

Getting to Know Ancient Nicopolis and Its Relationship with the Economic Development of the Area

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ABSTRACT

Students from the Evening Vocational High School of Preveza, considering the inclusion of the historical archaeological site of ancient Nicopolis in UNESCO's World Heritage list as a critical and timely issue for the Preveza area, wanted to focus on this topic.

Thus, students from different fields, Engineering and Management & Economics, collaborated and created a project that was included in the framework of school activities, specifically in the cultural issues category.

The importance of the topic is significant because this inclusion will radically change the archaeological site itself and lead to economic recovery in the broader area.

Key words: Ancient Nicopolis, UNESCO World Heritage List, local citizens, local economy, questionnaire.

1. Introduction

School Activities are a qualitative part of Greek Education and, using the most modern teaching methodologies, make schools more autonomous, provide opportunities for initiative to both teachers and students, overall change the "culture" of the local community, and build bridges of humanity, respect, and interaction – solidarity, teaching cooperation, dialogue, and civic engagement. (ipaidia.gr,2023; ipaidia.gr,2018).

The work was carried out through meetings of the student group outside of school hours and lasted for three months. In the initial phase of planning, the students chose the topic and set actions in motion for its completion. The topic selection was based on the current and significant issue in the area regarding the inclusion of the archaeological site of ancient Nicopolis and the upcoming proposed inclusion in UNESCO's globally recognized list. If

included, the entire area will undergo structural changes (like rerouting the national road, turning the space into an archaeological park, etc.), and it will also breathe new life into the local economy due to the anticipated increase in visitors to the archaeological site and museum. New questions arose for the group members, such as: Do locals and non-locals know the history and importance of ancient Nicopolis? Do we have the right education to be interested in the history of our area? Do we need the inclusion of the archaeological site in UNESCO more for the economic development of the area or for the promotion of a long-neglected archaeological site? Should educational visits and references be integrated into the educational levels (primary, secondary) so that locals learn about their area's history? How can the area develop economically with the inclusion of the archaeological site in UNESCO? All these questions led to the necessity of writing not just a paper, but also creating a questionnaire that had to be answered by locals both within and outside the Preveza region. (Passa, 2023)

2. Theoretical background

This specific initiative was based on the principles of experiential and discovery learning, highlighting the role of student engagement.

Discovery learning operates on the belief that students learn through their actions in specific contexts. Through experimentation and hands-on practice, students uncover principles or develop skills, leading to a grasp of abstract concepts or the discovery of knowledge, while simultaneously fostering intrinsic motivation (Smyrnaeus, 2018).

Learning requires exploration, experimentation, knowledge reconstruction, and discovery. A passive attitude from the student hinders these processes and becomes a barrier to acquiring knowledge. However, the discovery method presents several challenges. For instance, it requires significant time and certain special abilities from students. Nevertheless, these are merely technical problems that can be addressed regarding the benefits that the discovery method brings to learning (Bruner, 1977).

The collaborative model was adopted, where, through teamwork, a dynamic is created that encourages students to transcend their individual limits of thought and action and to develop collective ways of thinking and acting that lead to knowledge, ultimately expressed as individual achievement. This gradual process leads students towards individual fulfillment and autonomy. This model reduces competitiveness and fosters a sense of community (Bershon, 1995).

3. The value of school activity programs in Education

School activity programs, known as P.S.D., encompass three areas: environmental education

(E.E.), health education (H.E.), and cultural issues (C.I.). They are conducted in secondary education schools by coordinating educators and specific groups of students, outside school hours and within a defined timeframe. (Circular 2022-

School Activities (SAs) are thematically organized actions aimed at (specific) groups of students. They are designed and evaluated based on clear objectives, utilize models for interpreting material or intangible culture, and draw on specific educational theories and methods.

