

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

City as a Textbook: Building Urban Educational Environment

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Abstract

The idea to regard the city as a textbook rests on the belief that present-day educational tools get utmostly interactive and immersive so as to soon expand the boundaries of simple textbooks and embrace the complex educational environment. The article substantiates the thesis about the possibility to consider the city as a textbook from the standpoint of building the experience of national and cultural self-determination for a learner in the innovative context of educational urbanistics. As a key point, the author highlights the rationale that it is regional culture which is the only one available to the student to abide and understand by their national native culture. At the same time, the city (for example, the city of Moscow) is grounded as a resource space for such self-determination, being: a) a place to design social environment and communicative relations, b) a center of the regional level of native culture, c) a place to take an active part in real life situations, which involve both intercultural and communicative contexts. The author defines the related educational urbanistics as interdisciplinary field of designing socio-humanitarian knowledge and experience in the context of mutually enriching integration of urban space and value-specific (educational) trajectories of personal development of the citizen. As a result, the basic principles of building an urban educational environment in the context of national and cultural self-determination of students are formulated.

Keywords: textbook, city, national cultural self-determination, (urban) educational environment, educational urbanistics

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Introduction

Education going digital and transformed into a remote, mediated format of interaction leads to fundamental changes in the traditional system of education, developing helpful mindsets to rethink the goals and change the means. On the other hand, the call for the need to build individual educational trajectories, to design one's own future, its value meanings and oneself in it, and hence to strengthen the role of subjectivity in

education expand opportunities, suggest variability in the creation of new approaches and means of education. As a result, one of the controversies in the development of modern education implies, on the one hand, its relative global unification and hence loss of uniqueness (including national and cultural), and on the other hand, its potential variability associated with the expansion of opportunities for its implementation.

One of the positive prospects for solving this problem can be educational urbanistics, going in line with the need for an innovative approach to the implementation of the educational process. Globalization has long been developing in line with the development of major world cities, which, in turn, still retain their national context. On the other hand, the content of education, which has long been manifested as training in activities (Zlotnikov, 2020), goes out to the city, thus expanding its opportunities to obtain and build experience in such activities. The present-day means of education get more and more interactive and immersive so as to soon expand the boundaries of simple textbooks and embrace the complex educational environment. Considering the city as a textbook, it is possible to combine the socio-cultural education of a modern person with preparation for practical activities in this world.

Purpose and objectives of the study

Is it possible to consider the city (and urbanism) as a major instrument for a modern person to prepare for the basic life activities? What if to regard the city as an interactive educational environment and thus a textbook of the near future? The aim of this paper is, at large, to justify a modern city in the role of the educational environment in the context of the author's interpretation of educational urbanistics and formulate basic principles of building urban educational environment.

Literature review

The way to involve and represent national cultural worldview in the content of education is one of the priority problems of modern socio-humanitarian and pedagogical research (Levintov, 2021; Stolyarova & Vasilyeva, 2018; Yazykova, 2018; Yazykova & Goncharova & Budnikova, 2020). In particular, on the example of the context of linguodidactics, the author has already identified the lack of knowledge (and understanding) about the native culture of Russian students and the associated threat of foreign cultural expansion (Goncharova & Alpatov, 2017). At the same time, the idea was emphasized that the introduction to the national cultural picture of the world always manifests itself situationally and is determined by the specific place of its implementation, and also, it is carried out mainly in the volume and features of regional specifics. In other words, the regional level of awareness of native-language culture is the initial (and,

perhaps, most often exhaustive) conceptual field (more precisely, its segment) for building a reference point for the so-called national cultural self-determination.

It is certainly important to take into account the specifics of the region itself. For example, for the Moscow region, the nature of the representation of culture will be more specific, taking into account the complexity of the social environment of Moscow as a large metropolis, as well as the global status of Moscow. Involving the urban environment in the framework of subject teaching and building learner's identity has however been the focus of little attention notwithstanding its evident potential in the related area.

