

From the Architecture of Learning to the Architecture of Temples

A Cross-curricular Approach

to the thematic Section 6 of the 6th Grade of Primary School
in the Subject of Religious Instruction – Subsection 1:
Monuments and Places of Worship: Impressions of Faith

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Introduction

Since School is considered to be an organic part of the society and is in a constant interaction with it¹, the cross-curricular approach to knowledge is the most secure and effective way of the learning process. The interdisciplinarity is achieved with the investigation of a subject through different learning areas in order for the students to acquire a “consolidated” («έννοποιημένη») knowledge, which they could handle in their everyday life. The interdisciplinarity removes all the misunderstandings since it allows the cross-check of the information and its’ transformation into an entity. Thus, learning is achieved through interaction and composition of information from different learning areas. Every important and relevant knowledge is summoned up, so as to activate the interest of the students and to lead them to a deeper and more essential understanding of the subject offered.

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1. Io. Pyrgiotakis, *Είσαγωγή στην Παιδαγωγική Έπιστήμη*, Hellinika Grammata Publications, Athens 1999, p. 236.

Gagne has pointed out the importance of the transition of knowledge from different areas (indirect learning), influencing the extent and the promptness of learning² and contributing to a learning with more qualitative features.

The value of the interdisciplinarity in the learning process lies in the following reasons:

1. Systematic transmission of essential knowledge, rendering learning more effective
2. Complementarity of knowledge and as a result holistic apprehension of knowledge, abolishing the border lines between disciplines
3. Cultivation of inner motives of learning
4. Exploratory structure of learning
5. Collectivity, interaction
6. Elimination of the mechanistic thought and cultivation of the critical and creative thought³, necessary so as to meet the demands of a complex society
7. Multilateral, balanced information
8. Promotion of interests, abilities and of the critical thought of the students
9. Promotion of creativity, since creativity is based on deep knowledge of a subject and presupposes generally solid cognitive foundations⁴
10. . Transfer of knowledge in students' life
11. Orientation of the students towards self-fulfillment
12. The interdisciplinarity allows the effectiveness of memorization, since a learning material which is enriched with many views and meanings is better assimilated⁵
13. Objectivity
14. Dialogue between sciences
15. Assimilation and maintenance of students' knowledge.

2. A. Kapsalis, *Παιδαγωγική Ψυχολογία*, Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki 1998, p. 554.

3. Io. Kogoulis, *Διδακτική του Μαθήματος των Θρησκευτικών –Παιδείας & Ελληνορθόδοξης Κληρονομιάς– στην Πρωτοβάθμια & Δευτεροβάθμια Εκπαίδευση*, Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki 2014, p. 554.

4. A. Kapsalis, *ibid.*, p. 166.

5. A. Kapsalis, *ibid.*, p. 389.

Religious Instruction
of the 6th Grade of Primary School-Thematic Section 6
Subsection: Monuments and Places of Worship:
Impressions of Faith

The choice of the particular section brings out the value of the interdisciplinarity during the learning process. The particular teaching as a process of formation of literate individuals accomplishes its aim and activates the social dynamic of groups. The particular section deals with art, which is a language released from any kind of restrictions and through which feelings are impressed, ideas are expressed and causal mechanisms are brought out easily. Thus, in this particular case art is understood in relation to knowledge, thought, sensibilities and outlook on life⁶. It's inseparably connected with history, society, economy and cultural thought of the place and time. Religion and worship as its' way of expression are very important aspects of a civilization, as Weber and Durkheim notice⁷.

The specific proposal aims at inviting students through interdisciplinary activities to get involved emotionally and actively in the learning process, developing their communicational abilities and making learning a real experience. At the same time, is aimed the transfer and diffusion of values and convictions which will be cultivated to the students even beyond the walls of the school. The teacher creates learning "bridges" between these that the students already know and these that they are expected to learn through the different learning subjects. Through the exploratory teaching practices students take over initiatives and play a leading part in the learning process, as a result they become active persons in the learning process. The way the teaching is organized contributes essentially to the determination of the identity of the students, who could respond to the new facts of society, becoming flexible and adjustable.

6. G. Mihalakopoulos, *Κοινωνιολογία και Έκπαίδευση*, Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki 1996, pp. 84-85.

