

# CREATIVE METHODS USED IN MUSEUM-BASED EDUCATION IN MAŁOPOLSKA IN POLAND

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## Abstract

The paper presents creative and innovative methods used in museum-based education in Małopolska (the region in Poland). The text examines in what ways has the approach to visual culture in education undergone changes, and what educational range do institutions offer schools. The paper will present the part of a report illustrating the relationships between museums as cultural institutions and schools at all three levels of education in the province of Małopolska. The paper is the result of the project Regional or trans-regional cultural education using the example of museums.

Keywords: museum-based education, creative education, innovative methods of education.

## 1 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the project is to show how the methods of museum-based education and range of programs offered schools by the museums in Małopolska is changing through from formal education into informal and creative, over the last five years (2010-2015). Museum pedagogy primarily refers to subjects in the field of humanities and social sciences. On the one hand, it complements the core curriculum, and on the other introduces a completely new content, supporting education, but it also shapes soft skills. Some experts include it into non-formal extracurricular education, while others categorize it as something between standard school education and informal education. What is important however is the fact that it always takes place in a museum, or it is incorporating the use of museum exhibits outside the walls of an institution, or - more often - is led by museum educators in the vicinity of the museum which then becomes an external extension of the museum. Just as the definition of a museum undergoes changes, along with the functions of a museum are also extended and redefined, so does museum-based education. Education takes over the museum's mission to shape society, disseminate knowledge and to develop attitudes of respect towards heritage. This cultural education seeks education which is creative, artistic, held in cultural institutions - theaters, cinemas, museums, art galleries - and is carried out in order to protect cultural heritage, build cultural identity and create attitudes of dialogue, respect, tolerance and the acceptance of all cultures. And it is this attitude - an attitude promoting the fundamental values of culture, history and science, as well as the development of cognitive and aesthetic sensibility that guides museum-based education.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

In the project was verified what programs addressing the schools are offered by the museums that directly coincide with the material taught in schools or as a supplement to existing curriculum. The project pay particular attention to whether teachers benefit from the offer of museums located in the Małopolska region, and if so – what specifically guides educators in selecting a particular museum lesson, i.e. how the use of such lessons is seen as a kind of obligation, and how much stems from the belief the offer possess value and its meaning in the context of educating youth, or what topics in the framework of museum lessons are chosen, and to which museums are the students most often taken. During the project was interviewed educators and made a qualitative and quantitative analysis of museum offers sent to schools in the Małopolska region in southern Poland between 2010-2015.

## 3 NEW CREATIVE METHODS USED IN MUSEUM-BASED EDUCATION

The new approach to museum-based education is based upon five points. Firstly, the notion of museum-based education has acquired a much broader context – it relates not only to the education of children and adolescents and is associated not only with school education, but more often refers to the education of adults and seniors, family and people with all disabilities, becoming a part of art

therapy. As emphasized by educators from the Museum AK: "Dissemination of exhibits by forms of education affects not only students, but people of all ages and professions"<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, this type of education not only supports the school and takes place during the week, but is also carried out many times on the weekends. Furthermore, in most cases it is not a one-time activity, but rather, it takes the form of regular meetings and even becomes an element of post-graduate teaching. Thirdly, this form of an education is accompanied by publishing activities; often educators prepare lesson plans and educational materials. Fourthly, this form of education is accompanied by a cultural program - meetings with artists, concerts, theater, etc. Fifthly, the teaching methods have changed. Museum pedagogy is no longer only about conducting art workshops in the back room, or about guided tours of the exhibits, but rather, it is about seeking active teaching methods, to experimental pedagogy. In the context of the recent new debate about the museum as an Institution of Culture, the educator is therefore viewed as a guide to the world of art and heritage. He is a teacher of action and experience-oriented education. The essence of education is in fact an adventure. This model closely resembles the postmodern treatment of education. It refers to the use of the method of "friendly eye" educational practice, which aims to find opportunities to share experiences among participants, but also between the recipient and the exhibit. This method is based on a conscious performative of dialogue with the learner, as well as the subjectification and empowerment of him or herself and his or her subjective point of view and reception. The educator stimulates that dialogic relationship between the recipient and the exhibit. A museum lesson does not become merely a dry lecture, but rather, the past incarnate and embodied; a past living on the streets, in the memories, people are once again spoken of.