Methodology

In the educational, social and cultural contexts, types of educational environments have recently been under thorough scrutiny whilst textbooks and the diversity of educational tools have been studied for decades. On the other hand, urban studies help redraw the boundaries of humanitarian fields of knowledge, being the object of interdisciplinary research. In particular, urbanistics (urbanism, urban studies) feed back to cultural, social and educational studies and present a powerful medium for cross-disciplinary search for innovative solutions. One of these aims to unpick the thorny questions of how to integrate national cultural identity and multifaceted present-day competences into the "englobed" classroom via building a specially crafted educational environment. The answer to this rests on a core belief that it is the city (modern megapolis such as Moscow) that may present such educational environment in the modern urban context.

Our earlier analysis of the regulatory requirements for the results of training students at the levels of secondary and higher (pedagogical) education from the point of view of the manifestation of social and communicative skills (Goncharova & Abramova, 2019) allowed us to identify the systemic nature of such training in terms of the mutual conversion of the formed competencies. So, in the context of goal-setting of secondary education, the student is focused on achieving multidimensional personal ability to interact with multidimensional social environment, while the target dominant of higher pedagogical education is the ability to design and construct this environment. At the same time, it seems obvious that the area of manifestation of this social multidimensionality is the modern city – the center and agglomerate of numerous contours of human interaction with the human environment.

Thus, one of the basic competencies of a modern person, which forms the basis of his interdisciplinary education, is the ability to carry out communication, involving intercultural and foreign language interaction. To illustrate, language education in this regard, manifesting itself from the position of a priority intercultural approach (N. I. Almazova, T.N. Astafurova, N.D. Galskova, G.V. Elizarova, E.G. Tareva, I.I.

Khaleeva, N.V. Yazykova, B. Byram, M. Bennet, etc.), focuses the educational process on the formation of the ability to carry out communicative interaction in a foreign language with representatives of other cultures in the context of intercultural communication. In general, socio-humanitarian education in the modern communicative and intercultural projection is focused on the development of multidimensional thinking in the context of communicative interaction or, at a higher level of generalization, on the maintenance, development and design of the social environment when meeting with the other.

Despite the potential involvement of the other, the parameters of such a social environment however are increasingly unified in the system of universal digitalization. The associated hybridization of identity and the possibility of self-projection of the individual (Astafyeva, 2016; Tulchinsky, 2011) are new signs of intercultural communication, which, in turn, becomes the norm and an integral manifestation of socialization in the era of megacities.

At the same time, the modern city as a continuously and dynamically complex system of relationships is, first of all, a kind of tangle of communication links, built in patterns of complex hermeneutical processes, interdisciplinary codes and sign systems. Communication in the city is the creation of a network landscape of individual route schemes, individual trajectories of self-expression and the design of their future. Therefore, the main thing in this connected communicative environment is to develop and master the urban language – the language of achieving interpersonal (inter-vector) compromise. At the same time, the absolute value and the main principle of any urban space is the opportunity for free communication (Ignatiyev, 2017; Pichugina, 2015) . In the process of building and developing individual ontologies, relationships are carried out at the interpersonal level and the routes of such relationships are built. Acquiring human dimension, the social environment, in fact, through socialization determines the humanization of education and the allocation of its special area – educational urbanistics. In an integral sense, it is possible to define *educational urbanistics as interdisciplinary field of designing socio-humanitarian knowledge and experience in the context of the mutually enriching integration of urban space and value-specific (educational) trajectories of personal development of a citizen*. The principles of operation of education and the city are similar – this is, first of all, mapping the surrounding world and choosing / building one's own routes in it. And the principle of their interaction is of utmost importance which is conscious construction of an individual navigation system of a Human being in a human environment. This way the city exceeds the boundaries of the textbook – it becomes the nourishing space to communicate with, to build dialogues and rapport.

Thus urban space can affect and modify one's cultural awareness and identity. The city is connected with the transmission of the national and cultural specifics of the region and therefore is directly connected with the national and cultural self-determination of those who associate their activities with it.