In short, we could say that SAs are a potential tool for the change we all desire in the Greek school system, as they unfold a world of possibilities for every teenager. The main motivation behind SAs is to foster a love for school in students — a school that offers perspective and hope, where through action and reaction, knowledge can be enriched and flourish (there are students who, after graduating, rarely read a book or seldom visit an archaeological site).

Aiming for Learning Objectives

The goal of this project, which involved the creation and distribution of a questionnaire and conducting interviews, was for students to:

- Gain knowledge of the history of their area through various means of research (online, interviews, literature, etc.). This promotes the development of their critical and creative thinking.
- Learn to collaborate and interact with each other by exchanging ideas and good practices to build knowledge.
- Become familiar with electronic ways of learning.
- Organize their thoughts and create questionnaires using Google Forms, search for and compile statistical data, and after processing in Word and Excel, create graphical representations.
- Understand the importance of adhering to timelines to complete a project.

Additionally:

Duration of writing and research: February - April 2023.

4. Methodology - results:

- Peer teaching: The teacher discreetly guided the groups, and knowledge was passed from student to student.
- Collaborative teamwork: The activities were carried out by working groups.
- Inquiry/discovery-based and experiential: There was active involvement and initiative from the students.

From the first meeting, the topic was discussed with the students: the creation of the project and the appropriate questionnaire, the available electronic resources to be used, where we should focus, the timeline for implementing the project, etc. Then, the students were divided into two groups, each with a common task: researching information about ancient Nicopolis using the internet and literature, so that all the students could gain knowledge of its history. The additional responsibilities of each group were divided as follows:

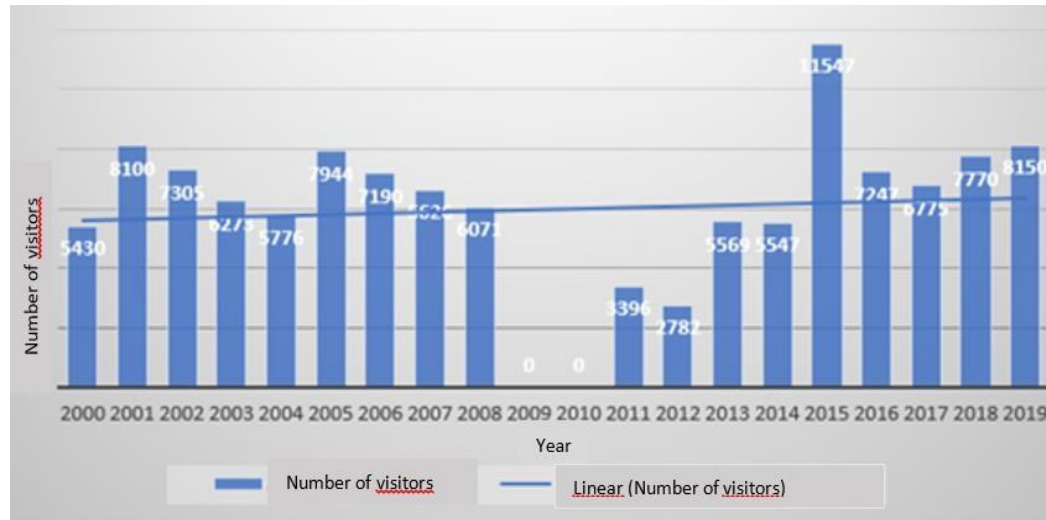
- **The first group** was supposed to take on gathering information from the others about the history of ancient Nicopolis, collecting statistical data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority

(ELSTAT) regarding visitor flows over time, both for the archaeological site and the old and new museum, creating tables and graphs using Excel, and generally writing the whole project. Samples of the students' work are included below (Passa, 2023):

Diagram 1: Flow of visitors to the archaeological site of Nikopolis



Diagram 2: Visitor flow to the archaeological museum of Nikopolis (old and new)



- **The 2nd group** was responsible for creating the questionnaire questions and writing it using Google Forms.

