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'Growing up' in a Museum: The Methodology of Teaching Adults in Museums

Abstract: In the changing world of the 21st century, people are only able to find their way by continuous learning and development. At the same time, entertainment and relaxation are as important as learning in helping individuals form themselves, and take more care of other people and of their environment by spending enough time in culture- and civilization-related activities through unusual situations. Others would rather visit exhibitions, cultural events and museums when on holiday with their friends or families. This paper will explore how museums are trying to prepare for their new function and role of educating visitors and learners who enter through their gates to participate in the colourful world of knowledge transfer. Nowadays, several cultural and educational institutions, of which museums are specific and good examples, provide an opportunity for mind development (Sári & Dominek, 2010). The purpose of this publication is to examine the methodology of museum andragogy programs and the opportunities that museums use in programs created for adults. The focus of our research are museums in our country, and in this research we suggest that they highlight very important social problems and concentrate more of their attention on adult groups.

Key words: museum, methodology of museums, museumandragogy, museumpedagogy, education activities of museums.

Gathering knowledge and information in museums

Apart from schools, there are today other, supplementary, opportunities for gathering information and knowledge - with the help of either the mass media and/or several kinds of cultural institutions such as museums. Exhibitions are special

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places of learning and competence-development; through them, empiricism and experimentation are also offered to visitors. They characteristically reflect and offer three identical forms of lifelong learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning can all be achieved in these special spaces. There have been a great number of initiatives to extend the open roles of museums in adult learning and education over the last forty years in Europe. The planned education activities of museums, that have contributed to strengthening this role since the 1970s, are the Museums For Everyone Program, which started in 2003, and the Hungarian Open Air Ethnographical Museum – Museum Education Centre (MOKK), so the adult teaching accreditation of the outdoor museum in Szentendre, which it gained in 2008, has taken a minor part in it. (Vásárhelyi, 2009). Having attuned themselves to the challenges, the teaching activities of museums are expanding toward museum andragogy and gerontagogy, in addition to the efforts of trying to keep in contact with schools.

„[Lifelong learning is] all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective” (Ingle & Walls, 2005).

„More and more museums in different European countries have chosen to consider the needs of, and engage with, new and/or different audiences: migrants, people with disabilities, socially excluded people, and also adult lifelong learners, who see a museum visit as an opportunity to build understanding, gain insight, be inspired, or simply to enjoy. The museum audience has widened to include both younger and older adults, who pose new challenges to museum educators used to working with groups of pupils or students in formal education.”³

A specific target group to consider are the elderly - the science of gerontology deals with their mental health, which presents an increasingly important part and subdivision in museums.

„While gerontology can be described as either ‚the study of aging’, or ‚the scientific study of old age’, a more complete definition includes all of the following:

- Scientific studies of processes associated with aging;
- Scientific studies of mature and older adults;
- Studies from the perspective of the humanities (e.g., history, philosophy, literature); and

³ Sani, M. (2008). What have museums got to do with lifelong learning? *Newsletter of the Network of European Museum Organisations*, 2008 (2) Retrieved November 20, 2012, from <http://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMONews/NEMOnews2-08.pdf>

- Applications of knowledge for the benefit of mature and older adults.”⁴

Our own research and assumptions

In our earlier research we were engaged in some topics of museum pedagogy (for example: emotional and behavior regulation of children and adult groups; teachers in a new way) and museum andragogy (best practices of museum andragogy in Hungarian and European museums).

Originally, the basis for our choice of subject was formed by our qualifications (Master of Arts in Teaching Pedagogy and a Cultural Mediator) and our earlier research. We assembled and used the following methods to provide interactive, activating elements which can be used by all participants.

In our research we have reviewed the settings and tools of museum-pedagogic programs and adult teaching that run in our national museums in terms of pedagogy. We completed our study with the help of document analysis, case studies and interviews. According to our assumption, the utilization of museums in terms of the teaching process is not adequate. While the relationship between education and museums has deepened, too few museums offer facilities for the various forms of learning for adults and older people. According to another assumption, those institutes that are at all concerned with museum-pedagogic programs and adult teaching, do not utilize those facilities with enough workmanship, i.e. methodologies available for teachers and adult trainers. Due to this fact we can see old and inadequate methodological elements on sides of both theory and practice.

Document analysis

Having reviewed the teaching activities and methodology of fourteen national museums, we have to express that excellent adult teaching can be found in three institutes – the Hungarian Science Museum, the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest, and the Hungarian Open Air Ethnographical Museum in the town Szentendre. However, this is not a good rate because in each of those museums there will be facilities that could be either developed according to the museums' profiles, or through different methodologies used by institutions.

