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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

**SUMMER SCHOOLS: PRACTICAL INTEGRATION IN
EDUCATION AND PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**



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SUMMER SCHOOLS: PRACTICAL INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION AND PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

ESCUELAS DE VERANO DE ARQUEOLOGÍA: INTEGRACIÓN PRÁCTICA EN LA EDUCACIÓN Y PROMOCIÓN DEL PATRIMONIO CULTURAL

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary era, integrating scientific knowledge into educational processes, particularly in conveying tangible cultural heritage to students, has become a major priority. Encouraging interest in the ancient history of one's homeland begins with exploring the historical geography of early human settlements and promoting archaeological monuments. This is especially important given the proliferation of unfounded claims about historical sites. Organizing educational tours for school and university students to various archaeological sites—many recently discovered and offering new insights to science—provides significant pedagogical and scientific value. Open-air lessons in “archaeoparks” offer immersive experiences that bridge theoretical knowledge and practical fieldwork. Currently, students mainly learn about Azerbaijan's ancient history, archaeological sites, prehistoric populations, their customs, economic activities, tools, and weapons through textbooks and educational literature. However, existing materials often lack structure, coherence, and outcome-oriented organization, particularly regarding ancient and medieval periods. Therefore, a systematic approach to lesson planning and delivery that ensures inter- and intra-system coherence is essential for improving educational outcomes and competencies. Archaeological summer schools have proven effective in addressing these gaps. By integrating creativity-oriented pedagogical programs, they stimulate student engagement and innovation. Scientific-practical modules, including masterclasses in history and archaeology, aim to foster creative thinking. Activities such as site visits and archaeological fieldwork provide hands-on, visual

experiences that enhance analogical reasoning, multidisciplinary understanding, idea generation, pattern recognition, and critical reflection. These approaches demonstrate that combining structured historical education with practical, experiential learning significantly enriches student understanding and cultivates essential competencies in the study of cultural heritage.

Keywords:

Archaeology, education, teaching, summer school, practice, cultural heritage.

RESUMEN

En la era contemporánea, integrar el conocimiento científico en los procesos educativos, particularmente en la transmisión del patrimonio cultural tangible a los estudiantes, se ha convertido en una prioridad. Fomentar el interés por la historia antigua de la propia patria comienza con la exploración de la geografía histórica de los primeros asentamientos humanos y la promoción de monumentos arqueológicos. Esto resulta especialmente relevante ante la proliferación de afirmaciones infundadas sobre sitios históricos. Organizar recorridos educativos para estudiantes de escuelas y universidades a diversos sitios arqueológicos—muchos recientemente descubiertos y que ofrecen nuevos hallazgos científicos—brinda un gran valor pedagógico y científico. Las clases al aire libre en “arqueoparques” proporcionan experiencias inmersivas que conectan el conocimiento teórico con la práctica de campo. Actualmente, los estudiantes aprenden principalmente sobre la historia

antigua de Azerbaiyán, sus sitios arqueológicos, poblaciones prehistóricas, costumbres, actividades económicas, herramientas y armas a través de libros de texto y literatura educativa. Sin embargo, los materiales existentes suelen carecer de estructura, coherencia y organización orientada a resultados, especialmente en los períodos antiguos y medievales. Por ello, un enfoque sistemático en la planificación y ejecución de las lecciones, que garantice coherencia inter e intra-sistémica, resulta esencial para mejorar los aprendizajes y competencias. Las escuelas de verano arqueológicas han demostrado ser efectivas para superar estas carencias. Al integrar programas pedagógicos orientados a la creatividad, estimulan la participación y la innovación de los estudiantes. Los módulos científico-prácticos, incluyendo masterclasses en historia y arqueología, buscan fomentar el pensamiento creativo. Actividades como visitas a sitios y trabajos de campo arqueológicos ofrecen experiencias visuales y prácticas que potencian el razonamiento analógico, la comprensión multidisciplinaria, la generación de ideas, el reconocimiento de patrones y la reflexión crítica. Estas estrategias evidencian que combinar educación histórica estructurada con aprendizaje práctico enriquece significativamente la comprensión estudiantil y desarrolla competencias clave en el estudio del patrimonio cultural.

