school, teachers highlighted the infrastructural and financial constraints and the challenges emerging from working in a locality with ethnic homogeneity and significant



socio-economic deprivation and high rates of unemployment (populated predominantly by white working class families). In the urban school, teachers stressed the challenges of working within an inner city location, with high levels of crime and economic deprivation and a highly diverse population, in terms of ethnic and religious background. Although facing different types of challenge, teachers talked passionately about their work and described their efforts in setting learning objectives and developing teaching practices with a wider, public-minded focus.

Despite the particularities and differences in the contexts where teaching and learning takes place, we captured some cross cutting elements in teachers' understanding of culture and their teaching approaches. Firstly, in several instances, teachers' narratives evoked conceptualisations of culture, as external to pupils' own embodied cultures and experiences. While teachers worked passionately on widening pupils' cultural horizons, they did so assuming pupils' cultural literacy as limited or not directly relevant. In this respect, young people's embodied culture or cultural practices were not always or fully acknowledged, neither were they recognised as resources for building up further learning experiences. Within this general outlook, we did glimpse some exceptions of working differently. One such example was a reading programme, purposefully designed to trigger pupils' interest and attention, by starting with books written by "Youtubers", which were popular among young people and then moving on towards other genres. In this case, cultural learning was couched on young people's experiences, which were recognised and used as a starting point to build-up further learning. Yet, these examples were marginal and the overall approach to the development of cultural literacy drew by and large, on rather normative perceptions of culture.

In pedagogic terms these findings encapsulate a shift away from dialogic pedagogy and a scaffolding approach to knowledge development (Bruner, 1996, Vygotsky, 1978, Edwards, Fler and Bøttcher, 2019) as well as from experiential learning models of knowledge co-construction (Freire, 1993). From a sociological viewpoint, following Bourdieu (1979, 1980), teachers' practices were pervaded by a dominant account of cultural value and foregrounded forms of cultural capital related to strategies of cultural distinction. In some cases, this was a conscious strategy of teachers; one of our interviewees explained how this focus would equip young people to achieve greater upward mobility, therefore highlighting the potential exchange value of amassing valid forms of cultural capital. Yet, Bourdieu's analyses and contemporary research has showed the classed (Savage 2000, Skeggs 2004), gendered (Adkins and Skeggs, 2004) and racialized (Gillborn, 2014) foundations of such valuation systems, and their workings towards reproducing existing hierarchies by de-grading and silencing 'less' valuable cultural practices.



Secondly, and in relation to the above, we identified teachers' narratives underlined by a 'deficiency' model. Although teachers championed the need for expanding pupils' cultural horizons and developing their appreciation of cultural diversity, they worked on the assumption that pupils' lack certain forms of knowledge and skills and the schools' role consists on providing them with these. We encountered several examples of teachers' describing their efforts to introduce young people to cultural activities and expose them to cultural knowledge and experiences. To a great extent, teachers' accounts echoed aspects of Bernstein's (1982) theorisation of codes, whereby pupils' cultural knowledge was predominantly perceived in terms of a 'restricted code', while the teaching focus was on 'elaborated codes'. In Bernstein's theorisations, codes incorporate and manifest the wider principles of power and social control in the field of education, making up pedagogic modalities, which are engraved with the principles of social hierarchies and regulatory regimes. Thus, teachers' understanding of pupils' communicative codes and cultural knowledge as 'restricted' as opposed to the 'elaborated' codes of school may be understood as reflecting, incorporating and reproducing the dominant power/control configurations. In the one school the 'restricted codes' were related to the cultural politics and lived experiences of class positioning, while in the urban school they were attached to certain racialized understandings of cultural background.

Thirdly, we captured teachers' practices as predominantly focused on developing cultural literacy through establishing shared value systems for all young people irrespective of their positioning and background. Their approach may be understood as embracing rather normative notions of culture and diversity and a mixture of what Kiwan (2008) has described as legal-based and values-based models. In particular, we identified approaches to culture, heritage and diversity, mainly drawing on liberal political theories and legal conceptualisations. In Torres and Tarozzi (2019) terms, these may exemplify the workings of 'normative multiculturalism', which they define as 'an institutional perspective that is rooted in a political project based on a culturalised interpretation of the public sphere, requiring a rigid conception of culture' (p. 11). Following their analyses, such an approach has been deployed both in conservative and progressive political agendas. In the former cases, it has fed into arguments regarding cultural classes and the need to protect national culture from hybridity. In the latter case, normative multiculturalism has been used to campaign and advocate for the rights of minority groups. Yet a shared problematic feature is an understanding of culture as rigid, unifying and essentialist.