The questionnaire is as follows: <https://forms.gle/dQbPw4Ti2ZmmXeSJ7>

In this, it was considered necessary by all members to record the views of local citizens who have lived in the area for years (within and outside the municipality), those who grew up here and then left for various reasons (studies, family, work, etc.) as well as those who do not live in the city and have no connection with it, where they may rightfully not know its history well.

Thus, four groups of questions were initially created in which each respondent would first have to join one of them a, b, c and d and then, depending on their choice, answer the corresponding questions.

The groups of questions as mentioned above concerned the place of permanent residence and were:

- A) Municipality of Preveza
- B) Another municipality within the prefecture of Preveza
- C) Another prefecture and
- D) Another prefecture with a previous permanent residence in the prefecture of Preveza.

In more detail:

Group A) was answered by citizens who live within the municipality of Preveza. Within the municipality is the capital of the prefecture, Preveza, as well as the surrounding villages. All are within a very close distance from the archaeological site of ancient Nikopolis and the Museums (Old and New). In fact, the main entrance to Preveza, the Ioannina - Preveza national road, passes through the archaeological site.

Group B) was answered by citizens who have permanent residence in another municipality within the prefecture of Preveza (the prefecture has three municipalities).

Group C) was answered by citizens who live outside the prefecture of Preveza and have not had any previous residence for a long time in the area.

Group D) included citizens who had previously lived in the area for a long time and then moved to other areas. The cases concern people who are originally from and have grown up here and then left due to studies, work or marriage, categories of people who have resided here for a long time due to work, marriage, etc., but are originally from another region, etc.

Each group of questions included approximately 20 questions. The questions were the same up to a point and then they were differentiated.

The questionnaire was answered by 391 citizens from all four categories. All the answers are listed in the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JGZBXARvrB9h-xJ3jdEqJO-gY9FAVYdSdhV8zDW7Yv0/edit#responses>

Table 1 below lists the common questions from all four groups a, b, c and d.

Table 1: Common questions from all four groups A, B, C and D.

	Question groups							
	α		β		γ		δ	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
<i>Age</i>								
10-20	12	4,13	0	0	1	1,3	2	6,5
20-40	41	14,9	1	12,5	19	24,4	9	29
40-50	128	46,5	4	50	31	39,7	14	45,2

50-75	94	34,2	3	37,5	27	34,6	6	19,4
Level of study								
Primary school	3	1,1	0	0	0	0	1	3,2
High school	8	2,9	1	12,5	0	0	0	0
Lyceum	84	30,9	4	50	12	15,4	5	16,1
University	124	45,6	3	37,5	40	51,3	13	41,9
Msc/Phd	53	19,5	0	0	26	33,3	12	38,7
I haven't been to school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Do you know the history of ancient Nikopolis?								
Little	59	21,4	2	25	29	37,2	8	25,8
Enough	124	44,9	5	62,5	27	34,6	16	51,6
Very good	89	32,2	1	12,5	8	10,3	6	19,4
No	4	1,4	0	0	14	17,9	1	3,2
If you know its history more or less or very well, please indicate the way(s) of information.								
I taught it in school before	102	37,9	3	37,5	13	20,6	11	36,7
On my own initiative by searching books, magazines and the Internet	145	53,9	7	87,5	28	44,4	15	50
From friendly discussions	68	25,3	3	37,5	17	27	10	33,3
From family conversations	47	17,5	2	25	7	11,1	7	23,3
From random mentions on the internet	48	17,8	1	12,5	12	19	8	26,7
Other way	33	12,3	1	12,5	7	11,1	3	10
If you don't know the story at all or you know it a little, what do you think is it because?								