In our opinion, native culture is primarily learned from the material of the area (geographical, ideological, etc.) where the communicant interacts. In other words, *native culture is acquired at the regional level* (which is especially important for such a vast country as Russia). At the level of national "knowledge" of the native culture, the communicant is most often exposed to the danger of falling into an illusion (stereotypical perception, distorting speculation, etc.), like it goes with a foreign culture. This is because national culture is perceived indirectly, through the mediation of multiple secondary sources, and the main intermediary is, first of all, the regional culture, often original and peculiar. This fact, unfortunately, is often not taken into account in the modern practice of socio-cultural (and intercultural) education.

On the other hand, the essence of national cultural self-determination gains strength and objectivity only in the situation of direct intercultural contact as a meeting of different worldview systems. It is under such conditions that the "qualitative increment" of the communicant's personality takes place, which until now has been quantitatively "prepared" in the sense of assimilation of knowledge and information, and even messages about possible experience of activity.

In this regard, we put forward a thesis: present-day megacities, or global capitals (such as Moscow), make places of genuine intercultural communication and thus can be the educational and social environment in which knowledge transformed into personal understanding, and awareness of one's cultural identity arises. The notorious "formation of national and cultural identity" (in our case, self-determination), which is illusory in the mediated learning environment of a closed audience of a typical subject class in an educational institution, can become real only in a natural socio-cultural and communicative environment. The Moscow metropolis may be such a place.

In particular, Moscow (and suchlike big cities) can be an educational environment and thus a genuine textbook for building the experience of national and cultural self-determination of students for three reasons:

- 1) in the context of educational urbanistics, schemes, scenarios and algorithms of social (intercultural / communicative) interaction as a generally acceptable co-development of individual value-significant trajectories are interpreted on the example of Moscow;

2) Moscow as an authentic regional center accumulates culture-specific information about the facts, thinking patterns and behavioral practices of regional culture, thereby forming ideas about native culture at the regional level (in our understanding – the only authentic one);

3) as the world capital and the city of intercultural communication, Moscow provides natural conditions for direct participation in the situation of intercultural communication as a necessary background to enhance understanding of one's own national and cultural uniqueness.

It can be concluded that the impressive collection of social cultural resources provided within Moscow means a huge potential for building unique educational environment to respond to the present-day educational and existential challenges. Ultimately the city may present the alternative toolkit and environment for educational agenda which however is greatly troublesome due to the lack of related educational initiatives and general understanding.

Results

The modern city, due to the above, can be considered as an educational environment for the construction of socio-cultural education and national-cultural self-determination among citizens, in particular. On what conditions the city can function as a textbook in the heart of its interactive and flexible educational environment? The basic principles of building an urban educational environment (on the example of Moscow) should be formulated and include the following.

The principle of *cognition of the universal (global) through the individual (local)* involves focusing on individual locations within the conscious microgeography of the city. Microgeography as a localized study of full-fledged urban resources within the system corresponding to the local scale is a particularly important framework for understanding the polycode of the city. Microgeography and local area studies inspire project and foresight work as triggers of education (Glazunova & Obuhov & Pavlov, 2020). So, for example, studying such areas of Moscow as Izmaylovo or Sokolniki, you can not only get an idea of the cultural and historical identity of Moscow in the time of Peter I, but also, what is important, understand and fix your own personal attitude to this identity as the legal successor of the historical past, transform abstract knowledge into understanding of how the past, one's own biography in the present and resources for designing a conditioned future are intertwined. At the same time, we emphasize that the fact of personal acquaintance (including the experience of living) of the student with a particular place in Moscow chosen for system analysis is important.

The principle of *methodological work with space as a resource and a factor of educational activity*

provides for the development of the ability to project the learners' own subjective goals, motives, resources, methods of activity on the development of the external objective environment, to draw inspiration from this environment for their own strategic and methodological thinking. In other words, the external (urban) environment can be considered as a special ecosystem, which can be designed and constructed, integrated with activities. These activities can be educational, provoking the intellectual autonomy of students. Important in this regard is the ability to learn the basics of methodological work as a special mental activity, including formulation of project problems, building strategies, developing research and analytical skills, taking functional positions, etc. It should be noted that methodological thinking is fundamental for effective communication in today's information-rich and unstable social environment.

