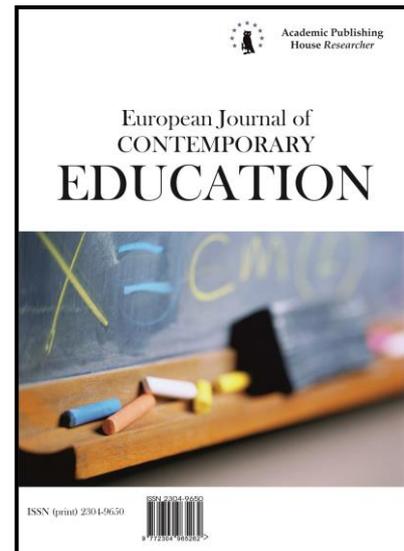




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The Development of Informal Learning and Museum Pedagogy in Museums

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Abstract

This paper presents an outline of the history and the current orientation of informal learning in museums, museum pedagogy. This is the result of a lengthy process over the last two centuries, which became particularly intensive from the 1960s, in which museums looked for deeper ways to communicate with visitors, starting from basic presentation activity with occasional spoken commentaries. From this, modern museums have developed specialised ways of working with different age groups of visitors, which can be referred to collectively as museum pedagogy and museum education. These activities not only strengthen the experience of museum exhibits and exhibitions but also allow information to be communicated using collection items in a playful way, through informal learning. Museums' current focus on communication and working with visitors owes much to the long development of heritage institutions, the stabilisation of their position in cultural and social systems, in cultural policy and strategy and the overall significance of the collections of museums and galleries for our modern knowledge societies. The aim of this paper is to outline the historical development and direction of museums' educational activities to the present.

Keywords: museum, informal learning, museum pedagogy, history of museum communication.

1. Introduction

1.1 *The museum as an institution for research and education*

The collection and preservation of naturfacts – the products of natural processes – and artefacts – the products of human society – are amongst the most important functions of a museum. Alongside the professional performance of these functions, which now have methodological support from theoretical museology, practical museography and the applied forms

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of the natural sciences, technical disciplines, the social sciences and the humanities, museums also have the function of making collection items accessible for purposes of study, education or pleasure (Desvallées, Mairesse, 2010).

There are many ways in which collections can be made accessible. Alongside the research and publication activities of museums, whose main topic and resource are the items in the museum's depositories, the most common way in which museums make their collections accessible is through museal presentation (Beneš, 1980; Gregorová, 1984; Stránský, 1979). Whether in a permanent exhibition reflecting a museum's collection activities or temporary thematic exhibitions, items are installed in an appropriate manner for the defined purpose with at least basic accompanying labels and explanatory text (Dolák, 2015; Šobáňová, 2014). Exhibits and exhibitions usually also include verbal commentary by a tutor or guide, a person who accompanies visitors to the museum and draws their attention to the most important exhibits using appropriate commentary. These basic forms of museal presentation – exhibition and guided commentary – are amongst the oldest ways of making a museum's collection accessible. New ways of working have gradually been added to these basic methods in accordance with museums' overall mission to provide visitors with informal instruction and explanation of the development of society (nature), the expressions, relationships and contexts of this development and so on, while at the same time generating interest (the sense of an experience) and providing entertainment. These forms of communication with the public are referred to as accompanying programmes. They work mainly by providing additional interpretation of collections through various events (Waidacher, 1999; Beneš, 1981; Beneš, 1997; Gregorová, 1984, Kačárek et al., 2013).

While the priority mission of a museum was once characterised as researching collections and making their museal value available to researchers, the main function of a modern museum is now perceived to be on the educational level (Pavlikánová, 2015; Brabcová et al., 2003; Mruškovíč et al., 1993). The specific educational function of museums needs to be understood in a specific and narrower sense as an extension of their function for scholarship (Rohmeder, 1977). The educational function of a museum is informal and often takes the form of a game or entertainment. It is linked to lifelong learning and develops a relationship between visitors and collections (Waidacher, 1999). The educational function of a museum involves activities through which visitors learn, either directly or indirectly from the activity of a tutor or instructor. Museums' educational processes are mainly functional (in contrast to the intentional processes in schools), reflecting the aesthetic environment, the value of the museum exhibits or the museal-didactic concept of the exhibition. (Jůva, 2004; Šobáňová, 2012a).

2. Materials and methods

Museums' educational activities are nowadays amongst their most important functions. Scientific procedures and the management of collections are oriented towards the museum's pedagogical activities and museum staff's educative communication with the public. Museum pedagogy is no longer seen as a mere side activity for a museum's visitor education and it has been defined as a separate scientific discipline applied to the museum environment or social science concerned with museum education (Jagošová et al., 2010). The functions, mission and status of museums have changed throughout history. The museal phenomenon has evolved, and with it the relationship between the museum as an institution and society, which has then provided feedback affecting the understanding of the function and objectives of museums' activities. It is therefore important to understand the evolution of museums' educational activity and the genesis and elaboration of the concept of informal education in the theory and practice of museums. Tracing the historical development of views on the educational mission of museums and their benefit for the education of society is one of the fundamental areas of study in the history of museums and it significantly reflects cultural and social relations in the studied regions.