My parents were illiterate and didn't know much about her story.	7	4,1	3	60	-	-	0	0
My parents didn't show much interest in passing on the knowledge to me	13	7,7	0	0	-	-	0	0
I did not seek to learn it myself in any way	53	31,4	2	40	-	-	10	52,6
I wasn't taught it in school	67	67	2	40	-	-	3	15,8
I wanted to, but I always put it off because there was no time left over from the most important things	26	15,4	1	20	-	-	8	42,1

I wanted to, but I always postponed it because I lived in the area permanently and could go at any other time in the future	31	18,3	2	40	-	-	5	26,3
I don't care	21	12,4	0	0	-	-	0	0
Other reason					-	-	1	5,3
<i>You have visited at least once:</i>								

The new museum of Ancient Nikopolis	193	69,9	3	37,5	15	19,2	12	38,7
The old museum of Ancient Nikopolis	170	61,6	4	50	19	24,4	15	48,4
The archaeological site (mosaics, etc.	203	73,6	6	75	43	55,1	24	77,4
None of the above because I don't care	1	0,4	0	0	1	1,3	0	0
None of the above because, although I am interested, I did not pursue it	13	4,7	2	25	31	39,7	6	19,4

Is the price of tickets for access to museums and archaeological sites an inhibiting factor for you?

Little	91	33	0	0	27	34,6	10	32,3
Miscellaneous	79	28,6	4	50	25	32,1	5	16,1
Large	39	14,1	2	50	13	16,7	6	19,4
No	67	24,3	2	50	13	16,7	10	32,3

Did you know that ancient Nikopolis is the largest ancient city in Greece and its population had exceeded 150,000 inhabitants?

Yes	195	70,7	4	50	32	41	13	41,9
No	81	29,3	4	50	46	59	18	58,1

Did you know that entrance to the archaeological site and museum of ancient Nikopolis is free on the following days of the year?

1. National anniversaries (25th March and 28th October)
2. The first Sunday of each month between 1 November and 31 March
3. The 6th of March (in memory of Melina Mercouri)
4. The 18th of April (International Monuments Day)
5. The 18th of May (International Museum Day)
6. The 5th of June (World Environment Day)
7. The last weekend of September (European Heritage Days)

Yes	146	52,9	3	37,5	28	35,9	10	34,5
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No	130	47,1	5	62,5	50	64,1	19	65,5
<p><i>What actions would you suggest to take to highlight the archaeological site of ancient Nikopolis? (Some of the answers to the questions can be found here; the rest can be found at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JGZBXARvrB9h-xJ3jdEqJO-gY9FAVYdSdhV8zDW7Yv0/edit#responses)</i></p>								
<p>- The road should be abolished as soon as possible and any other constructions that alter the face of the ancient city should be removed, the site should be unified, it should be kept clean of large vegetation, excavations should continue, new findings should be highlighted, a new scientific symposium on Nikopolis should be organized (20 years have already passed since the previous one), so that the locals love it. Second, the municipality and schools should be much more active. -Better information on the history of the region and planning visits of schools of all levels of education Illumination of the entire area, ticket closure, cleaning and pedestrianization of the entire area. Creation of parking spaces, safe access to the archaeological site -Be cleaner (greens, greens) -More frequent events related to the site and history by the archaeological service itself -Cooperation with schools for events, stronger media exposure, documentaries, games. -Cultural events, advertising, invitation of persons known for cultural activities in the country. -To carry out renovation works, with respect to the ancient construction and according to the regulations of the charter for the redevelopment, with care not to repeat mistakes of the past (by cementing ancient columns) and of course to highlight and complete the works on the monument of Augustus which is abandoned with torn barbed wire. -Through primary education initially and then secondary, in addition to the family that must encourage the child to enrich its knowledge on the subject of culture, but also relevant bodies and institutions that support with actions related to informing citizens (events, educational programs, etc.) -View it in every way.. -More visibility -THERE MUST BE A CONNECTION FROM THE CITY CENTER (BUS OR ANYTHING ELSE) -If our city becomes a tourist destination, Nikopolis will inevitably emerge. For this to happen, private initiatives are not enough, the authorities must make efforts and prioritize actions that our city needs. What are these I describe on my site, blog, etc. www.kalentzis.gr -Inclusion of lessons in schools, compulsory visits of schools to the museum and archaeological sites of ancient Nikopolis, advertising through the media -The municipality and the regional unit should be interested in primary and secondary education -First to get to know the locals and then to take targeted actions to promote and highlight it to potential visitors -Greater visibility -Restoration of monuments -Various events that will attract people, such as concerts, presentations of works of public figures (e.g. artistic content, etc.). -Advertising, brochures. -Better funding so that there are staff for better maintenance, promotion and utilization of the space -More information in schools, various activities in our prefecture and more advertising in the media.</p>								