⁴ Institute of Gerontology. Association for Gerontology in Higher Education. (2004). *Careers in Aging: Opportunities and Options*. Retrieved November 20, 2012, from <http://www.publichealth.uga.edu/geron/what-is>

So these three museums can be mostly considered as institutions and places of adult teaching. Most forms of their trainings are accredited and non-accredited courses (for example: museum-pedagogics, collection operator or restorer courses of the Hungarian National Museum, the accredited courses of the Outdoor Museum for teachers and the so-called 'everyday knowledge and courses for adults'); there are internal courses (all three museums organize preparations for teachers to develop the content and the methodology of their knowledge); and finally, they partake in university courses (the museum staff enrol in education programmes both at higher education institutions and doctoral schools).

Almost all of the museums' work can be featured in the above mentioned teacher preparation courses, information days, and additionally, the 'Free University Programme' also runs in several places (for example Hungarian National Gallery). Besides these, national museums promote the process of self-studying through a lively program that offers guided tours, lectures, musical evenings and concerts that use the background of collections and exhibitions, and are advertised in web pages and attached downloadable themes.

The methodology of museums

Methodology is very important in the museum environment, because although all of the museums have got their specific profiles and managements, if these are not introduced and used at an appropriate place and time, with the appropriate tools and in the right manner, problems and difficulties may occur.

One such problem is the lack of communication between the visitors and museums and, in reference to this, exhibitions are often not necessarily based upon real, relevant demands. Even the most boring guided tours can be made marketable by using new and lively elements and tools for all ages. Furthermore, an important part of this communication is the marketing activity, which implies further undeveloped facilities (interactive database, searching pages, program proposals on paper and on web pages, sales and offers, games, etc.) besides existing ones (internet, television, radio, newspaper, leaflets, posters, travel agency, etc.) Travel agencies should take much more responsibility and take part in personally promoting domestic cultural programs, which should be the most important method of data retrieval.

A museum as a scene of learning plays its part in education when it is promoted in several different ways. Before making a visit, it is important for teachers to talk to the children about where they will go and what they are going to see. They can prepare for a theme with a short discussion, jigsaw method or

brainstorming, or they can choose a specific museum from the many accessible facilities. During the preparation task, it is very important to choose the right method and to draw the pupils' attention, and make them sensitive, to some of the topics. These situations unequivocally imply not only didactic effects but also educative ones. After choosing the topic and preparing for it, the most important thing is to live through the impressions, the emotions and experiences, and afterwards talk about these. The same steps are needed for adults to be able to work up information properly while they are visiting an exhibition, because it is important and useful to read about the given theme before visiting, and 'get' the experience and effects from the things that are being looked at, and finally to discuss and define all these things.

It is an enormous problem in communication that the didactic-educative function of a museum directly translates as the preparation for a theme or a topic. It would be useful if museums offered a hand in solving social problems and situations. As for the informative conversations with reference to museums' profiles (starting a family, lifestyle etc.), helping conversations (prevention, taking up a career, profession orientation, choosing a career etc.) and planning and managing programs which offer rest and relaxation, or even civilization-courses for pregnant women and mothers who get childcare or child homecare allowance (bringing up a child, hygiene, game as a developing activity) can be such a good practice.

In transforming formal education failures through inspiring environment and in trying to achieve lifelong learning, self-study should be an important part of museums' work. Research and cooperation between museums and esteemed social organizations should get more focus and support.

Amongst the museums that we studied, three can be defined as 'adult teaching institutions', which confirms our first assumption that the utilization of museums is inappropriate in terms of the process of teaching and learning, relative to the learning opportunities for adults and older people. Unfortunately, their methodologies follow those applied in traditional education so – aside from some exceptions – they try to spread information in the form of lectures and explanations, without taking into consideration the features of different age groups. In some places, they have people work in pairs and groups and there is an occurrence of role-play and craftwork in such cases. Our second assumption regarding these museums' not using their facilities and methodologies with an appropriate professional knowledge available for teachers and 'andragogists' has also been proven, and because of this, we can see out-of-date and inappropriate methodological elements. Having reviewed the offers of nationwide museums, we have astonishingly met with how many opportunities and facilities remain untapped.

Most of the studied museums can be seen as the scenes of informal learning, so we are reviewing age-differentiating museum methodology of museum-pedagogical programs and informal learning opportunities through concrete examples.