7. P. Smith, *Πολιτισμική θεωρία, Μια εισαγωγή*, transl. A. Katsikeros, Kritiki Publications, Athens 2006, p. 46.

Aims:

1. To make the students identify the cultural identity of some religious monuments.
2. To discern the students the orders of the church architecture and their symbolic character.
3. To penetrate exploratory in the learning process.
4. To cultivate their complex thought and their critic ability.
5. To connect the elements which emerge from Christian temples with other subjects of knowledge and to transfer them to their everyday situations.
6. To provide the students with the possibility of multimodal expression.
7. To gain the students a social-cultural inkling through the observation and comparison of the different styles of Christian temples.

Subjects involved

I. Language, Literature

The subsection begins with the quotation of two literary genres: a prose piece and a poem with common subject the description of a Christian temple. In more detail, the text in prose describes the interior of a Christian temple, providing the students with elements and information, in a particularly enlightening way. On the other hand, the poem of Kavafis under the title: «Στῆν Ἐκκλησία» describes also the inner part of a temple with his own individual and characteristic way.

The cross-curricular approach that we undertake refers to the finding of the similarities and the differences between these two genres. We aim at the unification of knowledge, the cultivation of rational thought, the provision of valuable and utilizable knowledge, connecting the subject of Religious Instruction with the subject of Language, also the transition from the teacher-centered model to the student-centered model of teaching and the active learning.

In order to advance the intellectual evolution of the students and their creative and critical ability, we urge the students to write in groups their

own text, in which they will describe the interior of a temple that they will choose by themselves among the pictures of temples of their school textbook. Thus, pictures are used as expression's exercises, contribute to the creation of a communication framework, are stimuli appropriate for exploration. In this way, we utilize the equivalent knowledge of the students for the description of a place, as these have been taught to them in the subject of Language, and at the same time they are exercised to the observation of the interior of a temple, since thus is accomplished the stimulation of the interests of the students and the creation of the appropriate motives, which influence decisively the easy learning and the apprehension of the learning material. For, as A. Kapsalis notices, the effectiveness of the motives lies at the «βαθμὸ ἐνεργητικῆς ἐπεξεργασίας τοῦ ὕλικου ἀπὸ τὰ ὑποκείμενα»⁸ and to the «σημασία τῆς συνειδητῆς προσοχῆς στὴ μάθησι»⁹ (1st Cross-curricular Activity).

II. History

The orientation in the historic time and place is achieved through the historic framing of the subject. The references to the Roman empire, to the persecutions of the Christians, to the Edict of Milan and to Constantine the Great are necessary in order for students to be informed of the time and the way of the free creation of the religious places of Christians.

Important persons and events of the Eastern Roman empire (Justinian, Schism of Churches of 1054) complete the puzzle of their knowledge with the best possible and pleasant way, because they are based on facts with which the students are familiar the years before.

2nd Cross-curricular Activity: Applying the technique «5π καὶ 1γ» and based on what the students have been taught the previous year (5th Grade) in the discipline of History, the students are asked to recall the basic points of these historic facts.

8. A. Kapsalis, *ibid.*, p. 394.

9. A. Kapsalis, *ibid.*, p. 396.

Thus, the students are called to answer to the following questions:

1. Which of the persecutions from the book of History of the previous year are they able to recall?
2. Where did the persecutions happen?
3. When did they happened?
4. Who were involved, namely who were the persecutors and who were the persecuted?
5. How is the issue solved?
6. Why was the solution of this issue (the Edict of Milan) and still is so important for the people and for the society?
7. The aim of this activity is to lead the students in understanding the particular issue in depth, finding out its basic points.

III. Geography

We utilize the geographical knowledge of the students, but also the main instrument of geography namely the maps, with the help of which we attempt to find out some areas which the school textbook indicates and to collect and elaborate some facts. To locate some important cities on a map, which have very important monuments to show, such as Constantinople, Ravenna (Italy), Athens, Thessaloniki, and the investigation from the part of the students of the deeper causes that made them known will lead to very important observations and conclusions. The observation of some pictures from different parts of Greece, such as Amorgos, Syros, Tinos, Zakynthos, Crete, Mount Athos etc. and the emergence of some of their particular features, urge the students in the first place to observe and then to compare them and to extract useful observations. The variety of pictures and the peculiarity of the temples help the students to collect geomorphological and geological elements, about the natural environment etc. and to understand the dissimilarity of the structure of temples based on geomorphological and climatological local peculiarities, but also on historic and cultural influences. In this way the students research and then understand the conditions under which a temple is constructed, since these reflect the social and cultural conditions, the specific materials that were available in the place and the

morphology and typology (temples' order) that were prevalent in the particular area.

