

The approach of the museum and school relationship

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7225457>

Published Date: 19-October-2022

Abstract: During a period of time, that our “world” comes to face new social, political, and financial changes, all the time... the cultural institutions such as the museums, are asked to redefine their role and their impact on society. Through the necessity to produce social work, they address to an increasingly wider public and activate at issues such as tolerance, diversity, innovation and creativity.

More specifically, as concerns the school public, the educational role of the museums, especially the last few years has been proved to have an important development, something that is evident through their educational projects. The aim of the museums is to attract school students to visit and get to know the exhibits of the museum collections in such a way that will help and complete the educational process of the school community. With this project we will try to prove that only through a complete and substantial cooperation between museum and school we will manage to familiarize students with the museum as an institution and as a place which will offer them an educational and entertaining experience. Furthermore, the education of this educational project provides us with the possibility of giving feedback and therefore of researching the conditions of the fulfillment of the goals and the intentions of it and not only that but also it leads to possible interventions of improvement.

As concerns the practical part of the project, of what has been planned and organized is a “Presentation of the Heroes of the Greek Revolution of 1821 and their relics”.

This project was put into practice in a tested formula with the students of E’ and ST’ class of the 2nd primary school of Peristeri as participants.

This instructional project was connected and coordinated with the school timetable through the school subject of ST’ History of primary school having as a purpose to transform the strict theoretical knowledge that school has established into an experience which can be obtained in the museum environment.

Keywords: museum, school, informal and formal education, theories of learning, museum education, museum tutor/teacher, school teacher, educational project, National Historic Museum, Research Method.

I. INTRODUCTION

The school constitute the official formal education, in which included the specified duration of studies and the awarding of an official degree at the end, that is also their state legalization. Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 6-15 years old, and include primary (primary school) and lower secondary (high school) education.

According to Law 1566/85 (article 1) "The purpose of Primary and Secondary education is to contribute to the all-round, harmonious and balanced development of the intellectual and psychosomatic forces of students, so that, regardless of gender and origin, to have the opportunity to develop into complete personalities and live creatively"¹.

¹ <http://www.pi-schools.gr/programs/depps/>, http://www.pi-schools.gr/download/programs/depps/1Geniko_Meros.pdf

According to the Official Government Gazette 303B/13-03-2003, the educational process must shape the conditions that promote the values of democracy, respect for human rights, peace and freedom. Education aims at the all-round development of the students' personality and their successful social integration, on the one hand through the formation and acceptance of common values and on the other hand through the development of mental, emotional and psychomotor abilities and skills. In this sense, the student becomes capable of successfully dealing with problems, forming an opinion and functioning as a responsible and active citizen in a constantly changing and demanding social environment¹.

II. TEACHING OF HISTORY

Concerning the teaching of History in primary education, the general purpose is the development of historical thinking and historical consciousness. The development of historical thinking concerns the understanding of historical events through the examination of causes and effects. The cultivation of historical consciousness concerns the understanding of people's behavior in specific situations and the formation of values and attitudes that lead to the manifestation of responsible behavior in the present and in the future². By teaching History, the student can acquire not only an awareness that the modern world is a continuation of the past, but also the perception that the modern historical horizon is directly connected to his life. In this way the purpose of historical thinking and historical consciousness is linked to the more general purpose of education which refers to the preparation of responsible citizens.

In the interdisciplinary unified framework of study programs (I.U.F.S.P.), are proposed solutions to the theoretical and practical problems concerning the selection and organization of school knowledge in compulsory education. In this process, the Greek reality is taken into account, as it has been shaped both in terms of structures and in terms of aims and objectives. Thus, in I.U.F.S.P. distinct courses are maintained, but diverse ways of relating knowledge are promoted. Both the content and the conditioning process of the various concepts and information must ensure internal coherence, continuity and unified development, interdisciplinary considerations and correlations as well as cross-disciplinary extensions.

Today in primary education, the educational model used is mainly based on the independent teaching of the various subjects. In this way, however, it is not possible to ensure the required "internal coherence" and "the uniform horizontal development of the contents" at the same time. The horizontal interconnection as much as possible of the curriculums of the individual academic subjects is required. Horizontal interconnection at the level of the analytical curriculum means an appropriate organization of the teaching material of each cognitive subject in a way to ensure the treatment of issues from many points of view, so that they are "illuminated multi-prismatically" and knowledge and is highlighted its relationship with reality. That is why they must be looked through the curriculums and the teaching, the extensions and correlations that have the examined topics of the independent courses in the field of sciences, art, technology, but also in the formation of attitudes and values³. The timetables drawn up according to the analytical curriculums of the subjects should provide the possibility of adequate teaching of all the subjects that contribute to the achievement of the legislated purposes of school education. Specifically, for primary education, in the timetable foresees the establishment of a "flexible zone", lasting at least two teaching hours per week, in the context of which cross-curricular activities and work plans will be carried out. These tasks aim to improve the quality of the educational work offered, promote collective effort and the development of critical thinking, activate the students and, at the same time, allow the teacher to act proactively and flexibly, to modernize and update the content and his teaching methodology⁴.

Therefore, it is deemed necessary to connect the school knowledge with the daily life and experiences of the children, the development of their critical and creative thinking, as well as the creation of suitable conditions for a learning that will combine cooperation, investigation and intersubjectivity. With the new Analytical Curriculum (A.C.) in school teaching, the interconnection of the individual cognitive subjects is made and learning is achieved to be approached interdisciplinary, avoiding the sterile memorization and fragmentary transmission of knowledge.