Palabras clave:

Arqueología, educación, docencia, escuela de verano, práctica, patrimonio cultural.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a new concept has gained prominence in both archaeological practice and theoretical science: the archaeological summer school. The establishment of such schools—including the careful development of curricula, selection of participants, formation of the target audience, and definition of their scientific focus—requires professional and systematic planning. Archaeological summer schools function as both educational and cultural initiatives, aiming to promote the discipline of archaeology

documentation, and material analysis. Such immersive, hands-on experiences foster critical thinking, methodological rigor, and creativity among participants, bridging the gap between classroom knowledge and real-world archaeological practice. Ultimately, archaeological summer schools not only enhance educational outcomes but also play a vital role in promoting cultural heritage awareness and public engagement with history.

DEVELOPMENT

An *archaeological summer school* is a structured program that focuses on the instruction of archaeology in outdoor field conditions, combining practical training with the theoretical knowledge acquired through formal education. It aims to bridge classroom learning and field application by revisiting and reinforcing theoretical concepts through the material-cultural remains uncovered during archaeological excavations.

The foundation of an archaeological summer school lies in the synthesis of information obtained from the study of archaeology as a scientific discipline—particularly ancient and medieval history in secondary school curricula and archaeology courses in university-level programs—with hands-on experience in open-air excavation environments. In secondary school history textbooks, archaeological excavations are generally covered within narrow limits. Only a small portion of the findings from excavations conducted in the country or globally is conveyed to students (see Figure 1).

among secondary and university students, advance the study of ancient history, and disseminate tangible cultural heritage. These programs also play a critical role in fostering awareness and appreciation of cultural traditions and the protection of heritage, ensuring that students understand the value of preserving historical monuments and practices as part of their collective memory (Calvas-Ojeda, 2025).

Such initiatives highlight the importance of integrating heritage education into school curricula. By introducing students to local history, archaeological sites, and traditional practices, educators help cultivate a sense of responsibility toward cultural preservation and the continuity of traditions. Open-air lessons, field trips, and hands-on activities provide students with immersive experiences that bridge theoretical knowledge and practical application, creating opportunities for active learning, critical reflection, and engagement with history (Rebaine & Oubraham, 2025).

In Azerbaijan, particularly over the last decade, archaeological summer schools have attracted an increasingly diverse and engaged audience. This growth has been facilitated by the formation of professional teaching and training teams specializing in archaeology, history, and heritage studies. The primary objective of these programs is to explore the earliest traces of historical memory and to transmit this knowledge effectively to younger generations. Beyond the study of ancient heritage, these programs incorporate archaeological, historical, and architectural monuments from multiple historical periods, making them central subjects of academic inquiry and practical instruction.

The organization and management of archaeological summer schools often involve collaboration among multiple institutions and research centers. The coordinating body must provide effective scientific oversight and ensure the orderly execution of both theoretical and field-based activities. This is particularly important as a significant portion of summer school programs is devoted to outdoor research, including archaeological excavations, site



Figure 1. Students of the Archaeological Summer School at the Qarasoy Kurgans (2023, Keşikçidağ State Historical and Cultural Reserve, Aghstafa District).

Some recent archaeological excavations, particularly those involving newly discovered monuments, caves, open-air campsites, settlement sites (both urban and rural), necropolises, fortresses, cyclopean structures, places of worship, and shelters—although not presented in full depth—are partially introduced to students. Naturally, providing complete and detailed information on all such discoveries would considerably increase the academic load and risk overwhelming students with excessive archaeological detail.

At the university level, archaeology is taught for a limited duration within history departments, while students from non-history faculties receive only a brief introduction to historical subjects, with minimal reference to archaeological methods or findings. Nonetheless, students are exposed to a degree of information on archaeological excavations and material-cultural heritage (see Figure 2).

Archaeological summer schools serve as platforms where theoretical knowledge acquired in both secondary and higher education is revisited and integrated within the context of actual field excavations. Their objective is to reinforce classroom-based learning with practical experience, deliver knowledge directly at the excavation site, and demonstrate that pre-written history can only be understood through archaeological sources (Najafov, 2025).



Figure 2. Students and instructors during an open-air archaeological lesson.

Structure and Pedagogy of the Archaeological Summer School

An archaeological summer school must be based on a pre-established academic workload and curriculum. The participants should form a motivated and disciplined audience, capable of adapting to outdoor training conditions. This audience is not limited to students, university faculty, or schoolteachers. It may also include volunteers; young professionals working in scientific, medical, industrial, and public service sectors; staff from institutions and enterprises; employees of history and ethnography museums, historical-cultural and nature reserves; personnel from youth centers; educators; and representatives from heritage protection and restoration services, among others.