In this respect, we encountered little evidence of teachers' exploring in further depth and detail, the pupils' cultural references and background. In turn, their teaching of diversity



predominantly deployed a top-down direction to cultural literacy development. While teaching focused on raising awareness and celebrating diversity, it appeared to involve little attention towards incorporating individual pupils' cultural references. Thus, while teachers' commitment to inclusion was advocated, there was little concern with expanding or remaking the boundaries of culture by accommodating and reflecting its varied forms.

On the other end of the pedagogical practice, we captured young people's narratives of school experiences (their perceived learning strengths and weaknesses as well as their ideas about future pathways), framed in ways that echoed, to a great extent, their social positioning in terms of both material and symbolic/cultural resources.

On the one hand, we identified their accounts differing in ways that echoed their class positioning. We particularly observed their forms of engagement with present education and their orientation to the future developing in part habitually, and in part reflexively, drawing on familial resources. The habitual workings were identifiable in the ways young people's perceived horizons of possibilities as well as on the affective elements of their narratives. For some pupils, continuing their education appeared to be a common sense and taken for granted route (Ball, 2003, Vincent and Ball, 2007) while for others, the idea of going to the university was narrated as creating insecurity, uncertainty and reluctance (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000). Additionally we observed some young people thinking of their future strictly within the locality while for others, it was constructed as open to a number of opportunities and not necessarily constrained by the immediate local context. We captured the above, as closely linked to their families' educational experiences and views on education and future employment. In this respect, we observed the workings of habitus in the narratives of young people (structuring their cultural experiences and present/future cultural horizons) as well as the manifestations of the emotional politics of class (Skeggs, 1997). These also confirm ongoing research on the workings of cultural reproduction in young people's lives in the UK.

In addition to the above, throughout youth narratives of educational experiences and ideas about the future, young people appeared to rely heavily on family experiences and linked their ideas to family members' experiences. In these cases, we observed how family experiences and cultural resources worked on facilitating or limiting young people's perceived horizons of possibilities in their engagement with education and their imagined pathways. The differentiations we captured, showcased how certain cultural resources operate as capital while others do not.

Overall, these empirical insights are in line with a lot of current social and educational research stressing the enduring and profound effect of socio-economic positioning in the



lived experiences and life-chances of young people in the UK. In Bourdieu's terms, we observe the continuation of cultural reproduction through habitual inclinations and the workings of economic, cultural and symbolic capital. In all the cases, irrespective of the different orientations and forms of engagement with the present and future learning, young people reported being overwhelmed by their revisions and preparation for the exams. This was discussed as having implications for their free time and for some as a factor of stress. Thus, we could glimpse aspects of the so-called culture of measurement (Biesta, 2017) and its implications on young people's lives.

In addition to their class positioning, we identified the workings of ethnicity in pupils' educational experiences. Although we captured all young people being aware of certain aspects of diversity, young people who identified as part of the majority ethnic group appeared to be less engaged with issues of culture and belonging. For young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, issues of culture and identity appeared to be a lot more relevant and guided their overall accounts of school and wider life experiences. In these cases, their family culture was narrated as more or less distinctive or separate from the school culture and narrated themselves as drawing on both. In Yosso's (2005) terms' this raises questions of whose culture constitutes capital and whose does not.

Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds talked about their cultural identities as predominantly performed in the private sphere. Schools were narrated as culturally distinctive fields, nevertheless they were constructed as non-judgmental and accepting of difference and therefore, were experienced as 'safe' spaces with respect to their outlook to cultural diversity. While unpacking young people's accounts, we can identify the elements of their lived experiences of schools' inclusive ethos, along with its limitations. On the one hand, the schools inclusivity was narrated as recognising and accommodating young people's religious belonging, in terms of allowing time and space for religious practices to occur. On the other hand, inclusivity in schools was experienced through learning about other cultures, which predominantly focus on certain objectified markers i.e. food and flags. In this respect, we observed learning experiences being underpinned by limited, superficial or partial notions of culture, which subsume it to religious belonging. Inclusivity was focused predominantly therefore on accommodating pupils' rights to diverse religious practices, rather than being driven by a dynamic understanding of the multiple aspects of cultural diversity. As a result we found that there were limited opportunities for pupils to draw on their culture and utilise it as 'cultural capital' in the learning process, therefore hindering the opportunities for developing greater insight and a more rounded and in depth understanding of culture and diversity, that goes beyond its manifestations (Dixson, Rousseau-Anderson and Donnor, 2017).