The following table lists the separate answers to the questions of group A) Municipality of Preveza

Table 2: Separate questions from group A

	Number of respondents	%
How important do you consider it as locals to know the history of Ancient Nikopolis and to have visited the museum or archaeological site?		
A little important	14	5,1%
Very important	260	94,2%
Not at all significant	2	0,7%
Do you believe that as citizens we should know the history of our region?		
Yes	272	98,6%
No	0	0%
Not necessary	3	1,1%
I don't know	1	0,4%

The following table lists the separate answers to the questions of group B) Other municipality within the prefecture of Preveza

Table 3: Separate questions from group B

	Number of respondents	%
Municipality of permanent residence		
Municipality of Parga	2	66,7%
Municipality of Ziros	4	33,3%
How important do you consider as locals to know the history of Ancient Nikopolis and to have visited the museum or archaeological site?		
A little important	1	12,5%
Very important	7	87,5%
Not at all important	0	0
Have you visited any other archaeological site in your area apart from that of ancient Nikopolis?		
Archaeological site of Kassope	4	50%
Ancient Elatria	1	12,5%
Necromancy of Acheron	8	100%
I haven't visited any of the above	0	0
Do you believe that as citizens of the Prefecture we should know the history of our region?		

Yes	8	100%
No	0	0%
Not necessary	0	0%
I don't know	0	0%
The inclusion of ancient Nikopolis in the list of UNESCO Cultural Heritage Sites as well as the promotion of other archaeological sites of the Prefecture of Preveza is of the greatest importance to you:		
To highlight the importance of the archaeological sites of the place.	8	100%
For the economic development of the region.	7	87,5%

The following table shows the separate answers to the questions in group C) Other prefecture

Table 4: Separate questions from group C

	Number of respondents	%
How important do you think it is for the residents of an area to know the history of their place and to have visited the museum or the archaeological site that probably exists there?		
A little important	3	3,8%
Very important	75	96,2%
Not at all important	0	0%
Do you think that it is necessary in the educational planning of all educational levels of the Prefecture where you live, to include the educational / teaching visits of students and to make references to the history of your place so that the new generation of your region has the knowledge?		
Yes	77	98.7%
No	1	1.3%
In a possible visit to the Prefecture of Preveza, is a visit to the archaeological site or museum of ancient Nikopolis one of your priorities if you have not already done so far?		
Yes	47	60,3%
No	4	5,1%
Maybe	27	34,6%
Do you think that it is necessary in the educational planning of all educational levels of the Prefecture where you live, to include the educational / teaching visits of students and to make references to the history of your place so that the new generation of the region has the knowledge?		
Yes	75	96,2%
No	3	4%

The following table lists the separate answers to the questions from group D) Other prefecture with previous permanent residence in the prefecture of Preveza.