The purpose of this article is to indicate the method of museum-based education used by museums in the Malopolska region (historical and geographical region of Poland, now covering the south-eastern part of the country, in the upper and partly middle Vistula River basin, and in the upper basin of the Warta river. The capital of Malopolska is Kraków). The analysis of educational tools used by the museum pedagogy in the years 2010-2015 carried out under the project entitled *Regional or trans-regional cultural education based upon the example of museums*<sup>2</sup>, showed that both, the educational offer, and the applied work methods evolve very quickly, and the museum-based education itself is extremely dynamic.

The museums of the Malopolska region often refer to active teaching methods. Thirty-six different methods of teaching have been identified, ranging from traditional museum-based lessons through workshops, the use of timesheets or source-based text, or by incorporating puzzles or logic games. These museums rely on **interactive teaching methods**, thus those methods that rely on the involvement of the student in independent or group-based assignments, which aims to solve a specific problem. Often educators resort to **problem-based teaching methods**, providing a student with a specific problem or challenge and then accompany him in the process of finding a solution. Sometimes participants are provided certain materials (including source materials), enabling them to finding causal relationships between data, facts or time-space between specific phenomena. An example of such teaching methods are classes offered by the Museum of National Army to primary school students entitled, *Getting to know Modern Knights*. The educators tackle with the participants the subject regarding the difficult days of World War II. After seeing the exhibition which contains the various objects associated with the subject matter, they change students into Army soldiers who take part in military training and then engage into role-playing, performing the tasks of Polish conspirator. For example, they must retain secret orders, prepare a soldier's equipment, obtain supplies for the army or deal with virtual tanks. Such an interactive course allows participants not only to broaden their knowledge, but also gain new experience and play the role of a soldier. In addition, such an approach refers to **method of drama and improvisation**, and therefore relies on spontaneous action of participants, role plays, and allows for the discovery of new situations. Such education is based on experience, emotions, practical application of acquired new skills, and stimulates the imagination of students. It forces them to think, often leading to further development, while stimulating student interest on the subject.

For many museums, the term interactive learning is defined as teaching **using an interactive whiteboard**, which allows for the coalescence of various forms such as lectures, discussion and museum lesson undertaken by children. This form of work with the participants of museum-based education not only allows for an appealing format which often arouses keen interest of students, who

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.muzeum-ak.pl/edukacja/index.php> (Access: 20.09.2016)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.obserwatoriumkultury.edu.pl/>

are accustomed every day to use new technologies of information and communication, conducting classes, transferring of specific knowledge. But it also allows for an opportunity to test their knowledge during practical exercise, illustrate that the computer and the Internet are not only used for fun but also for learning, as well as prepare the student for life in the information society, a task that is forecasted by the current core curriculum.

Active participation in the classes also allows for the use of **didactic games**, including **board games**. It can be a way to transfer knowledge, as well as its retention. At the same time, such games help to shape soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, spatial orientation, memory, creativity and logical thinking, observation, observe certain rules, develop their imagination, the ability to associate shapes and reasoning, and what is more, allowing for easy memorization of facts. The game is a form of fun, which has certain rules, and it relies on the interaction of players. It contains elements of competition, hence it allows for the coalescence of the process of learning with entertainment; it makes classes much more appealing and thus motivates students to work. This kind of learning is used, among other things, at the Galicia Jewish Museum. Anna Wencel, an educator, stresses that the mission of the museum is moving away from media in education. Her motto slogan is: "Unplug your students from smartphones." Based on her experience she knows that students are able to concentrate and work with commitment, even when performing simple tasks, for example when practicing calligraphy. Thus, during many classes she is looking for creative, non-media based methods of working with students. Among other things, she created a board game, which shows the topography of the Jewish district of Kazimierz in Kraków. Students move pawns from synagogue to synagogue, while answering questions. Apart from the small-format version, the same game is also played during adult education in a larger format version, except that the pawns are replaced by the participants of the game.

Another innovative method often used by educators is **mapping**. It refers to the noting or listing technique through the use of images and associations developed by British scientists - Tony and Barry Buzanów. Participants put on clean sheets of paper and sometimes maps of the museum's drawings, comments, facts, titles, keywords, symbols, ideas, questions, which are associated with the subject matter. The *Mapping collection* workshops for primary and secondary school students using this method was prepared by MOCAK. Following the museum tour, the participants had the opportunity to create their own path of learning about the exhibit - spatial maps marked the museum with the exhibits that they thought were most important, followed by the workshop of art sets its own path to explore. The advantage of the method of mapping allows a short time and on a small area to save a lot of content and associations, enables rapid memorization of facts (on the map, you can mark a title or subject of the work, its author, the year of the creation of the work) and organize knowledge.