## 7. Conclusion

Taken together, teachers' discussion of the pedagogic practices, as well as pupils' accounts of learning about culture and belonging, illustrate a view on the lived experiences surrounding the formation of cultural literacy. Additionally they offer greater insights on formal educational settings, by bringing to the fore the multiple dimensions of the process of young people's developing a sense of cultural heritage and belonging. Previous analyses of cultural education policy and curriculum guidelines provide the context within which these narratives may be considered and understood.

In this respect, one of the key findings, that runs through the different levels of formal learning relates to the limited presence of a European or other, post-national dimension in education. The study of education policy as well as the analysis of the curriculum guidelines highlighted an ongoing focus on national belonging and significant underplaying of post-national frames of reference. Our teacher and pupil's interviews confirmed these, through an approach to culture and self-identification in ethno-cultural terms. The dominant approach to culture, emerging though the study of education policy consisted of a neo-liberal alongside a communitarian strand, underlying national parameters of belonging. At the same time, our analysis of the curricula identified normative and values-based notions of culture, and an enhanced focus on linking culture with national heritage and identity. In our teachers' interviews we identified several examples of values-driven approaches to culture too.

Both teachers' and pupils' accounts evoked approaches to cultural identity focusing on a single dimension of it; thus ethnic origins and religion overshadowed other multiple and intersecting aspects of identification paving the way to essentialist understandings. Essentialism and a lack of consideration of the multiple interplay of differences entwined in cultural belonging, were also evident in the content analysis of the curriculum. In the accounts of teaching practises, ethno-culturalism also formed the foundation of inclusive practices, yielding a focus on accepting and manifesting difference rather than putting forward a quest for more dynamic inquiry, in-depth understanding, recognition and incorporation of diversity at institutional level.



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## 9. Appendices

**Table A1: Information about interviewed students**

File name	Date of the interview	School area	Age	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Parent's occupation	Religious or spiritual affiliation	Citizenship(s)
WP2_UK_YP_Amy_S	24.01.2019	Sub-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Parents are divorced. Two households: 1) Mother, step-father; 2) father, step-mother	Father: social worker; mother: social worker; step-father: HR consultant; step-mother: ex-banker, social worker	Not religious	British
WP2_UK_YP_Anne_S	30.02.2019	Sub-urban	14	f	English	English	English	English	Parents are divorced. Two households: 1) Mother, step-father, brother; 2) father	Mother: dental nurse; step-father: chef; father: hairdresser	Not religious	British
WP2_UK_YP_Liz_S	30.02.2019	Sub-urban	14	f	English	Chiche wa, Shona, English	English, Shona	-	Mother, father, brother	Mother: cleaner; father: employed in security company	Christian	British, Malawian
WP2_UK_YP_Anna_S	06.02.2019	Sub-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, brother	Father: builder, mother: housekeeper in a hotel	Roman Catholic	British



File name	Date of the interview	School area	Age	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Parent's occupation	Religions or spiritual affiliation	Citizenship(s)
WP2_UK_YP_Siobhan_S	06.02.2019	Sub-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Father, mother, brother, sister	Father: transport manager, mother: hairdresser.	Roman Catholic	British
WP2_UK_YP_Rosie_S	27.02.2019	Sub-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Father, mother, brother	-	-	British
WP2_UK_YP_Lara_S	13.03.2019	Sub-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, brother	Mother: charity worker; Father: landscaper	Not religious	British
WP2_UK_YP_Emmily_S	03.04.2019	Sub-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, sister, brother	Mother: speech therapist, father: solicitor regulator	Not religious	British
WP2_UK_YP_Beckie_S	06.06.2019	Sub-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, sister	Father: sales and marketing manager; Mother: supply teacher (currently out of work)	Not religious	British
WP2_UK_YP_Aziz_U	28.03.2019	Urban	14	m	Urdu, English	English	English, Urdu	English	Parents, sister, brother	-	Muslim	Pakistan
WP2_UK_YP_Raj_U	28.03.2019	Urban	15	m	English, Gujarati	English, Gujarati	English, Gujarati	English, Gujarati	Mother, father, sister, brother	Father: barber, mother: dinner lady	Hindu	British
WP2_UK_YP_Aisha	04.04.2019	Urban	16	f	English,	English	English	English	Mother, father,	Mother:	Islam	British