The principle of *taking an educational environment as an individual value* relates to the above-stated methodological work with space. Multi-level study of urban landscapes, understanding the relationship between the city's living environment and one's own development (socio-cultural, ontological, spiritual) builds attitude to the city as a resource for self-development and to the learner as the creator of such resources. At the same time, there is a special motivation for personal intellectual and creative autonomy, which, in general, can be manifested if the "doer of the action" is personally involved in such an environment (his family and his home are placed here, his plans and ambitions are rooted, etc.). The desire to develop, expand one's education, in turn, inevitably means designing one's own future, setting goals, selecting funds and resources, that is, creating an educational environment.

The principle of *designing an individual educational trajectory based on mapping*, in turn, complements the above in the sense of expanding opportunities for the development of methodological thinking and intellectual autonomy. Mapping in education can be understood as the method to critically identify and build links (graphical/schematic) between targets and resources, usually two-dimensionally (appealing to the future from the educational present). We can assume a logical connection between the construction of individual educational route and mapping of the urban environment (moreover, used as a textbook). In the urban environment as an educational one, there is a constant design of the future, the construction of individual trajectories from the position of self-determining, self-exploring agents. So there is a chance to arrive at a clearer understanding of what genuine activity is. It is here where education transcends its limited institutional borders and becomes Life Long Learning.

The principle of *contextual learning* involves assimilation of knowledge and building understanding based on the study and experience of activities within the context of the phenomenon under study. Methodological work with urban socio-cultural landscapes involves activities in a connected environment, in which the problem is defined in the analysis of the situation, and the tasks are set in visual models of the

implementation of processes. Thus, using the urban environment as a textbook, the leading teaching methods are the case method (situational analysis), experiment, provocation, role-playing games, observation, survey and interview, reflection. In this sense, the urban environment offers undeniably more opportunities to foster knowledge, hone skills and build genuine competencies, that is, the ability to carry out consciously managed activities based on the experience gained in this activity.

The principle of *the priority of spontaneously created meanings / knowledge* is extremely important for such contextual education. Methodological work with space and the associated design of the future inevitably involves the search for new meanings and, as a result, the creation of fundamentally new knowledge, object and methodological (about the object and methods of interaction with it). At the same time, the urban environment, provoking learning in conditions of constructive participation in real activity processes and therefore focused on obtaining new flexible knowledge, can, alas, be considered as an alternative to the traditional education system, in which the abilities of students are formed on the basis of templates, models and samples.

Discussions

Urban education based on the related urban educational environment aims to readdress the content and process of education focused on building students' national cultural identity. On these grounds it presents a unique textbook potent enough to grasp the challenges of the urban and globalized society. In particular, the crucial components of the urban education are social intelligence (as a readiness for interaction and self-realization in a variable social environment), the specific cultural identity of the communicant, who relates oneself to the only micro-regional culture of this, meaning making (as a result of the coordination of positions in the course of gaining experience in the situation of genuine socio-cultural communication), as well as "soft" skills of different ways and types of thinking (methodological, spatial, strategic, critical, systematic, design) and working with the situation. At the same time, the city becomes the main platform for education, or rather, the microgeography of the city as a map of its original, but interconnected localities. It is from a separate residential locality of the city that the citizen starts exploring the area in microgeography and thus starts expanding cultural awareness from local individual level to regional and finally to a generalized and abstract national one.

Conclusion

We regret to state that at the moment such a topic of integration of the city and education is practically not developed, as a result of which there are no educational materials corresponding to this purpose. Moreover, it is relevant to study the development of a holistic methodological system for the use of urban resources

for the formation of existential and communicative competencies of students from the point of view of a multidimensional and multi-position consideration of the city. To learn for the development of the city, to invest education in the city and at the same time to consider the city as a textbook is the main slogan of the associated educational urbanistics. Indeed, it is a simple and obvious fact that it is possible and necessary to teach culture on the example of the city, thereby raising the civilizational and existential foundations of modern education to the manifestation of the culture of the city.

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