**Role-playing games**, increasingly incorporated in museum-based education formulated upon a previously prepared scenario, is based upon incorporating the students into adequately described characters - the student should know the nature of the character, and the motives of its actions. Participants improvising within the set rules of the game create events; solve puzzles; moving the action forward. The game may take place in imaginary settings or in a specially prepared space - in the case of museum-based education, the action takes place at the museum. It is important that the narrative of the game is based on the facts, referring to real events or people, thus allowing the participants to search for sources of data describing these historical events. Participants are assigned specific goals and objectives in order to facilitate successful attainment of set objectives. The educator leads the game- acting as a master, describing the characters, situations and events, determining duration, evaluating the accuracy and adequacy of the historical ideas of students, and in some cases even resolving arising conflicts. Such games, as an element of fun and education is used by the City Museum in Wadowice. Secondary school students are invited to the "House of Secrets," within which they become transformed to pre-war times. Their task is to solve an intricate murder mystery.

The **path method** is yet another example of active method of teaching. It involves a guided tour of a specific exhibition, according to a predetermined theme. Students move from one museum exhibit to another, listening to stories told by a guide, while performing specific tasks. An example of this method is a proposed educational path at the Regional Museum in Tarnów, a branch of the Museum of Ethnography entitled, *On the Roma trail*. Participants learn about Roma culture by visiting various exhibitions within the museum as well as the open-air exhibits, and at the same time performing various exercises: solving crossword puzzles, painting or making cutouts. An additional attraction - now also often used in museums - is dressing up in traditional Gypsy costumes and taking pictures of themselves. The path method allows for a multi-faceted approach to a given problem, because it focuses on a specific topic and shows it from different angles, while developing specific competencies

in students, translating theory into practice, and verifying the acquisition of new knowledge as well as its preservation. It is associated with other active methods that allow students to go beyond museum walls. **City walk** is a form of educational path, while an urban game is the transferring of a role-playing game into an urban setting.

Protecting and learning about intangible cultural heritage is one of the tasks facing the museums. After all, the 1996 law on museums clearly states that the purpose of the museum is "to collect and ensure durable protection of natural and cultural heritage of humanity of a tangible and intangible, information about values and content (...), dissemination (...), the formation of cognitive and aesthetic sensitivity."<sup>3</sup> The aim of the museum-based education is, among other things, the formation of identity and local memory by allowing visitors to commune with intangible heritage. Learning about intangible heritage fosters its commemoration and protection, but it also assists in counteracting intolerance, degradation, extinction. It aims to foster among students a duty to respect the heritage of other communities, groups and individuals, cities. Furthermore, it hopes to increase awareness on the importance of this heritage, ensuring its appreciation. It is much easier, however, to illustrate and teach about tangible heritage presented in the museum, than to refer to ephemeral cultural elements. For this purpose, educators together with the students decided to go beyond the museum walls and treat the city as an extension of museum space, paying attention not only to infrastructure but to the behavior of people, traditions, race, which had and still have a significant impact on the contemporary perception of reality. It proves that the city space is an active space of experience; intangible cultural heritage is considered to be a source of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development and protection of traditional culture and folk. And in an effort, to further promote museum-based education, the Częstochowa Museum, for example, organizes themed bike tours during which participants address issues of historic trees and parks, ancient suburbs of Czestochowa, monuments, historic railway, as well as hiking. Such walks and themed trails of course, are only some of the numerous teaching models of museum-based education. Apart from the models already discussed, it is worth mentioning the organization of **urban games, fairs, festivals, and staging of major historical events**. These methods rely on learning by actively engaging participants, with the museum, and treating them as equal participants' co-creating the event.