With the utilization of the pictures¹⁰ and maps the attention and the interest of the students is stimulated. According to C. Basilopoulos: «κατὰ τὸν σχηματισμὸ τῶν ἐποπτειῶν ἔχουμε συμμετοχὴ τοῦ ὅλου ἐγώ», the will is strengthened and the emotional world is stimulated¹¹.

IV. Visual Arts

Because of the students' particular sympathy with this subject, the connection of this specific unit with visual arts seems necessary and essential. Students familiarize with the terminology which is used in art. Thus, terms such as "order", "byzantine", "roman" "gothic", "renaissance" are connected and utilized by students leading them to the holistic awareness of the subject. The projecting of the ground plan of different orders of temples and the explanations offered by the teacher helps the students to find out their differences.

3rd Cross-Curricular Activity: The students are called to choose an order of a temple and to draw its ground plan in their sketch-book and then (as creators-architects) to present their works and to explain the basic features of the order that they chose to depict.

The aim of this activity is the experiential experience of the students and the cultivation of their artistic and linguistic abilities. By choosing this particular activity is offered the students the chance to express themselves freely¹² to create, to enrich their energy, strengthening their self-confidence and offering motives for cooperation¹³.

V. Mathematics

Today the transfer of knowledge of mathematics in other cognitive fields is taken for granted. A Cross-Curricular approach which aims

10. See and Io. Kogoulis, *Διδακτικὴ τῶν Θρησκευτικῶν στὴν Πρωτοβάθμια καὶ Δευτεροβάθμια Ἐκπαίδευση*, Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki 2005, pp. 288-291.

11. C. Vasilopoulos, *Διδακτικὴ τῶν Θρησκευτικῶν στὴ Μέση Ἐκπαίδευση*, Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki 1989, p. 57.

12. Io. Pyrgiotakis, *ibid.*, p. 219.

13. R. Papanikolaou, *Δημιουργικὲς εἰκαστικὲς δραστηριότητες γιὰ παιδιά*, Mikros Prigkipas Publications, Thessaloniki 2002, p. 13.

at the transfer of the knowledge of mathematics to other subjects «εἶναι τόσο μεγαλύτερη, ὅσο περισσότερο συνειδητὰ τὴν ἐπιδιώκει ἡ διδασκαλία», notices, A. Kapsalis¹⁴. In this particular section the connection with the subject of mathematics is inevitable.

The references to shapes (rectangle, circle-rotunda), to parts of a circle such as arcs, semicircle, and to the distinction between straight and curved lines allow the students to combine and to transfer knowledge from a theoretical framework to their everyday life, pointing out that the experiential learning makes easier the essential learning and finally leads to the metacognition.

On the occasion of the 3rd activity and the construction of ground plans of different orders of Christian temples, we could refer to the sense of scale, which the students find particularly difficult.

VI. Physics

Connection of the subject with the phenomenon of the refraction of light- temple's windows. The phenomenon of the refraction is taught to students in the subject of physics. The reminder of the phenomenon and its connection with scenes of everyday life makes the students more observant and exercises their critical ability.

We orientate teaching towards the conscious transfer of learning. The principle of communication¹⁵ is one of the most basic didactic principles that must be utilized in this subject.

VII. Local History

The connection of the section with local history is necessary, for when the students connect knowledge with their everyday life they get to know their place better, they understand its history, they exercise their observation ability and their critical thought. They release themselves from a sterile learning process and become themselves researchers, discovering the historic place, its geomorphological framework, the social-cultural base, the religious framework.

14. A. Kapsalis, *ibid.*, p. 323.

15. Io. Kogoulis, *Διδακτική τῶν Θρησκευτικῶν*, Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki 1991, p. 81.

For these reasons it would be particularly important to lead the students to the research of some local temples in order to study and to draw important information. With this activity is reassured the active participation of the students in the researching process and the acquirement of abilities, knowledge and critic penetration to the particular learning material. Students are mentally and emotionally involved and do not remain apathetic and indifferent observers.

Therefore, the students are called in groups¹⁶, to choose a local temple, and after studying it and gathering material about it, to present the results of their research to the whole class, cultivating their abilities in communication. This last activity is particularly important, since a modern school is not interested only in the knowledge that the students can acquire, but mainly in that which they form and understand as knowledge, something that is of course reassured with the interdisciplinarity.

16. The participation in a group influence not only the efficiency of the students but also their spiritual welfare see K. Bikos, *Κοινωνικές σχέσεις και Άλληλεπίδραση στη Σχολική Τάξη*, Zygos Publications, Thessaloniki 2011, p. 83.