Museum methodological know-how (concrete examples)

The permanent exhibitions in the Budapest Historical Museum ('Ancient Peoples', 'Antique Cultures', 'Budapest in the Middle Ages', 'Budapest in Modern History', etc.) offer golden opportunities for the process of learning, pervaded by empiricism. Some programs make sights lively through examples such as facing a brick puzzle, taking pictures in period dresses, and through the introduction of archaeological knowledge, but these can be expanded to a wider scale. It would be good to hide fake archaeological artefacts at a particular place, which can then be excavated and taken home by 'young archaeologists': in this way not only the discovery of the artefacts, but their value as well, would break into the children's minds. In addition to dancing and being dressed in period dresses, there are facilities for creating feasts – cooking and baking could be done on the spot, with the help of children (under the supervision of adults) and adult visitors, and music could be played (ensuring the use appropriate instruments and the imitation of the period's lifestyle and social life) with the help of acting and drama teachers. It is a good idea for nursery children and children from junior section to perform, with the help of puppets, some children's stories from the period of King Matthias. Acting is also a good option for adults, and it can create another great experience. When a fully dressed King Matthias and Beatrice, with their royal household, greet both the children and adults, this generates true fascination and creates an everlasting effect.⁵

One of the permanent exhibitions in the Hungarian Military Museum is the 'Iron Curtain', where, with the help of workers and adventurous visitors, one can experience the meaning of the phrase and how this signal system of frontier incident functioned. Another exhibition entitled 'Sword and Wreath – A Thousand Years of Military Symbols' is always open to visitors. Military history of the last thousand years can be explored, and the military tactics, using tactical weapons, together with the historical development and construction of weapons, would all be very interesting and could be explained – and not only to children, as visitors can imitate the outcome of the battles of a certain period by personally handling all this equipment, or with the help of computer simulation pro-

⁵ Budapest Historical Museum. (2012). *Museumpedagogy*. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.btm.hu/varmuzeum/fooldal/varmuzeum.htm>

grammes (video games). The construction of these weapons (although not made of original materials) can also pose a challenge for children/adults. And while the 'Homecoming Collection' mainly remains a fleeting remembrance, trying out a simulator, or having the opportunity to sit in an original military aeroplane, would be everlasting.⁶

The Museum of Applied Arts reflects, in our opinion, important social roles as its direct message is not sent by its permanent and seasonal exhibitions but, more generally speaking, it is allowing for art to be introduced and loved.

Fortunately, it seems that those museum professionals who are working there think the same way, as they offer lots of programs for children, adults, and their families, through various means. What is lacking is the support of such a therapeutic facility like music and art therapy, in creating art productions by children or adults who are handicapped and disadvantaged or an attempt to generate some income through that source. With regards to this, there is also a possibility of charity work – such as creating photos, pictures, postcards, and stamps that reflect on victims of a flood, or making visitors create things in relation to the exhibited topics and then sell these and transfer the income for the people in need. There is no doubt that art should appear as a bridge between the members of society in different situations and with different values.⁷

The museum-pedagogic training programs offered by the Hungarian Museum of Science, Technology and Transport cover wide aspects, but as they introduce lots of activities it would be great if vocational guidance was available for those children and young people who have questions and are motivated about their future, once they step out of the 'Celebrities' Hall'. It would be fine – for the adult visitors too – to watch the old-time transport services and production of various vehicles in short films. Moreover, the different vehicles ought to be palpable and testable, and advertisements can be made by visitors too in the activity entitled 'Adds, adds, adds' to show how they would advertise the given technological object and not just look at and analyze the old ones. The visitors have a chance to try and clean spaces made purposefully dirty, to see how it is easier to clean with modern machines than it would have been in the old times. They also have opportunities to construct mock-ups and then buy and take them home.⁸

⁶ Hungarian Military Museum. (2012). Museumpedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from [http:// www.militaria. hu/hun/altinfo.php](http://www.militaria.hu/hun/altinfo.php)

⁷ Museum of Applied Arts. (2012). Museumpedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.imm.hu/hu/contents/12,M%C3%BAzeumpedag%C3%B3gia>

⁸ Hungarian Museum of Science, Technology and Transport. (2012). Museumpedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.omm.hu/foglalkozasok.html>

We suggest that the Hungarian National Gallery should organise art education, optional courses, study circles, leisure activities for children (to teach them how to create things for a given fee) and for adults (mothers who are on childcare leave or childcare allowance and for mothers with small children), and to organize family programs. The Gallery, within the auspices of free university, should invite famous domestic and foreign artists to give lectures. Topics could change and vary every year, and this can be defined by speakers and professionals from within the confines of art, and be taught not only to students from universities and colleges but all who are interested.⁹