File name	Date of the interview	School area	Age	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Parent's occupation	Religions or spiritual affiliation	Citizenship(s)
U					Pothwari	, Pothwari		, Pothwari	sister, two brothers	housewife, father: works for a technical company, has a university degree		
WP2_UK_YP_Zara_U	04.04.2019	Urban	14	f	English	English	English	English, Spanish, French	Parents separated. Lives with mother, brother and sister	Mother: housewife; father: musician	Not religious	British
WP2_UK_YP_Lilly_S	06.06.2019	Semi-urban	14	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, two brother	Mother: deputy head teacher at the special needs school; father: sales manager.	Not religious	British
WP2_UK_YP_Rahma_U	03.04.2019	Urban	17	m	Urdu, English	Urdu, English	Urdu, English	English	Parents, three sisters	-	Islam	British
WP2_UK_YP_Tariq_U	03.04.2019	Urban	17	f	Urdu, English	Urdu, English	Urdu, English	English	Parents	-	Islam	British
WP2_UK_YP_Maya_S	27.02.2019	Semi-urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, brother	-	Christian	British
WP2_UK_YP_Sabbir_U	03.04.2019	Urban	17	m	Bengali, English	English, Bengali	English, Bengali	English	Parents, a younger sister (there are also four older sisters)	-	Islam	British
WP2_UK_YP_Daniel_U	03.04.2019	Urban	17	m	Romanian, English	Romanian	Romanian	English	Parents, brother	Father: builder; mother: maid	Christian	Romanian
WP2_UK_YP_Safia_U	27.03.2019	Urban	15	f	Bengali,	English	Bengali	English	-	-	Islam	British



File name	Date of the interview	School area	Age	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Parent's occupation	Religions or spiritual affiliation	Citizenship(s)
					English	, Bengali	, English					
WP2_UK_YP_Jamillah_U	27.03.2019	Urban	14	f	Gujarati, English	English	English	English	Mother, father, two brothers and a sister	Mother: cleaner; father: bus driver	Islam	British
WP2_UK_YP_Khalila_U	13.03.2019	Urban	15	f	Bengali, English	English, Bengali	, Bengali	English	Parents	-	Islam	British
WP2_UK_YP_Ryan_U	04.04.2019	Urban	14	m	English, Spanish	English	English	English	Mother, father, sister	Mother: unemployed; father: postman	-	British
WP2_UK_YP_Victoria_U	27.03.19	Urban	13	f	English	English	English	English	Mother and brother	Mother: nurse, father: DJ	Atheist	British
WP2_UK_YP_Annabelle_U	3.04.2019	Urban	17	f	German Urdu and English	English and Urdu	English and Urdu	English	Mother, 2 sisters and brother	Mother doesn't work	Muslim	German
WP2_UK_YP_Elian_U	27.06.2019	urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, brother and father	Mother and father teach drama	No religion	British
WP2_UK_YP_Molly_U	28.03.2019	Urban	15	f	English and Shona	Shona	English	English	Mother, father and little sisters	Mother: accountant, father: company manager –runs his business	Christianity	Zimbabwe and British