Table 5: Separate questions from group D

	Number of respondents	%
Are you originally from the Prefecture of Preveza?		
Yes	25	80,6%
No	6	19,4%
How important do you consider it to be for permanent residents or those who are originally from the Prefecture of Preveza to know the history of Ancient Nikopolis and to have visited the museum or archaeological site?		
Very important	29	93,5%
A little important	1	3,2%
Not at all important	1	3,2%
Do you believe that as former residents you should know the history of the region?		
Yes	30	96,8%
No	1	3,2%
Do you consider it necessary to include educational/teaching visits of students and references to the history of your place in the educational programming of all educational levels of the Prefecture where you reside, so that the new generation of the region has knowledge?		
Yes	28	90,3%
No	19	9,7%
The inclusion of ancient Nicopolis in the list of UNESCO Cultural Heritage Monuments is of the greatest importance to you:		
For the promotion of the importance of the archaeological sites of the region	28	90,3%
For the economic development of the region	19	61,3%

Of great importance is the answer to the common question for the four groups:

“Do you consider that the relationship of Greek citizens with their cultural heritage is a matter of education?” -In category A the majority of respondents answered Quite a lot (113) and Very much (148) and in B the majority answered Quite a lot and Very much.

“Do you consider it necessary to include educational/teaching visits of students and to make references to the history of your place in the educational programming of all educational

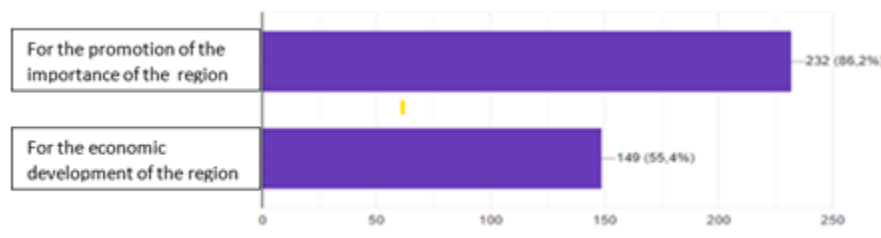
levels of the Prefecture where you reside so that the new generation of the region has knowledge?" - Answer:

a) 89.3% YES, b) 96.2% YES, c) 100% YES and d) 97.8% YES from a total of 391 answers.

Also of great importance in group a) Place of residence Municipality of Preveza is the answer to the question:

"After the bypass works of ancient Nikopolis with the aim of creating an archaeological park, an application will be submitted for inclusion in the list of UNESCO Cultural Heritage Monuments. Then the number of visitors to the archaeological site will increase dramatically with visitors from every corner of the earth. Do you think it is contradictory that we have not visited the museum/archaeological site even once while foreign tourists show enormous interest?" - Answer: 94.1% YES, 5.9% NO from a total of 269 answers.

"The inclusion of ancient Nikopolis in the list of UNESCO Cultural Heritage Monuments is of the greatest importance to you:" (from a total of 269 answers)



In the end, members of both groups helped distribute the questionnaire to as many people as possible inside and outside the school, inside and outside the prefecture. The entire work and the results of the questionnaire were presented by the students at the end of the school year at a school event and were broadcast in local media. (Passa, 2023)

5. Conclusion

School activity programs (SAPs) are an innovative tool where students have the opportunity to move beyond the predetermined curriculum of school subjects and deal with issues that are of great importance in today's era (cultural, health education and environmental).

This specific program, especially in evening school (EPAL) where it was implemented, gave a motivation to the participating adult students by dealing with a topical and burning issue for the area where they live, since there is an imminent proposal to include the archaeological site of ancient Nikopolis in the UNESCO cultural list. Due to the age of the students, greater depth was

given both to the creation of the work and the questions of the questionnaire. The willingness and interest that the students showed both during the implementation of this specific activity and in the presentation of the results at the end of the school year, was an important confirmation of their efforts.

The questionnaire has been answered by 391 citizens so far and is an important tool in the possible future shaping of the educational programming of both secondary and primary schools. The results show that the history of each region of our country must be part of the education of children in the schools of the region from an early age.

The PSDs, especially in evening high schools, also contribute to the reduction of school dropout and school abandonment since they are an incentive for adults to engage in social issues that are of great importance to them. (Passa, 2023)

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