

METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATING STUDENTS IN THE SPIRIT OF NATIONAL PRIDE THROUGH ANCESTRAL IMAGERY

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Abstract. The article provides methodological recommendations for educating university students in the spirit of national pride through visual representations of ancestral figures. It treats national pride as a reflective educational outcome grounded in historical knowledge, cultural identity, ethical evaluation, and constructive civic participation. Based on culture-and-arts education, culturally responsive pedagogy, studio-based learning, and heritage education research, the article proposes a practical framework for curriculum design, source selection, classroom dialogue, creative production, assessment, museum collaboration, and digital presentation. Particular attention is paid to balancing historical reliability and artistic interpretation, diversifying the ancestral canon, avoiding propaganda-like instruction, and making students' reasoning visible through portfolios and artist statements. Ten recommendations are organised across four levels: curriculum, teaching process, learning environment, and assessment. A sample project structure and measurable indicators are offered. The framework is applicable to drawing, painting, sculpture, graphic design, art history, and interdisciplinary heritage modules. It concludes that ancestral imagery contributes to national pride most effectively when students participate as critical researchers and creative cultural agents rather than passive recipients of celebratory narratives.

Keywords: methodological recommendations, national pride, ancestral imagery, visual arts education, heritage pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, student project, assessment rubric.

Introduction

Educating students in the spirit of national pride is a complex pedagogical task. It requires more than the transmission of heroic biographies or the visual display of well-known historical figures. Sustainable pride should combine knowledge of cultural achievements with the capacity to evaluate historical evidence, appreciate artistic expression, respect cultural diversity, and translate admiration into responsible action. Visual arts education offers a distinctive environment for this purpose because students do not merely receive narratives; they select, interpret, compose, materialise, critique, and publicly communicate them.

Ancestral imagery includes portraits, monuments, miniatures, book illustrations, murals, posters, sculptures, digital reconstructions, and student-created visual narratives representing significant figures from the past. These images can strengthen belonging, but they can also simplify history if used without inquiry. Accordingly, the teacher needs a methodology that protects historical complexity while preserving the emotional and symbolic power of art.

The aim of this article is to formulate practical recommendations for designing and teaching ancestral-imagery projects in higher education. The recommendations are grounded in UNESCO's holistic approach to culture and arts education, culturally responsive pedagogy, experiential heritage learning, and recent evidence linking cultural heritage education with identity, pride, self-efficacy, and civic engagement (UNESCO, 2024; Gay, 2018; Xu, 2026; Wang & Li, 2026).

Methodological basis

The framework was developed through conceptual synthesis and pedagogical modelling. Four design principles were established. First, authenticity: claims and visual attributes should be traceable to credible sources, and reconstruction should be labelled. Second, agency: students should make substantive choices rather than reproduce a teacher-provided image. Third, dialogue:

interpretations should be discussed, compared, and revised. Fourth, transfer: the value associated with an ancestor should be connected to a contemporary professional, ethical, or civic context.

The recommendations are intended for drawing, painting, sculpture, graphic design, art history, museum pedagogy, and interdisciplinary courses. They can be implemented as a two-week studio assignment, a semester project, a museum partnership, or a public exhibition.

Core methodological recommendations

The following ten recommendations form an integrated system. Their value lies in coordinated implementation rather than isolated use.

Level	Recommendation	Practical action	Quality safeguard
Curriculum	Set dual outcomes	Pair an art skill outcome with a heritage/value outcome	Both outcomes appear in the rubric
Curriculum	Diversify the ancestral canon	Include science, literature, education, arts, crafts, women, regions, and local figures	Avoid narrow or exclusively political representation
Curriculum	Connect heritage with the present	Require a contemporary ethical, professional, or civic link	Transfer must be argued, not asserted
Teaching process	Start from inquiry questions	Use research problems before image production	No copying without source analysis
Teaching process	Separate evidence and invention	Create a documented/conventional/invented attribute map	Label reconstruction explicitly
Teaching process	Use staged critique	Check concept, structure, and pre-final presentation	Feedback is criterion-referenced
Learning environment	Partner museums with communities	Use objects, curators, local histories, and public audiences	Respect provenance and community perspectives
Learning environment	Provide inclusive public presentation	Exhibition, digital gallery, artist statement, alt text, bilingual label	Accuracy and accessibility reviewed
Assessment	Assess process	Evaluate sources, sketches,	Do not grade only

Level	Recommendation	Practical action	Quality safeguard
t	portfolios	revisions, and final work	surface polish
Assessment	Assess reflective transfer	Ask how heritage values inform present action	Allow reasoned, diverse interpretations

Recommendation 1: formulate dual learning outcomes. Each project should include at least one disciplinary art outcome and one heritage-value outcome. For example, “construct a portrait using accurate proportion and tonal modelling” should be paired with “explain how the selected visual decisions communicate the ancestor’s contribution and its contemporary relevance.” This prevents value education from becoming an unassessed slogan and prevents studio work from becoming historically empty.

Recommendation 2: use a source hierarchy. Primary or near-primary evidence, scholarly histories, museum catalogues, peer-reviewed studies, and reputable heritage databases should be prioritised. Popular images may be analysed, but not automatically treated as factual. Students should maintain a source log indicating what each source contributes: facial reference, costume, architecture, symbolic object, historical event, or interpretive viewpoint.

