



PRACTICING DIVERSITY THROUGH A LEISURE TIME EDUCATION PROGRAM: AN EDUCATIONAL AND LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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Abstract:

Leisure programs can play an important role in the education, socialization and development of children. On the other hand, the trend of the modern age is the inclusion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. If leisure time activities can be combined with integration, an effective outcome can be achieved with multiple benefits. In addition, the type of activities that children choose and their performance in them can play an important role in integrating them into the peer group. The purpose of this article is to present an educational program as an example of an inclusive approach to leisure. This program aimed at recognizing and accepting diversity in an experiential manner. The article presents the three meetings that took place with first-year children, as well as the results of these meetings. Through this program the children came in contact with concepts that even adults have difficulty discussing and understood the difficulties a person with disabilities may face.

Keywords: diversity, disability, educational activities, leisure time program

1. Theoretical Framework

In general, free time training programs should involve a specific number of people, have an organized structure and a specific duration. It is commonplace that the implementation of a free-time training program requires the mediation of the trainer. It is the person who acts within an educational environment of active learning with a variety of experiential techniques and a wide range of educational activities depending on the students' development stage, in order to create on the one hand a pleasant pedagogical environment with an emphasis on experience, and on the other hand, knowledge, understanding and critical observation about the exhibits, their interpretation and their explanation (Alcistis, 1996/ Moussouri, 2002).

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More specifically, more recent research efforts in the context of educational experiences and learning outcomes reflect a different approach, focusing on how societies and organizations can help each other through the provision of cultural achievements and resources in order to develop lifelong learning. So some of the things we learn throughout our lives include the accumulation of information or knowledge on which we base our opinions, the distinction and cultivation of preferences and moods, the adoption of new roles, the development of new aspects of our character, and self-knowledge. Given the need to develop learning activities to promote lifelong learning in any environment within a modern multicultural society, there is talk of a more open system of educational experiences and social opportunities, in which a wider range of competences should be cultivated with point of reference the adaptation, formulation and selection in each environmental context (Sternberg, 1997):

- 1) Recognizing the existence of a problem,
- 2) Defining the nature of the problem,
- 3) Building a strategy to solve the problem,
- 4) Presenting on a cognitive basis information on the problem,
- 5) Designing a solution,
- 6) Assessing a solution to a problem.

It is not accidental that in our days, free-time education programs broaden the pedagogical horizon beyond pre-school and school education in other fields such as history, art, culture, arts and aesthetics in general etc.

Overall, these sites have an important and active role to play in experiencing new experiences and fulfilling the cultural needs of all young people, in their socialization, in developing their skills and talents, as well as in their personal perspective.

Cultural spaces and creative workplaces can provide learning opportunities and opportunities for all and become a channel of democracy, training and education as well as social inclusion (Ioannidi, 2018).

In particular, museum education issues can be realized using constructively diverse people, building on the theory of multiple intelligences. Howard Gardner (1993) reports that intelligences relate to the ability of an individual to perceive the world around him through a process of storing and interpreting information. By distinguishing the multiple types of intelligence that Gardner distinguishes (linguistic, mathematical / logical, musical, spatial, physical / movement, interpersonal and intrapersonal), it is possible to create a combined framework for exploring and expressing individual inclinations and possibilities at the level of museum education, in order to integrate people with learning and social differences.

The basic pedagogical principles of such an inclusion philosophy are (Ioannidi, Kalokairinou, 2010):

- democratic attitude and awareness of diversity,
- civilization and unconditional acceptance of all members without distinctive features and specificities,

- autonomy and dignity as an inalienable right of all,
- cultivating the individual's ability to investigate, explore, communicate and learn new ways of being, coexisting and reconciling.

In this context, the classification of teaching objectives includes three overlapping areas: cognitive, emotional and psychomotor. According to Bloom et al. (1956):

- Cognitive learning is evidenced by the recall of knowledge and mental skills. Furthermore, six levels or categories ranging from simple levels (i.e., recall and recognition of the facts) to more complex and abstract at the mental level (i.e., assessment) depending on the individual's developmental stage were identified. The six levels are: knowledge, understanding, implementation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
- The emotional sector, which is related to feelings, attitudes and values, has five categories: sensitization, treatment, evaluation, organization, and characterization.
- Psychomotor learning is evidenced by physical skills including motor skills (Krathwohl et al., 1964).

On the basis of this brief theoretical discussion and the teaching objectives described (Ioannidi, 2016), the purpose of this work is to raise awareness of diversity through the presentation and description of a free time educational program on "Diversity and Disability". It should be noted that the starting point of our scientific and pedagogical orientation, through this educational and learning experience, is the creation of meanings through painting as it emerges in modern bibliography (Einarsdottir et al., 2009).

2. Example of a leisure time program on "Diversity and Disability"

A project on the basis of diversity was designed in a Center of design and implementation of inclusion educational free-time programs.

The general issue was the recognition, understanding and acceptance of disability.

The aim of the program was for children to be able to perceive and accept the different as normal. The program was implemented in a small group of five children of first school age and applied at three hourly meetings.

1st meeting: Discussion

At the first meeting, the children came into contact with the disability term and linked the vocabulary with their daily routine and the linking of disability with people who had met or even communicated / contacted.

The children focused on motor and sensory disabilities. This result is not surprising, as children of this age can understand more easily what they see and can perceive.

The children were asked to answer how they think people with disabilities are managing their everyday lives. The responses provided were about motor and sensory disabilities (wheelchair transportation, use of a white club).

Based on children's responses to motor disabilities, they were asked to think about ways in which people with mobility disabilities could self-serve and paint. The children concluded that they should use their legs or mouths to keep objects in their everyday life if they could not use their hands.

2nd meeting: Painting with mouth and foot

The second meeting was organized on the basis of the children's responses and the discussion that emerged with the completion of the first meeting. The children were given pictures of paintings painted with their mouth and foot, as well as pictures of people who painted with their mouths or feet. There followed a discussion about how they perceive and imagine the painting with the mouth or the leg, the degree of difficulty that the people who are painting in this way can face, but also the difficulties they can face in their everyday lives.

In the end, children were asked to paint in three different ways: with the hand, with the mouth and with the foot (figures 1, 2, 3, 4).

In the first stage, they had to represent geometric shapes and in the second stage a complete painting.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

3rd meeting: Comparison of painting with hand and mouth

At the third meeting, the children were asked to comment on the similarity or difference of both the geometric shapes and the drawing they had made by hand with the ones they made with the mouth and the foot (figures 5, 6, 7).



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

It was clear to the children that they could not paint the same easily and effectively with their mouth or foot. They realized how difficult it was to achieve something different from the usual / conventional way they knew them. The children also commented on the fatigue and the difficulties people with motor disabilities should experience in their daily lives. The important thing is that they tried hard and did not give up, despite the difficulty they encountered. At the end of the discussion, children could perceive, explain and understand differently the daily life of people with mobility disabilities.

3. Conclusion

It is very important to adapt the educational program to the developmental stage of the student group and / or to the interests of the respective social group, as well as to the pupils' school life (Chalkia, 2002). At the same time, the integrity and sense of identity of the individual trainer is what determines the learning outcome. Because learning experience, irrespective of the content of the teaching and the teacher's instructive competence, reflects the very soul of the individual (Palmer, 1998). Through the program presented, first-school children were given the opportunity to get in touch with concepts and difficulties that even adults have difficulty discussing or understanding. The children perceived the whole process as a game. Through a pleasant activity (painting) and experiential way, they have been able to understand what is meant by difference but also the everyday life of people with disabilities.

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