The archaeological summer school is structured around theoretical instruction, practical workshops, hands-on training, and masterclasses—all centered on the excavation process itself.

Archaeological Summer School and Education: Practical Integration

The collaborative efforts of summer school participants—spanning the domains of school-community, school-family, school-archaeologist, and school-educator cooperation—create favorable conditions for effective educational reform and practical integration. These collaborative relationships are among the core criteria for ensuring the quality of education within the archaeological summer school framework.

When assessing the effectiveness of the summer school's operations, one of the key indicators is the level of awareness and engagement achieved among the participants. Transforming them into active stakeholders in the learning process is central to the leadership and management policies of the school. These considerations are not limited to theoretical or scientific perspectives but are rooted in practical evaluation and real-world implementation (Najafov, 2025).

Two core indicators define teaching efficiency in archaeological summer schools: time and value. If higher-quality learning outcomes can be achieved using fewer resources and less time compared to traditional methods, the process is considered efficient. Productivity, in this context, is measured by the ratio of learning outcomes to the pedagogical effort invested. In other words, if greater instructional effectiveness and learning quality are attained with minimal effort, the result is deemed productive.

Therefore, when evaluating innovation within archaeological summer schools, efficient learning and high-quality practical training are considered primary indicators. This implies that the innovations implemented not only enhance the productivity of learning but also increase the overall efficiency of the educational process (see Figure 3).

Archaeological summer schools also represent the emergence of new educational content and forms—ranging from teaching materials, academic curricula, and textbooks to knowledge systems and innovative educational products or services.



Figure 3. Field-based archaeological masterclasses.

Visualization and Creative Transformation of Knowledge

A core principle of modern education lies in reinforcing theoretical knowledge acquired in both secondary and higher education with tangible demonstrations, transforming this knowledge into creative competencies. Instructional programs in educational institutions that foster creativity stimulate innovative processes during archaeological summer schools. Practical coordination, direct observation, and visits to archaeoparks or active excavation sites enable students to draw analogies, transfer ideas creatively and laterally from one context to another, integrate knowledge across disciplines, generate unconventional ideas, anticipate overarching frameworks, and analyze diverse cognitive approaches (Najafov, 2025, p. 234).

Observing archaeological excavations and visiting archaeoparks within the summer school context provides a multidimensional archaeological experience. It allows students to engage with the content actively, supports the evaluation of creative activities, and motivates participants to articulate their perspectives on the process. As part of the curriculum, students, volunteers, and participants gain firsthand exposure to ancient tools—made of stone, bone, or metal—as well as diverse ceramic artifacts, ornaments and beads fashioned from precious and semi-precious stones (such as agate, jasper, opal, aragonite, basalt, etc.) and various metals (iron, gold, bronze, etc.). They also observe examples of weaponry (arrowheads, spear tips, battle axes, swords, defensive arms, etc.). This live interaction not only piques interest but also stimulates logical reasoning and critical thinking skills (Ouernoughi, 2025).

The Role of Archaeological Summer Schools in Promoting Cultural Heritage

Archaeological summer schools play a significant role in the promotion and dissemination of tangible cultural heritage. Overall, they fulfill three core functions: integrating education and science, facilitating practical field experience in education, and promoting awareness and recognition of material-cultural heritage. While the first two have been addressed earlier, the third is of particular importance, as it focuses on raising public awareness of archaeological and historical monuments.

The primary focus of archaeological summer school audiences is the excavation site itself. When participants arrive at the excavation area, the archaeologist plays a crucial introductory role by welcoming them and providing background on the site, including its historical, archaeological, and sometimes architectural significance, and explaining why this specific location was selected for excavation (Alakbarov, 2018). This constitutes the initial phase.

Subsequently, participants are introduced to the excavation area. At this stage, it is important to note that the field archaeologist assumes multiple roles: as a guide, an informant, a practical instructor, and a lecturer in an open-air classroom setting (Boudjemaa, 2025). They must engage the audience effectively, spark interest in the excavation work, and inspire curiosity. The archaeologist should respond to participant questions with enthusiasm, provide accurate information, and convey comprehensive insights into the archaeological-historical context of the site.