Recommendation 3: diversify representation. The curriculum should include scientists, poets, educators, artists, artisans, women, local community figures, and representatives of different regions. A diversified canon makes national culture visible as a collective and evolving achievement rather than the product of a few political leaders. Students may also compare nationally prominent ancestors with locally significant figures to connect macro-history and place-based identity.

Recommendation 4: begin with inquiry questions, not a ready-made image. Useful questions include: What problem did this person address? Which value is demonstrated through action? Which aspects of the person’s appearance are documented? How have later artists changed the image? What visual language would communicate the legacy to contemporary youth? Inquiry questions activate critical thinking and establish a reason for every artistic choice.

Recommendation 5: separate evidence, convention, and invention. A three-column visual map can classify documented attributes, established iconographic conventions, and the student’s original interpretation. This distinction is particularly important when no life portrait exists. It supports ethical reconstruction and makes the creative process transparent.

Recommendation 6: combine studio practice with dialogue. Short lectures should be followed by visual comparison, small-group interpretation, sketching, peer explanation, and revision. Culturally responsive pedagogy positions learners’ cultural knowledge as a resource while also requiring critical engagement rather than passive affirmation (Gay, 2018). Dialogue allows students to recognise that heritage is interpreted through different media, periods, and social perspectives.

Recommendation 7: employ staged formative assessment. Three checkpoints are recommended: evidence and concept approval; structural or compositional critique; and pre-exhibition review. At each checkpoint, feedback should be linked to explicit criteria. Staged assessment reduces late correction, supports creative self-efficacy, and helps students manage the cognitive load of combining research with technical production.

Recommendation 8: use museums and cultural institutions as learning partners. Museum-based learning provides experiential access to objects, curatorial narratives, material culture, and public interpretation. Activities may include object analysis, curator interviews, sketching in galleries, comparison of labels, and co-designed student exhibitions. Recent research demonstrates that museum-based heritage education can positively affect awareness, perceptions, and learning (Erbaş et al., 2026).

Recommendation 9: make the project public and accessible. A final exhibition, digital gallery, QR-linked artist statement, audio description, or bilingual catalogue gives the work an authentic audience. Public presentation increases responsibility for accuracy and communication. Accessibility should include readable labels, alternative text for digital images, and language appropriate to non-specialist viewers.

Recommendation 10: assess reflective transfer. Students should identify how the ancestor's value relates to their current discipline and social role. A student depicting a scholar might connect intellectual courage to research ethics; a craft master may prompt reflection on sustainability and skilled labour; a poet may stimulate discussion of language, empathy, and public communication. This transfer converts heritage admiration into professional and civic orientation.

Sample project model

A four-week project can be organised as follows. Week 1: orientation, selection of an ancestor, source verification, and comparative iconographic analysis. Week 2: value statement, mood board, compositional thumbnails, and technical trials. Week 3: production with a mid-process critique focused on structure, symbolism, and historical plausibility. Week 4: revision, artist statement, public exhibition, peer response, and individual reflection. The project may be completed individually, while research and exhibition design can include collaborative components.

The teacher should provide a source checklist, a concept template, a process portfolio structure, and a rubric at the beginning. Students should not be required to express identical emotional conclusions; they should be required to support their interpretation respectfully and with evidence. This distinction protects academic integrity and encourages genuine engagement.

Assessment indicators

Evaluation should capture both artistic achievement and educational meaning. Suggested indicators are presented below.

Indicator	Evidence	Suggested weight
Historical and source literacy	Source log, comparison, distinction between evidence and reconstruction	20%
Conceptual understanding	Clear explanation of the ancestor's contribution and selected value	15%
Visual communication	Composition, symbolism, medium, and audience appropriateness	20%
Technical quality	Control of drawing, colour, modelling, material, or digital workflow	15%
Originality and agency	Independent decisions and meaningful	10%

Indicator	Evidence	Suggested weight
	transformation of sources	
Dialogue and revision	Use of feedback, peer critique, and documented improvement	10%
Reflective civic transfer	Connection between heritage, professional ethics, and social contribution	10%

Pre- and post-project evidence may include a short concept map, a source-evaluation task, a reflective questionnaire, or an oral explanation of one visual decision. These instruments can document changes in historical understanding and the sophistication of students' reasoning without reducing national pride to a single emotional score. For research purposes, cultural identity, cultural pride, creative self-efficacy, and civic intention may be measured with validated instruments, subject to appropriate adaptation and ethics review.

Digital tools can support the methodology through virtual museum visits, layered image annotation, 3D modelling, digital painting, and online exhibitions. However, generative artificial intelligence introduces new obligations. Students should disclose tool use, verify generated historical details, retain evidence of their own decisions, and avoid presenting synthetic reconstructions as documentary images. The assessment should prioritise authorship, critical verification, and conceptual coherence rather than mere visual polish.

Conclusion

Ancestral imagery can educate students in the spirit of national pride when curriculum design combines historical authenticity, student agency, dialogic interpretation, artistic rigour, and civic transfer. The ten recommendations presented in this article operationalise these principles across curriculum, teaching, learning environment, and assessment. The central methodological shift is from showing students whom to admire toward enabling them to investigate why a figure matters, how visual language constructs meaning, and what responsibility follows from cultural inheritance. Such an approach is compatible with inclusive culture-and-arts education and avoids both superficial decoration and uncritical glorification. Future classroom studies should test the framework through mixed methods and compare its effects across disciplines, media, and regional contexts.

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