The main materials used in this paper are theoretical publications on the phenomenon of museum education, didactics and museum pedagogy itself which show the most important milestones in the development of European and world museums and their interpretation in the context of the work of museums. The paper has a strong historical orientation and therefore the methods used are mainly those of history (heuristics, criticism, interpretation and synthesis).

3. Discussion

3.1 Brief history of museums as institutions and the perception of their objectives and mission to the end of the 20th century

The oldest collections, which became basis for museums, were connected with the development of science and research. This was the motivation for the first “Mouseions” in ancient Greece and Egypt, which included collections of items (artefacts and naturfacts) for use in research in the natural sciences, astronomy, medicine, botany, zoology and art (Waidacher, 1999; Brožek, 2002; Štěpánek, 2002; Lalkovič, 2005). The collections were used not only as objects for scientific research but also as teaching aids. This form of education and collection did not survive the end of the ancient world, however.

Significant new collections began to be appear in the middle ages in church treasuries and the castles of rulers and the nobility (Mruškovič et al., 2005). Their meaning and use had little to do with science or education though. They were used only for their owners’ prestige, to show their status, wealth and power. As universities developed, they began to create their own collections (often referred to as cabinets of curiosities or chambers of wonders) (Lalkovič, 2005; Gregorová, 1984), which were used as teaching aids, and this practice was taken up by the scientific and learned societies that began to be appear in the second half of the seventeenth century as a way to spread scientific knowledge and appreciation of art in accordance with the emerging values of the Enlightenment. Collections were often founded together with libraries to provide a suitable base for complex academic research. Although the first museums as independent institutions appeared in the seventeenth century (e.g. the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford), it was only in the eighteenth century that museums began to open for the general public rather than a limited circle of researchers and scholars. The British Museum in London is usually recognised as the first modern museum (1753) (Stránský, 2005), but many other important world museums were founded in the same period, including the Hermitage in St Petersburg (1764), the Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain (1785) and the Louvre in Paris (1773).

Major influences on the establishment of public museums included the spread of enlightenment thought and, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the idea of the French Revolution, which inspired national movements and patriotic feeling in many European countries. These forces prompted the creation of regional and national museums in Europe in the early nineteenth century (e.g. Budapest 1802, Copenhagen 1807, Graz 1811, Opava 1814) (Waidacher, 1999) and the gradual emergence of other types of museums (municipal, homeland, historical and fine art museums, later applied arts, archaeological, ethnographic, technical and other museums) usually supported by an association. These reasons for the establishment and development of public museums were reflected in the early stages of museums’ pedagogical activity (Jagošová, Jůva, Mrázová, 2010; Waidacher, 1999). Early in the nineteenth century, exhibits were seen as a source of learning and the potential advancement of society. In this period museums played an important role in the cultivation of patriotism (Šobánková, 2012b). The natural models for the new museums were the oldest and largest museums, such as the previously mentioned British Museum and the Louvre, which had become a symbol of national pride for French society.

The new types of museums had an important influence on educational activities. Museums of fine art and the applied arts with collections of craft products began to focus on documenting the technological procedures used in production and the products that resulted from these procedures. Their exhibitions presented procedures and products side by side. Visitors to such museums could thus familiarise themselves with the whole production process as a guide for recreating it and producing new works (Lalkovič, 2005).

As Vladimír Jůva has noted, public museums developed from a social need to develop a new and dynamic relationship between learning and culture (Jůva, 2004). The motivation for establishing museums included the needs of society and the idea to preserve and care for evidence of the development of society and nature for future generations so that they will know their ancestors, their nation, their region etc. As collection activities became more institutionalised, the opinion grew stronger that collection items could contribute to society’s knowledge.

A milestone in the development of museums and society’s concept of cultural heritage was the organisation of highly popular global exhibitions in the second half of the nineteenth century. These attracted many visitors and became the basis for several important museums, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, initially founded as the South Kensington Museum in 1857

(Waidacher, 1999). Several governments gradually became aware of museums' potential for educating society, in Great Britain, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary amongst others, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they began to provide financial support for the development of museums. Ideas broadened during this period and new concepts were developed for linking museums and schools (Jagošová et al., 2010) but the promising ideas that were being kindled in Europe were snuffed out by the military conflicts of the second decade of the twentieth century. During the First world War some British museums took over some functions in schools when school buildings were taken over for other purposes and many teachers were recruited into the army (Šobáňová, 2012b).

After the war, there were extensive political changes, especially in central Europe. Several new states were established and developed cultural policies and museums reflecting the needs of their societies. In some countries, the standing and function of museums began to fall under the spell of ideology during the interwar period (Stránský, 2005). During this period, museums in Italy, Germany and elsewhere came under the totalitarian influence of their new regimes, especially in the second half of the 1930s and the 1940s (Fascism, Nazism and certain forms of racism and extremism) and after the Second World War and the division of Europe, the eastern European countries were influenced by the Communist regimes. Ideology had a strong effect not only on collection activities but also on museal presentation. Under totalitarian regimes museums were required to use cultural and educational activities to support pro-regime objectives, and they stagnated (Kačárek, Tišliar, 2015; Gregorová, 1985; Jagošová et al., 2016). The democratic societies of western Europe followed a different path and museum culture was able to develop without major political interference.

