



**BUILDING ON THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE
AND ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF LEARNING FOR ALL -
EXPERIENTIAL ARTISTIC CREATIONS OF
SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN**

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Abstract:

In recent years, extracurricular activities have focused on areas other than sports, which were previously considered to be the main option. In modern times, museums and other cultural spaces can be places of education and effective learning. This article aims to make use of the museum experience in relation to learning and education for all. A bibliographic review will present the meaning and role of museums with emphasis on their educational, communicative and cultural dimension. In addition, an educational example of school children's artworks will be presented by a Center for Design and Implementation of Personalized and Group Educational Programs for children with and without special educational needs. The implementation of the experiential educational program confirms the theory and the educational role that extracurricular activities can do. The combination of a theoretical approach and educational example serves the relationship of a fertile conjugation of theory and applied knowledge and practice.

Keywords: museum experience, learning for all, inclusion, experiential artistic creations, school age

1. Introduction

Nowadays, cultural management, and indeed the management of cultural material evidence, can become under the necessary conditions a lever of sustainable development. Cultural management is linked to sustainable development, as the environment is natural and cultural. Culture is a social creation and, in this context, its creation, development and protection is the task and responsibility of local communities. Within local communities, museums cultivate a rich network of international relations, exchanges and partnerships and contribute constructively and in

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the long run to social cohesion and harmony (Poulios et al., 2015). In this context, schooling combined with museum experience creates a multidimensional environment of education, communication and entertainment for All, as well as "*essential learning with the potential for reflection and empathy that contributes to the emancipation of individuals and social groups with diversity*" (Kokkos, 2017). Nowadays, this philosophy is expanding into extra-curricular creative activities and leisure activities for people with and without special needs. The purpose of this article is to make use of the museum experience in relation to learning and education for all. Initially, on a theoretical level, a bibliographic review analyzes the meaning and role of museums with emphasis on their educational, communicative and cultural dimension, and refers to good pedagogical practices that serve goals of school and social inclusion (Ioannidi, 2016, 2018).

To this end, in practical terms, an educational example of school children's artworks is presented by a Center for Design and Implementation of Personalized and Group Educational Programs, which creates a variety of social stimuli of inclusion philosophy and education for children with and without special educational needs.

The combination of a theoretical approach and educational example serves the relationship of a fertile conjugation of theory and applied knowledge and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Museums

In general, the museum is a place of informal education and an institution of lifelong learning for everybody. Expresses the choice of free learning through an inclusion philosophy. Specifically, the uniqueness of the museum as a learning space is consistent with the exploitation of the museum space as a constructed environment with educational intentions and the focus on experience and participation on the one hand is realized by experiential-creative activities and on the other hand it is an essential contact with culture, art and science (Nikonanou, 2015).

In particular, museums are, among other things, educational organizations with social activity, which they promote through ways of social learning. Museums can support progress, development and human rights in a variety of ways. It is the responsibility of the museum community to recognize this work and to use the means and the opportunities it has to inform and educate the individuals of a society, especially at the level of formation of attitudes and values of culture (Hein, 1995).

In this event, new technologies in Information and Communication Technology, as well as education and training sciences play an important role today and Museopedagogy indeed.

2.2 Museopedagogy

According to Nakou (2001), Museopedagogy aims at the scientific investigation of the pedagogical and museological principles and terms that govern the pedagogical and educational policy of the museums, aiming on the one hand at the creative exploitation

of the material of culture in general and of the museums in particular, on the other hand, in cultivation of people and social groups, regardless of their origin and abilities. Museopedagogy forms the framework for the best possible planning and the best possible implementation and evaluation of educational programs that facilitate social groups with diversity in order to understand, interpret and exploit creatively museums and other cultural spaces. Its ultimate goal is to promote museum education throughout society through the cultivation of critical thinking and multifaceted aesthetic, emotional, physical, social performances and communication codes. From this point of view, museum education does not only concern museums and educational departments, but also other educational, cultural and social institutions. For the fulfillment of its objectives, Museopedagogy is founded on the one hand on the principles of modern museology and the theory of material culture and on the other hand on findings of modern pedagogy and teaching, which mainly concern the polysemy of the museum spaces and the objects, as well as its extensions intersect in social and scientific dimensions of knowledge, learning and communication. However, despite its various links to museology, material culture theory, and education and behavioral sciences, museum education is developed as a particular scientific field with research approaches aimed at making better use of the educational importance of material culture through alternative forms of communication and learning in relation to modern multicultural reality and the necessity for social and cultural inclusion.