The name given to the best activity idea of the Petőfi Literary Museum is 'On your feet now...' in which those interested can try out the original printing-machine of Landerer and Heckenast, reconstructed by the museum and able to print 12 Demands and the National Song for the young ones, while older visitors can make copies of the events of printing history and those that took place on 15 March 1848. It would be important to organize national and international conferences to complement for 2007, since it was intermitting then. It would be good to organize story and poem teller competitions and camps, which would advance the students' chances for gaining higher education in Hungarian Literature. The museum can also consider the role of having students prepare for matriculation or the entry exam, not only with regards to Alexander Petőfi, but all Hungarian writers and poets. The museum uses good methods in museum-pedagogic activities (creating puppets, acting out a story), but they concentrate mainly on children in the nursery and junior sections, although the secondary school students and adults could be included as well. The assembly hall of the museum could become the setting for the reading evenings, for adults and even retired people to discuss a topic or deliberate together.¹⁰

The permanent exhibitions of the Hungarian National Museum offer a good opportunity to make history become part of the students' memory, and to prepare them for matriculation and the entry exam. Their best idea is the 'Historical Playhouse' in which everybody can create their own jewellery, headpieces, armorial bearings, models of castles, seals, coins, or be involved in a joust. The museum could establish and run knighthood clubs and organize camps for those who are interested in history. The representational camps could help broaden the knowledge acquired at school about specific periods, from the prehistoric ages up to the modern times. There would be a chance for role-play for both children and adults in knighthood clubs and camps. The process of making original

⁹ Hungarian National Gallery. (2012). *Museumpedagogy*. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.mng.hu>

¹⁰ Petőfi Literary Museum (2012). *Museumpedagogy*. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.pim.hu/object.809459e1-543b-452b-afb0-7f2d90e17f89.ivy>

armorial bearings, cloaks, clothes and weapons could involve asking old, retired tradespeople to participate, and include the visitors.¹¹(G. Kesik, personal communication, October 19, 2009)

Apart from the public educational tasks, the Hungarian Science Museum could expand its role in dealing with biology and chemistry even more. Teacher and students experiments, field and project work could all be included alongside their permanent exhibitions. Quality knowledge could be developed in demonstrating such a scientific task that could not normally be undertaken in higher education in the university and doctoral faculties. The museum provides opportunities for using methodological elements (even in the form of a worksheet), such as surveying the previous knowledge, comparing and complementing various approaches. Problem-solving thinking, creativity, vocabulary and self-expressive skills and communication competence can be developed by these elements, and organizing differentiated learning can be achieved too.¹²

The Hungarian Agricultural Museum is demonstrating a wide range of natural and farming values through its exhibitions. It would be very good to discuss topics in a thematic order – after having visited the museum – within the auspices of open-air school-programmes. Their museum-pedagogic activities are multiple and they are struggling to win further project-based support through national and international funds.¹³

The permanent exhibition at the Ethnographical Museum is called ‘Traditional Culture of the Hungarian’. Unfortunately, museum-pedagogic activity, for them, is the sixty-minute exhibition guidance, without trying to differentiate between the main age groups. In our view, there are endless methodological opportunities for the museum that educates visitors to become patriots and to learn about patriotism, to display the culture of the Hungarian people. Films about particular settings (and the subsequent discussion around the topics of weapons, fighting manner, battles and working lifestyle) and old Hungarian films (to present the two World Wars and the after-war years, clothing, morals, vocabulary, music, lifestyle) could be useful in portraying national history. Having country houses and county museums involved, with the help of projects that include craftwork, cooking-baking, cleaning, and the presentation of every activity which belongs to the Hungarian history, could attract more visitors once there is a chance of joining and trying things out. Last but not least, its important task

¹¹ Hungarian National Museum (2012). Museum pedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.hnm.hu/hu/fooldal/mainPage.php>

¹² Hungarian Science Museum (2012). Museum pedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.nhmus.hu/>

¹³ Hungarian Agricultural Museum (2012). Museum pedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from http://www.mezogazdasagimuzeum.hu/article.php?article_id=7

could be to waken patriotism not only in children but also in adults.¹⁴ (M. Káldy, personal communication, May 31, 2010)

We maintain that Semmelweis Medical History Museum, Library and Archive should be responsive to major social needs. It should embrace, through medicine, current problems and issues that the society is interested in. It would be effective and useful if it gathered together and represented special groups who do not belong to the majority of the society in medical and psychological terms (disabled people, people living with physical and mental abnormalities) and educated on addictions, their prevention, treatment, and the historical development of remedies as well.

