

## **Why archaeology should be part of the curriculum in general education**

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An important dimension of human identities is the temporal depth that is expressed in narratives (personal life story; family genealogy and anecdotes; local and national history). In modern education systems, the latter is made an essential part of the basic curriculum. But the teaching of history tends to be ethnocentric, nationalistic, and divisive because its structure and contents depend on the starting point that is arbitrarily selected as the beginning of the narrative and focuses on antagonistic relations with neighboring kingdoms and nation states. This does not necessarily invalidate the teaching of history in itself as part of the curriculum but it has the potential of promoting jingoism and exclusion. The teaching of archaeology as a part of the regular curriculum brings temporal and spatial perspectives that are conducive to more balanced and integrative construction of the past. This paper will develop four arguments in favor of the teaching of archaeology from the earliest rock art to the Iron Age as a way to improve the sense of local belonging and mitigate the alienation generated by the globalization of culture. First, archaeology helps to ground the identity narrative in a human past that transcends recent territorial divisions; secondly, it focuses attention on universal human abilities to overcome environmental and social challenges; thirdly, it exposes students to cultural artefacts that bear witness to human innovativeness and creativity; finally, it brings forth the importance of the natural environment through representing what is known of the climatic and geographic conditions that were contemporary to these past activities. Since almost all localities hold some kinds of archaeological record, the teaching of archaeology contributes to the healthy construction of identities that are both locally grounded and integrative rather than divisive.