



## **NURTURING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH ART, HISTORY, AND DIGITAL INNOVATION IN EDUCATION**

***Art and history are essentially connected to the culture in which they are created. To foster a community in which this connection is valued, educational institutions should promote programs in which students can gain insight into their own culture and historical heritage. By exploring art and history, students learn about different values, beliefs, traditions, and societal norms which are crucial for the development of critical thinking. The development of critical thinking skills from an early stage is widely acknowledged and well researched. According to Vygotsky (1978), development in children aged 4–12 years occurs through a process called ‘scaffolding’ in which social interaction leads to developing higher-order thinking skills. In other words, it is essential for children's cognitive growth that adults and children interact and work together. Therefore, when young students learn about art and history, it involves a process of critical thinking and analysis. They learn interpretation and evaluation of art, historical events and culture, which fosters understanding of the way cultural norms influence historical narratives and art.***

***According to Bloom and Doss (2021), technology can help educators create learning environments which hold an emphasis on creative and critical thinking abilities. However, it is important to maintain a balance between technology and traditional teaching methods. Whereas technology fosters critical skills and is appealing to young learners, educators should also consider the importance of museum visits and direct interactions with artists and historical artifacts. The surge in interest for teaching cultural heritage underscores our goal of amplifying the number of programs dedicated to this pursuit. To achieve this, we are embarking on a comprehensive approach involving desk research, focus groups, and an exploration of the relationship between cultural heritage and digital games in primary education. Specifically, the research will delve into the desired behaviors of these games, ideal methodologies, and the framework for their software development, seeking to enrich both the gaming experience and cultural preservation efforts. The desk research will be highly valuable for the preparation of our project “ARCH: Bringing Cultural Heritage to the digital Era; Unifying Past, Present and Future” which aims to engage learners aged 9 to 12 through an exciting combination of technology and cultural experiences. Precisely, this project is centered around the development of a digital educational game which combines real and virtual elements of cultural heritage. Our team is excited to see how this game will evolve and how it will positively impact the education processes of our project participants from Cyprus, Greece, and Italy.***



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