2.3 Educational, cultural and communication dimension of museums

According to Bellamy & Oppenheim (2009), until recently, learning in the museum sector was an untapped field of culture. But in recent years, there has been a concerted international effort for the fruitful combination of education in different and diverse cultural environments. Above all, in the field of education, a holistic approach to child development and education and then focusing on wider educational and learning experiences have the potential to broaden and deepen the learning experience beyond the core of the curriculum. In this context, the contribution of museum education in the formal educational process can offer vital alternative ways of learning, education and training to supplement the formal educational system, will inspire the interest and creativity, helping, in this way, the most dynamic part of society -the young people-become aware of the wider world and their place in it, in a way that neither parents nor teachers can offer and otherwise remains unexploited. However, the challenge is great, because a large percentage of children, even if they are within the educational system, lives in the poverty line, which affects the social and cultural horizon in general. It is no coincidence that the issues of education, access and social justice are the most important fact that museums will face in the years to come.

In addition, the museum is a fact and symbol of culture that preserves common heritage and collective memory and creates social ties between all people, regardless of national and religious diversity, social origin, physical and mental disability or any inadequacy. At the same time, it is a fact that a museum must possess and offer

aesthetics through a well-structured, healthy and accessible environment for all, with security, functionality and respect for the multiculturalism and diversity of its visitors.

Therefore, the exponential practice of museums is on the one hand the result of educational theories, which result from the conjugation of learning, knowledge and teaching theories, and on the other hand are directly influenced by the social and educational background of the educational policy adopted, which has an impact on the design and implementation of museum education programs (Hein, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999, 2007; Nakou, 2001).

In this context, we mention indicative educational approaches to museum exhibits (Philippopoliti, 2015), such as:

- Linear reports with defined goals and teaching-oriented texts with teacher-centered methods which are based on didacticism theory.
- Linear reports with accompanying informative texts, combined with other aids offered as a stimulus to teaching, have as a theoretical starting point behaviourism.
- Reports that provide the appropriate material through exploration and comparison activities, with the ultimate goal of exploring objective knowledge, are based on the theoretical approach of discovery.
- Exhibitions, which enable multiperspective view to visitors, are organized and function in relation to everyday life and experience, as well as encouraging the possibility of multiple interpretations, are those that bring constructivism as a theoretical background. Here, learning is an active process of building knowledge from the subjects themselves, and teaching aims at cultivating critical thinking and interpretation skills.

Accordingly, part of the museum communication is the exhibitions for people with and without special needs, the technology through the use of educational tools for educational purposes, the audio tour, the audio-visual CD-ROM tour, museums on the internet, all kinds of programs, cultural, museopedagogical etc (Kokkinos & Alexaki, 2002). Over the last few decades, educational programs are designed and implemented that aim at the multifaceted, active exploration and creative exploitation of the social and cultural environment by individuals and social groups of diverse populations within a framework of genuine entertainment and aesthetic enjoyment. Thus, museopedagogical programs for mixed population groups are promoted, based on the idea that the different characteristics of individuals and groups - needs, abilities, peculiarities - should not be considered negative factors but a fertile parameter that can bring positive effects for everybody within a society (Nakou, 2001). On this basis, museum professionals are trying to provide meaningful experiences for visitors. Meaningful experiences are those that provide the choice and control in the exploration of ideas, concepts and objects. In many cases, these experiences happen through an interactive element. For this reason, a number of studies have focused on interactive museums and on how visitors perceive and learn from experiences in it (Adams et al., 2004). It is clear that the importance of Lifelong Education and Education for All is

cultivated through the cultural, educational and communicational dimension of the museums, and the role of the active citizen in society is strengthened, material culture is being exploited, and wider social and cultural institutions are involved in the educational policy towards a school and social inclusion, and therefore a peaceful and equitable coexistence for children with and without special educational needs and social groups, without exception of characteristics, differences and peculiarities.

2.4 Good practices in a museum

It is a commonplace that the museum, rich in material and intangibles, offers a variety of experiential and kinaesthetic experiences as well as interpretative views of the world, which in turn influences the visitors totally on basic life issues. In particular, the essence of the pedagogical work carried out within a museum, as well as the mission of each educational activity, can be analyzed in three components (Potvin, 2000):

- to train teachers to further use school time to convey knowledge,
- acquaintance and familiarization of students as far as possible with artistic suggestions related to the way the selected artists work; however, this is not acceptable to all, as it is the opinion that one should not be cultivated to come into contact and be moved by works of Art,
- cultivating aesthetic sensitivity as the primary destination of Art for everything that surrounds us and is not an object of Art.