Moreover, the archaeologist should explain the typologies of monuments, the chronological classification of habitation and burial sites, the categorization and comparative analysis of discovered material-cultural remains, and relevant analogies (see Figure 5). The archaeologist must also guide participants in conducting supervised excavations, facilitate initial field documentation of the findings, and oversee this process with professional diligence (Zeynalov et al., 2022).



Figure 4. Familiarization with an archaeological monument.

Naturally, masterclasses conducted in field settings play a crucial role in the promotion of tangible cultural heritage. Members of the archaeological summer school become acquainted with archaeological monuments, which fosters a sense of national pride and patriotism, deepens their interest in history, and cultivates appreciation for cultural heritage. Each participant, by sharing their impressions with peers, also assumes the role of an informal communicator, thereby contributing to the expansion and outreach of the summer school network (Gasimov, 2020).

In recent years, one of the most exemplary models of an archaeological summer school has been the project titled *“Archaeological Excavations and Summer School at Keşikçidağ”*, implemented by the Keşikçidağ State Historical and Cultural Reserve. For the past five consecutive years, the reserve has achieved significant milestones in this area. The archaeological excavations are carried out by archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS), under the framework of a formal memorandum of cooperation signed between the Institute and the Keşikçidağ Reserve (Najafov et al., 2018).

The excavations take place in the Bronze Age kurgan burial mounds located on the Ceyrançöl plain, within the administrative boundaries of the Keşikçidağ State Historical and Cultural Reserve. Dozens of kurgans have been excavated across sites such as Sarıyoxuş, Karvan Valley, Qaltan Plain, Qarasoy, Sarısu, Candargöl, and Yovşanlıdərə, revealing numerous valuable examples of material culture (Mursaqlıyev et al., 2024; Najafo & Mursaqlıyev, 2023; Najafov et al., 2024).

In accordance with the memorandum, the recovered artifacts are stored and exhibited at the administrative headquarters of the reserve. These artifacts are displayed year-round and are accessible to all participants. The most recent project realized by the reserve was the *“Scientific-Archaeological Excavations and Summer School at Keşikçidağ-5”*, conducted in the current year. This initiative reached an audience of more than 2,000 participants, including students and educators from regional universities, secondary and vocational institutions, museum staff, cultural heritage preservation and restoration specialists, volunteers, youth center members, and reserve employees, all of whom had the opportunity to observe the excavation process firsthand.

Young participants who joined the excavations followed the process with great enthusiasm and curiosity, acquiring a wealth of information about the discoveries. The progress and results of the excavation were covered by over 100 local and international media outlets and websites, receiving widespread positive feedback. The staff of the reserve have accumulated considerable experience in organizing and managing the summer school programs. Particularly noteworthy is the recurring participation of secondary school students and university undergraduates and postgraduates in the excavation sites. Their direct engagement fostered deep interest in archaeology and history and significantly encouraged respectful and attentive attitudes toward national heritage.



Figure 5. Archaeological summer school students during excavation.

The archaeological summer schools organized by the **Keşikçidağ State Historical-Cultural Reserve** can serve as a model in this field. The careful design of the school program, formation and organization of the student body, invitation

of archaeologists, execution of excavations, dissemination and discussion of results, and ultimately, the scientific-practical seminars and open lessons—all reflect a unified program with a defined scientific orientation and demonstrate the integration of practical experience into education.

CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological summer schools play a vital role in fostering engagement with the discipline of archaeology among the younger generation—including school pupils, university students, and volunteers—as well as among the educators guiding them. These programs facilitate the development of interest in archaeology, enhance familiarity with archaeological monuments, offer opportunities to observe excavation processes firsthand, and enable participants to engage directly with material remains under the supervision of professional archaeologists.

Such experiences undoubtedly leave participants with a scientific understanding of how archaeological excavations are conducted. Observing and physically interacting with artifacts that have been buried for centuries or even millennia deepens one's knowledge of ancient history and reinforces theoretical learning through practical fieldwork. Direct engagement helps cultivate abstract thinking and allows participants to visualize the socio-political and religious aspects of prehistoric periods.

From this perspective, archaeological summer schools not only provide academic and practical education but also present history in a tangible and experiential manner. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, further improvement of archaeological summer school program designs and the development of these initiatives through the expertise of experienced institutions should be a priority. Expanding the audience for such projects, which shed light on the traces of our ancient history, is essential. Archaeological summer schools have significant value for the study and promotion of both local and national historical heritage.

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