File name	Date of the interview	School area	Age	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Parent's occupation	Religions or spiritual affiliation	Citizen(s)
WP2_UK_YP_Pola_U	3.04.2019	Urban	16	m	Bengali, English	Bengali	Bengali	English	Parents and sister	Father: delivery, mother: never worked	Muslim	Italian, Bangladeshi and British
WP2_UK_YP_Barsha_U	4.04.2019	Urban	17	f	English	English and Bengali	English and Bengali	English	Mother, father, brother and sister	Father: taxi driver, mother: dinner lady	Muslim	British
WP2_UK_YP_Rita_S_U	10.04.2019	Semi-Urban	16	f	English	English	English	English	Mother dad and siblings	-	No religion	English
WP2_UK_YP_Leah_U	28.03.2019	Urban	15	m	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, sister	Mother: nursery teacher father: owns food shop	Atheist	British
WP2_UK_YP_Melody_U	04.04.2019	Urban	16	f	English	English	English and Gujrati	English	Mother, father, 2 sisters and brother	Mother: teacher, father: shop owner	Muslim	British and South African
WP2_UK_YP_George_SU	03.04.2019	Semi Urban	15	m	English	English	English	English	Mother, father and younger brother	Mother: teaching assistant, father: metal worker	Islam	British (moved with family from Zimbabwe to the UK, at young



File name	Date of the interview	School area	Age	Gender	Languages fluent	Languages growing up	Languages home	Languages friends	Members of the household	Parent's occupation	Religions or spiritual affiliation	Citizenship(s) (age)
WP2_UK_YP_Donna_SU	03.04.2019	Semi Urban	14	f	English and some French	English	English and French (grand mother)	English	Mother, father, younger sister	Mother: cleaner at the church, father: professional chef	Christian	English and Australian
WP2_UK_YP_Abi_SU	30.01.19	Semi Urban	14	f	English	English	English	English	Mother and father. She has an older brother who does not live at home.	Mother: dog walker, father manager at an electrical company	Catholic	English
WP2_UK_YP_Courtney_SU	30.01.19	Semi Urban	15	f	English	English	English	English	Lives with Mother and two brothers. She has three more siblings not living with them	Mother: hairdresser and works at school (non teaching job) father: carer for autistic old people	Not religious	English (mother originally from Zimbabwe)
WP2_UK_YP_Violet_SU	27.03.19	Semi-urban	14	f	English	English	English	English	Mother, father, brother and sister	Mother stays at home father works at Land Rover factory	Christian	English
WP2_UK_YP_Ronnie_SU	27.03.19	Semi-urban	15	m	English and learning Spanish for GCSE	English	English	English	Mother, father and two brothers	Mother works in a technology-related job father builder	Christian	English



**Table A2: Information about interviewed teachers**

File name	Date of the interview	Gender	Years of teaching experience	Subjects	Language	Religion	Citizenship/nationality/ethnicity	School area
WP2_UK_T_Josh_U	11/10/19	Male	16	Social Sciences teacher, Assistant Principal and Head of Social Sciences	English	Agnostic	British (English)	Urban
WP2_UK_T_Mia_U	27/10/19	Female	8	History and Religious Education Teacher	English	No religion	British (English)	Urban
WP2_UK_T_Nina_U	11/10/19	Female	8	Teacher of English and Deputy Head	English	Christian	British (Mother's family is Gypsy, father's mother was Greek and father's father was Italian)	Urban
WP2_UK_T_Vicky_U	11/10/19	Female	38	Drama teacher and Senior vice-principal (responsible for inclusion)	English	No religion	British (English)	Urban
WP2_UK_T_Mary_U	27/11/19	Female	4	Art teacher	English	No religion	British (English)	Urban
WP2_UK_T_Ben_U	27/11/19	Male	5	Drama teacher and head of drama	English	Atheist	British (English)	Urban
WP2_UK_T_Luna_R	13/01/20	Female	14	Deputy Head and Teacher of English literature	English	No religion	British (English)	Rural



File name	Date of the interview	Gender	Years of teaching experience	Subjects	Language	Religion	Citizenship/nationality/ethnicity	School area
WP2_UK_T_Lila_R	13/01/20	Female	25	Languages teacher	English French Spanish German Italian	No religion	British (English)	Rural
WP2_UK_T_Jannis_R	13/01/20	Female	14	English teacher and librarian	English Some Danish Welsh	No religion	British (Welsh and English)	Rural