It would be good to connect the museum to special organizations that can give advice and information about opportunities for the people who ask for help (addicted people and their families). The Museum has to take a role in specialized sexual enlightenment for students in the senior section, and in the education on venereal and cutaneous diseases. As a part of their museum-pedagogic activities, interested visitors can get acquainted with the effects of smoking and infections on the human body.¹⁵

The Museum of Fine Arts offers unusual opportunities for camping and museum-pedagogic activities for the incurious. They offer opportunities for workshops within the study circles and class activities, which they direct at the children as well as adult visitors. It intensely concentrates on Antiquity, but fewer programs can be found which emphasize the Middle Ages, modern history and current social life.¹⁶

Last but not the least, having reviewed the activities of the Open-Air Ethnographical Museum one can conclude that here the widest methodological development can be found. Their aim is to support educational and research roles, by offering training that is suitable for museum professionals, curriculum development, national and international good practices, and theoretical study and analysis, and to create national museum-pedagogic database, the confirmation of the relationship between museums and public education, and the adaptation of European museum-pedagogic methods. Consequently, they provide a model for other national and county museums, thereby drawing attention to those Hungarian problems that have not been emphasized by other research in the area of

¹⁴ Ethnographical Museum. (2012). Museumpedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.neprajz.hu/>

¹⁵ Semmelweis Medical History Museum, Library and Archive. (2012). Museumpedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.semmelweis.museum.hu/>

¹⁶ Museum of Fine Arts. (2012). Museumpedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://www.szepmuveszeti.hu/web/guest/szepmuhely>

museum pedagogy or andragogy.¹⁷ (M. Káldy, personal communication, May 31, 2010)

Results

We can see in the prominent museums' programs that their educational activity develops, and that there are increasing number of opportunities available for museum education, museum andragogy and museum gerontology.

It is very important for both the national and smaller museums to recognize how much they need methodological innovations and adaptation of museum-pedagogic activities, and subsequently employ the necessary professionals, in order to be able to subsist and function economically. The number of visitors must be increased, and museums must assume a role and responsibility in solving social questions (e.g. by creating photos, pictures, postcards, and stamps representing the victims of a flood, or having visitors create such things from represented topics and then sell them and transfer the income for people in need; by gathering and representing special groups who do not belong to the majority of the society in medical and psychological terms). They should offer information to the people about the addictions, their prevention, treatment, and of the historical development of remedy. They should offer non-formal and informal learning to visitors, namely, to adult learners and their families. Also, teachers must be open-minded and must communicate with all the informative and culture-transmitting institutes that support education and development of children and adults. Sparking interest in families strongly depends on the cooperation between those who teach their children, museum professionals, and the holiday agencies whose offers try to include a little culture and art in the teaching of adults in the family.

Conclusion

We recognize and continuously improve the opportunities in museum andragogy and will use an extensive methodology of museum gerontology and museum pedagogy to form the basis for increasing the number of visitors and the quality of programs in museums. In this way, museums can improve their role in the preservation of identity and values. We conclude that it is necessary to apply a varied methodology. All this is essential in that respect: proper professional back-

¹⁷ Open-Air Ethnographical Museum. (2012). Museumpedagogy. Retrieved July 30, 2012, from <http://skanzen.hu/>

ground, methodological publications (brochures or materials prepared for teachers) and financial incentives (discount for children and adult groups).

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Odrastanje u muzeju: Metodologija obrazovanja odraslih u muzejima

Apstrakt: U 21. veku, u svetu koji se stalno menja, ljudi mogu da ostanu na svom putu samo uz pomoć kontinuiranog učenja i razvoja. U isto vreme, zabava i opuštanje su jednako važni kao i učenje kako pomoći pojedincima da se razviju, da više brinu za druge, briga o životnoj sredini učestvovanjem u aktivnostima vezanim za kulturu i civilizaciju u neobičnim situacijama. Ovaj rad se bavi pitanjem kako muzeji pokušavaju da se pripreme za svoju novu funkciju i ulogu u podučavanju posetilaca i onih koji uče. U današnje vreme nekoliko institucija kulture i obrazovanja, a muzeji su dobri primeri ovih institucija, pružaju mogućnost za razvoj (Sári, 2010). Svrha ovog rada je da ispita metodologiju andragoških programa u muzejima i prilike u kojima muzeji koriste programe namenjene odraslima.

Ključne reči: muzej, metodologija muzeja, andragogija muzeja, pedagogija muzeja, obrazovne aktivnosti u muzejima.

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