One of the teaching methods activating students, allowing them to explore the available material within a specific discipline or topic related to their interests is **competition**. It tends to encourage independent work. Students have often stated in conducted interviews that competitions, and the notion of a possible prize, mobilizes them to learn. Unfortunately, they have also stressed that they do not feel the same need to learn only for themselves, and thus they are looking for additional incentives to learn. The possibility of rivalry, the desire to show off, to obtain a diploma or award is a sufficient incentive to work independently. Educators often capitalize on this form of work with students and encourage them to visit museums. It is also sometimes a way to engage students in local celebrations. Additionally, among other things, to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Limanowa city, the Limanowa Regional Earth Museum and the Polish Historical Society, Limanowa branch organized for primary students an art contest entitled, *Paint Ilman - the legendary founder of the Limanowa city*. The contest was preceded by a workshop, during which the participants gained knowledge about the legends related to the origin of the town's founding, and completed by a post-competition exhibition of the student's work.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Leszek Karczewski<sup>4</sup> describing contemporary museum-based education, called it the participatory educational practice, implicated in instrumental participatory activities and education through discovery. Additionally, he notes that its main goal is the emancipation of the recipient. Quoting Jarosław Suchan: "Therefore, the thing is, that the viewer, equipped by the museum with an emancipatory outlook, wanted and was able to use it beyond its walls. The educator is only successful when the student no longer needs it"<sup>5</sup>. The change the methods of museum-based education from the lessons and guided lesson into creative models shows that the museum-based education in Poland is a part of the education system and it changes as much as models of education.

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<sup>3</sup> Act on Museums 21st November 1996. Chapter 1. Article 1.

<sup>4</sup> L. Karczewski, "Sztuka czy zupa. Społeczna odpowiedzialność edukacji muzealnej", *Muzealnictwo* no 56, 2015, pp. 159-168.

<sup>5</sup> J. Suchan, "Muzeum Sztuki: między muzeum a sztuką", [in:] "Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Monografia". Tom II, ed. D. Muzyczuk, M. Ziółkowska, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi 2015, s. 44, quotation from: L. Karczewski, "Sztuka czy zupa. Społeczna odpowiedzialność edukacji muzealnej", *Muzealnictwo* no 56, 2015, pp. 159-168.

Conducting education is one of the objectives of the work of museums listed in the Act on Museums (Article 2 paragraphs 5 and 10). And although most of the activities of museums have an educational component, it is difficult to talk about it in general. The forms of that education, the level, scope, dynamics determines the specificity of the museum, of its activities, form of financing, size, its location and, above all, people. And although it seems to be a truism, museum-based education primarily depends on the awareness, commitment and often the capabilities of individuals. In addition, another factor impeding the global debate about museum-based education is a fact emphasized by Piotr Gorajec in the *Forum of museum educators*, where he writes that "museums even compete with each other, creating educational programs to a wide audience."<sup>6</sup> For many, education is a kind of promotion or a way of educating of future visitors. And although competition may seem pejoratively characterized by, after all, denies collaboration (though it also exists this way among museum curators), in this case often becomes a motivator, initiator of new educational solutions. As Gorajec writes, "this situation creates for museums and museum workers themselves interesting new quality"<sup>7</sup> and causes the growing interest in exhibition-based nature of museums, but also - and perhaps primarily - with regard to the educational element, and shows that it is possible and worthwhile to spend worthwhile time in the museum. Museum-based education ceases, therefore, to be only a supplement to schools and becomes valuable in itself or a showcase of the museum. Increasingly educators strive to ensure that the museum becomes an Institution of Culture. During an interview, Krzysztof Marchlak, an educator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow MOCAK, stated that "museum-based education creates a meeting space." Dorota Folga-Januszewska in a book entitled *Museum: phenomena and problems* writes about museums as "multi-instrumental institutions of culture, science, education"<sup>8</sup> and notes that they become an active form of the flow of learning and experience. Participants of museum-based education have to feel safe in the museum, as a space for dialogue, exchange of ideas, meetings, and collaboration- a place that educators refer to as "alive". A museum, by introducing the public to the educational process and often self-education, becomes a place where one wants to go; a place which one wants to commune with; a place where something new can be seen; a place where one can learn, confront the views of others, but also confront oneself, get to know the artists, learn about one's heritage and the surrounding world. Understood in this way, museum is a participant in the performative act of co-creation, interpreting, reporting and educating about everyday life and history. Moreover, the heritage presented by museums is portrayed from the perspective of the present. As noted by educators at the Army Museum in Krakow: "Modern museums are focused on completing a public function, by which they can find their place in the center of social life and became an active center of the wider culture. The most important element of a policy aimed at modernizing museums has been focused on integrating the museum with real life and social activity. That is why museums have also become important centers for acquiring knowledge"<sup>9</sup>.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>6</sup> P. Górajec, "Forum Edukatorów muzealnych", *Muzealnictwo*, no 51, 2010, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> D. Folga-Januszewska, *Muzeum: fenomeny i problemy*, Kraków: Universitas 2015.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.muzeum-ak.pl/edukacja/index.php> (Access: 20.08.2016)