**Table A3: Information about the areas where the WP2 schools are located**

Area	‘Migration’/ ‘Ethnic and religious diversity’	Income diversity	Median income	Deprivation	Cultural capital (Average educational attainment)	Regional political indicator
<b>Urban</b>	High diversity	Low income diversity	Low	High deprivation (amongst the 10% <b>most</b> deprived neighbourhoods in the country)	GCSE and A Levels below the national average	Moderate support for Leave vote - 55.6% Leave vote
<b>Semi-urban</b>	Moderate diversity	Overall above average affluence with small pockets of above average deprivation	Below national average	Low deprivation (amongst the 20% least deprived)	GCSE above the national average  A Levels below the national average	Strong remain - 58,7% vote Remain
<b>Rural</b>	Low diversity	Overall above average affluence, with pockets of above	Below national average	Below national average (amongst the 50% of	GCSE and A Levels below the national average	Strong ‘Leave’ vote 67%



		average deprivation.		least deprived)		
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**Table A4: Characteristics of the selected school #1 (Urban school)**

#1 School description		Urban
School type		Academy, part of a multi-academy trust
School size	# students	1355
	# teachers	106
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context:		<p>It is a larger than average inner city school, non-religious and non-selective. It offers education for 11-18 year olds.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils with EAL (English additional language) is well above the national average.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. Largest groups are Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African, Indian, White British, Roma Gypsy</p>

**Table A5: Characteristics of the selected school #2 (Semi-urban school)**

#2 School description		Sub-urban
School type		Academy
School size	# students	1466
	# teachers	86
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context		<p>It is a larger than average suburban school, non-religious and non-selective. It offers education for 11-18 year olds.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils with English as Additional Language is well below the national average.</p>



**Table A6: Characteristics of the selected school #3 (Rural school)**

#3 School description		Rural
School type		Academy
School size	# students	994
	# teachers	53
Anything relevant in the CHIEF context		<p>It is a rural average-sized school, non-religious and non-selective.</p> <p>It offers education for 11-16 year olds.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils with English as Additional Language is very low, well below the national average.</p>



## Common Interview Schedules

### Appendix G1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

Lead questions (aiming at narrations)	<i>Check – have these topics been addressed?</i> <b>Possible questions (only to be asked if not answered autonomously)</b>	<b>Anchor Questions (to be asked, whenever thematically appropriate)</b>
<p><b>Block 1: Notion of culture/cultural heritage</b></p> <p><b>In this Block we want to find out about teachers’ understanding of “culture” and “cultural heritage”</b></p> <p>- <b>How would you explain the term “culture”?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the main message you would like your pupils to get from your subject?</li> <li>- What are the values you would like them to internalize as much as possible?</li> <li>- Why do you find these values important?</li> <li>- To what extent, in your opinion, do they internalize these values?</li> <li>- IF NOT: Why not?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What would you define as “cultural heritage”?</li> <li>- What would you define as “cultural education”?</li> <li>- What are the goals of “cultural education”?</li> <li>- What do you consider important with regard to young people’s cultural practices?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Block 2: Cultural identity of young people</b></p> <p><b>In this Block we are looking at how the respondents understand “cultural identity” and especially in regard to their students</b></p> <p>- <b>How would you describe your pupils with regard to their cultural practices?</b></p> <p><i>Alternative:</i></p> <p>- <b>In which way are your pupils culturally engaged?</b></p> <p>- <b>In which way do your pupils participate in cultural activities?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In which ways are the students in your class(es) diverse?</li> <li>- Which talents do your students show in the classroom?</li> <li>- How much would you say they are interested in your subject?</li> <li>- What do they like about it most? Why is that, in your opinion?</li> <li>- What do they not like that much? Why is that?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you consider important with regard to young people’s cultural identity?</li> </ul>



<p><b>Block 3: Educational concepts</b>  <b>Here we aim to understand how teachers communicate these concepts to students, and in particular, facilitate cultural competence and participation</b></p> <p>- <b>How do you teach ... [pick up words mentioned by teacher in answers of block 1, e.g. subject or their individual concept of cultural education]?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What were the reasons you've chosen this subject to teach? [<i>We are looking here for reasons more or less related to value choices.</i>]</li> <li>- What inspires you most about this subject?</li> <li>- Is there anything that you don't like about it?</li> <li>- What materials (textbooks, online etc.) do you use? Can you show us? How do you use them? What do you especially like/dislike about these? Are materials prescribed or do you use your own?</li> <li>- Would you say or not that the way this subject is taught in [country] has changed during the period that you teach it?</li> <li>- IF YES: What has changed and how? Curricula? Textbooks? Pupils? How would you assess these changes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you participate/initiate as a teacher with your pupils in any cultural event or experience inside or outside the classroom/school?</li> <li>- What textbooks and teaching materials do you use and how do you evaluate these?  <i>[Please record the material/textbook to be used in our analysis]</i></li> <li>- How you value the influence of new technologies and the internet among pupils learning process? And about cultural knowledge?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Block 4: Country's issues</b></p> <p>Formulate your own topic that is relevant in your own context</p> <p><i>Please do not overload this block, try to focus on one issue.</i></p> <p><i>The whole interview shall not take longer than 45-60 minutes</i></p>	<p>Formulate your own questions</p>	<p>Formulate your own anchor question(s)</p>