III. THE CONNECTION AND INTERACTION BETWEEN MUSEUM AND SCHOOL

In the preceding findings, a catalytic role is played by the students' contact with places of cultural interest (museums), in which museum education plays an active pedagogical function. Many educators consider the education offered by museums as informal, which differs from the formal education offered by school. This difference is found in the fact that laws and

2 <http://www.pi-schools.gr/programs/depps/>

3 http://www.pi-schools.gr/download/programs/depps/1Geniko_Meros.pdf (ΦΕΚ 303B/13-03-2003).

4 <http://www.pi-schools.gr/programs/depps/> (ΟΓΓ 303B/13-03-2003).

rules are developed in the school, with a specific curriculum, according to which the type of lessons, the teaching material, the teaching objectives and methods, the attendance hours and the obligations of teachers and students are determined [1].

Many times, the school does not appear to approach the learning process as a prolonged process aimed the understanding the world, but instead prioritizes imparting elementary knowledge and covering specific curriculum [2].

On the contrary, the museum, even if it is connected to the school curriculum, is not bound by it. In the informal education of the museum, the curriculum and teaching hours are not defined, attendance is not mandatory and the knowledge that will be obtained will not be evaluated with an exam or a grade, as is the case at school [1]. In the museum, education is more flexible, emerged and applied through cross-curricular activities, and offered in such a way that the student does not feel that he/she is being educated. Therefore, as long as the learning process uses the active participation of the child in the world and in all events, skipping the textbook the more the contribution of museums to education will be appreciated [1]. The process of learning in the museum is determined both by the personal motivations and expectations of the students, by their knowledge, interests and beliefs, as well as by the possibilities of choice and control over the type and amount of knowledge that each of them receives. "The cooperation of the museum with the school offers many opportunities for the holistic cultivation of children" [3].

IV. THE SOCIAL ROLE OF MUSEUMS

Museums have been organizations of social activity and support. For many years, all over the world, museums have contributed to the externalization and change people's sense of identity and also to the development and maintenance of friendship, family and other important social bonds. Through the museum experience, solidarity between people has been strengthened, and interaction between people with differences has been expanded. In general, museums have attempted to influence the knowledge, attitudes and behavior of their audiences [4].

Nowadays, the demands of museums are very different. Instead of the storage and display of objects that mainly reveal the needs of the urban public, there is a discussion about a museum that has the visitor as its center of interest [5]. In this way, special importance is given to the social role of the museum. His main feature is dealing with the public and especially their participation. In this progression, the museum must stop being guided "by the product" and put the visitor at the center of its interest, taking into account the personality of each visitor and the holistic nature of their visit to the museum [5].

Museums can positively influence the lives of all individuals, act as a catalyst for social regeneration and as a means of empowering and creating equal societies [6]. Since museums are considered safe sites for public behavior and discussion, they can also bring together larger groups who may not know each other well for interaction and dialogue [4].

The museum experience itself activates relationships and interaction. Museums provide opportunities for experiences in a person's free time and for social interaction and communication, most often in groups of visitors consisting of families or even friends. Through interaction in museums, family members can better understand themselves, each other, and their family as a whole. Museum activities offer opportunities to improve basic family interaction skills such as patience, cooperation, observation and listening [4].

The interactive social experience that takes place within the museum spaces helps to activate people's relationships and produce meaning from the exhibits. This communication offers beneficial results such as: the individual can satisfy essential human needs such as the need for self-esteem and self-actualization, create and strengthen social bonds and relationships, emphasize social problems and contribute to social justice and equality. The results of these results can interest and benefit individuals, groups and society in general. With the contribution of museum communication, people represent, share and change key elements of culture that shape the function, quality and experience of social life [4].

Every museum must be connected and communicate with the society in which it is located. This also happens in the case of a local museum, which must function as a place of meeting, dialogue and communication of various and diverse societies and cultural worlds [7]. The mission of the museum should be to improve the living conditions through the communication of the local society members, the education, the knowledge and the love for the place in which they live. To strengthen the feeling of locality, promoting the uniqueness of their place and of the residents themselves, both at a local, national and international level [8].

In this context, museums have a wide social mission. These are organizations that collect and exhibit evidence that confirms the diversity of peoples and cultures. Through their collections, they show the special elements of a populace, its past and its evolution [9]. As a result, they play an important role in improving the public's perception of tradition by contributing to a positive assessment of it. Finally, they motivate the population to gain knowledge about the characteristics of the tradition and various activities of the past, while helping individuals to understand specific concepts related to the present. At the same time, however, its educational role gradually developed with the scientific, artistic and patriotic mission of the museum, since it was now generally accepted that education is what determines the possibilities of success in life.

V. CONCLUSION

So, educators need to consider ways to use a visit to a museum as constructively as possible. This is achieved by choosing museum spaces that offer educational programs or when they design and implement a series of activities within the museum space. The most important is that the students don't function as spectators in the museum space but to be actively and constructively involved in it. The science of museum pedagogy is moving in this direction, providing suggestions to teachers to keep students interested in order to gain essential knowledge from visiting the museum, in a pleasant and entertaining way.

An important part of the learning process is fun, since the learner gains more knowledge when he/she takes information after an enjoyable experience. The educational programs of the museums today share these findings and offer the possibility for the students to spend their time visiting the museum pleasantly and creatively, combining at the same time their education. Only with the communication and cooperation of the museum and the school the all-round cultivation of young people is effective.

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