Pedagogical practices in museums are different from those of schools. The marginal application of this logic appears in the rejection of writing in the implementation of an educational program in the museum and in favor of the treatment of the sight of observation. The pedagogy adopted and applied in museopedagogic programs is characterized as a pedagogy that treats children as mature individuals rather than as executors of orders. Thus, the central idea regarding the representations of the museum executives is formed around the following axes (Zafeirakou, 2000):

- The museum needs school because it provides its future audience.
- The museum applies innovative pedagogical practices based on "pedagogy of gaze".
- Museum knowledge involves not only cognitive but also emotional and aesthetic dimension. In this way, it is more completed and connected with the requirements of everyday life.

Also, visitors will be satisfied with the opportunity to test specific engagement strategies with works of art, e.g.

- through active problem-solving that is encouraged by texts (who the artist was, what we think, what is new or old),
- using interpretive strategies such as comparing different ways of representing the same subject, and
- through the establishment of relationships with everyday knowledge, objects and texts. The use of the art museum as a separate space, where experience is experienced as a follow-up of stimuli, needs attention and further consideration.

Finally, in this research direction, color, music and other strategies for enhancing experiential visitor involvement can be examined (Hooper-Greenhill, Moussouri, 2001).

Below, there is an example of acquaintance with Art in a leisure museopedagogical program that has been applied to a group of children with and without special educational needs. The experiential creative activity resulted in the successful participation and inclusion of all children with and without special needs in the group. The diversified capabilities and abilities of the children were fully utilized with the ultimate goal of being included through the aesthetic and experiential experience.

3. A pedagogical and educational paradigm of museum experience: Knowing and Recognizing Art

Based on the engagement strategies and pedagogical practices mentioned above, a leisure museopedagogical program for elementary school children could include getting acquainted with well-known painters and their works. The discussion about painters and their lives, their different styles and their paintings, and through active problem solving and the use of interpretive strategies offers children the opportunity to get to know and recognize art.

The children come in contact with important works by well-known painters and learn to recognize on their own the different styles, inspiration, feelings that each painter can experience, and the feelings that each painting brings to his "observers". Here are some portraits of first-year children who, by trying to understand and come closer to important works by well-known painters, represent the paintings in their own way:

- a) Picture 1: Trying to get acquainted with the colors and technique of Vincent Van Gong,
- b) Picture 2: Trying to get acquainted with the colors and style of Wassily Kantinsky,
- c) Picture 3: Attempting to represent Paul Klee's painting "Cat and Bird",
- d) Picture 4: The way children see Pablo Picasso's works.

The pedagogical and educational intervention of museum experience was implemented in a Center for the design and implementation of personalized and group educational programs, which creates a variety of social stimuli of integration philosophy and education for children with and without special educational needs.



Picture 1: Trying to get acquainted with the colors and technique of Vincent Van Gong



Picture 2: Trying to get acquainted with the colors and style of Wassily Kantinsky



Picture 3: Attempting to represent Paul Klee's painting "Cat and Bird"



Picture 4: The way children see Pablo Picasso's works

Through the attempt to recreate art, children show more easily to learn and remember painters, paintings and styles.

The connection between the museum, the school, the groups of visitors and the community, in particular the relation of the museum education with the educational work in general, promotes, among other things, a dynamic social extrovertness of the school institution itself, the community factors and the local communities, museums internationally. This coupling guarantees their auspicious development and sustainability as places of social interaction, inclusion and sustainable development of individuals and societies.

Finally, free time programs, as a good practice area, whether aimed at children and adolescents or targeting adult audiences, confirm the importance of the Lifelong Learning and Cultural Cultivation Museum, providing learning opportunities and entertainment moments and combining active and experiential methods with playful and exploratory means (Philippoupoliti, 2015). Furthermore, the new perception of learning encourages diversity, as well as alternative pedagogical methodologies of school and social inclusion, where museum experience supports Education for Everyone Out of Social Exclusion (Bunia, 2015).

4. Conclusion

Concluding, the assumption for a lifelong substantive and active process of discovery, processing and renewal of knowledge and skills for all citizens is contemporary, on the one hand, and on the other hand common. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the lifelong education of all European citizens is based among others on equal opportunities for access to quality education as well as on citizens' demands and needs, including equal opportunities for vulnerable social groups. Particularly with regard to specific population groups, sensitivity, anticipation and a specialized approach are required not only towards improving professional qualifications but also personal development and, in particular, positive interaction with the community (Kedraka, 2011).

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