## Appendix G2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS

Lead questions (aiming at narrations)	<i>Check – were these topics mentioned?</i> Possible questions (only to be asked if not answered autonomously)	Anchor Questions (to be asked with exactly the same wording, summarising the block)
<p><b>Block 1: School experiences</b></p> <p><b>In this Block we are interested in school experiences of young people. What is important for them in school? What is their learning experience and what and how do they wish to learn? How do they want to be educated? Indirectly, we want to approach the topic of “culture” from their narrations. If they talk about math and science, than that is important to them, and it is also culture. So let them speak.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>What is your favourite/least favourite subject? Why?</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you think is the most interesting part of your school experience? What do you enjoy most while at school? Why?</li> <li>- Is there anything that you would like to change about your school? What is this?</li> <li>- Why would you like to change it? How would you change it?</li> <li>- And is there any subject that is not currently part of your school program, but you would like it to be taught? IF YES: Which subject? Why it should be taught?</li> <li>- Which textbook(s) do you like most? Why?</li> <li>- Which textbook(s) teaches you most, i.e. helps you learn most? Could you please tell me more about these textbooks?</li> <li>- If the [Ministry of education] asked for your opinion, what would you suggest to change in the textbooks that you are using now? [INTERVIEWER: <i>Make sure to specify the textbook(s) the respondent would make changes to, and what and how would s/he want to change.</i>]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you imagine a school in [the country] in 10 years from now?</li> <li>- What will stay the same, what will change?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Block 2: Notions of culture/cultural heritage (in and out of school)</b></p> <p><b>Here, we want to find out how young people understand “culture”, “cultural heritage” and</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you learn about culture in school? Which cultural events are celebrated at your school and how?</li> <li>- In which way is this knowledge, these events and celebrations relevant for you personally?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What else would you consider “cultural”?</li> <li>- What do you wish to learn about “culture” in school?</li> <li>- What did you learn about Europe so far? Where did you learn it? How did you learn it?</li> </ul>



<p><b>“European culture”, their experience of getting to know these concepts and how they engage in the concept of culture within the school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From your point of view, what is “culture”?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you learn about culture at home/from internet/from your friends that is not taught in school?</li> <li>- What comes to your mind first when you hear “European culture”?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Block 3: Cultural identity of young people</b></p> <p><b>This Block deals with students’ notions of “cultural identity” and “cultural diversity”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would you describe your own culture?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What topics or issues do you discuss most with your classmates?</li> <li>- In which ways are the students in your class(es) diverse?</li> <li>- Your family’s culture? Your friends’ culture?</li> <li>- Are you European? What does it mean?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can you live your culture in school?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Block 4: Cultural participation of young people</b></p> <p><b>Here, we want to find out, how students engage with all the concepts above in practice, in and outside school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you practice your culture? Where do you go, what do you do?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What cultural activities do you do with your family?</li> <li>- Which talents and/or hobbies do you have?</li> <li>- What do you do in your leisure time?</li> <li>- Which type of cultural events/activities do you like to attend?</li> <li>- What extra-curricular activities are you involved in?</li> <li>- Do you take part in any volunteering initiatives?</li> <li>- What are your favorite TV programmes/social media/websites?</li> <li>- What is your favorite music?</li> <li>- Do you do any sports?</li> <li>- How do you (and your friends) perform your culture? What do you do?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can you live your culture outside school?</li> </ul>



<p><b>Block 5: Country's issues</b></p> <p>Formulate your own topic that is relevant in your own context</p> <p><i>Please do not overload this block, try to focus on one issue. The whole interview shall not take longer than 45-60 minutes</i></p>	<p>Formulate your own questions</p>	<p>Formulate your own anchor question(s)</p>
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