During the twentieth century a modern concept of the museum developed, effectively culminating in the last decades of the twentieth century with the conception of the museum as a public institute for general education. Another trend that came to prominence in the 1960s was towards elaborating didactic accompanying programmes and encouraging museum workers with pedagogical training to establish deeper contact with visitors through active presentations. The basic definition of the museum thus began to emphasise museal pedagogical work as a way to overcome the crisis of the modern museum (Jůva, 2004).

3.2 Educational function of museums

Reflections on the museum as an institution and a place offering resources for scientific research date from the earliest times. The oldest surviving deeper reflections that we possess on the form of the ideal museum date from the sixteenth century (Waidacher, 1999). Samuel von Quiccheberg (1529–1567), whose work was published at Munich in 1565, saw the meaning of the museum in mainly scientific terms. He also considered the museum on the educational level, referring to it as an educational centre open to study (Jagošová et al., 2010). A similar view of the function of museums (school collections) is found in the work of the Moravian pedagogue, Ján Ámos Komenský (1592–1670), whose pedagogical activities emphasised the importance of illustrations and practical examples (Dravecký, 2006; Šobáňová, 2012b), especially examples from life. Accordingly, his advice and guidance on teachings recommended practical cooperation between schools and “educational” collections (a school museum). His ideas became the foundation not only for modern pedagogy in the general sense of the word but also the later formation of museal pedagogy.

More detail was added to the relationship between museums and education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As mentioned previously, the establishment of public museums was largely driven by Enlightenment ideas. However, some Enlightenment writers, such as Denis Diderot (1713–1784), emphasises the educational importance of certain types of cabinets and the functions that they could perform in education.

When public museums open to a wide audience were established, several authors reflected on their educational potential (e.g. Emil A. Rosmäsler, Alfred Lichtwark, Georg Hager, Hugo von Tschudi) (Jagošová et al., 2010; Šobáňová, 2012b). Amongst the leading topics of discussion were how museums could inspire children and young people (school pupils) and what was the best relationship between museums and schools.

The development of museums' educational function was not confined to Europe. The museum as an institution and relationships with museums began to develop in North America

from the mid-eighteenth century (Waidacher, 1999). Eventually the United States of America would begin addressing questions of museums' educational function more intensively than the European countries. This was a result of the closer connections between museums and universities and schools in the USA, whereas European museums were initially dominated by science and research interests (the classical view of the museum as a scientific institution) with a focus on collecting and on collection items. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a close connection between museums and schools was supported, for example, by John Dewey (1859–1952) (Jagošová et al., 2010). He saw the museum as a part of everyday school life and an aid for illustrating lesson on the development of human experience through support for activities and initiatives – learning from experience with an object (learning by doing) (Dewey, 1904; Dostál, 2008; van Mensch, van Mensch, 2011).

US museum pedagogy's approach of learning by doing and by experience led to the creation of a special type of museum, the children's museum. The oldest children's museum was the Brooklyn Children's Museum, which opened in New York at the end of the nineteenth century. (Jůva, 2004). The museum's primary mission was to teach children in Brooklyn and Queens and develop their interests. After the Brooklyn museum, others opened in Boston, Detroit and Indianapolis. In the middle of the twentieth century there were nearly 40 children's museums in the USA but still none in Europe. The first, isolated European children's museum was opened in 1970, at the Ethnological Museum of Berlin. Real development of children's museums in Europe began only at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. They are thus a relatively recent phenomenon which, unlike traditional museums, tell visitors "Please do touch" (a "hands-on" approach) in order to make it easier to understand the function and context of the material evidence of cultural and natural heritage (Kucharík, 2016).

Since the start of the twentieth century, there has been a reform movement in pedagogy that criticises and seeks to modify traditional school education. The pedagogy reform movement and its two wings, "the movement for artistic education" and the "movement for working schools", have made major contributions to museum pedagogy, because they have, amongst other things, encouraged the direct involvement of museums and other cultural institutions in systematic cooperation with schools (Jagošová et al., 2010).

From the mid-1930s onwards, museums in many European countries were infiltrated by the aforementioned political propaganda of totalitarian regimes. Although the Second World War put an end to fascism and Nazism, in eastern Europe socialism and communism succeeded them and continued to use museums' presentation activity for propaganda. This caused a significant retardation in their development which became apparent in many areas of museum work from the 1960s. Cultural and educational activities in these countries were concentrated on a limited range of ideologically defined issues, such as the history of the workers' movement while other areas were considered undesirable. The free development of museums in western Europe, on the other hand, allowed them to respond flexibly to the needs of all sections of society and from the 1960s onwards the term museum pedagogy came to apply to all the educational activities of museums. Museums in West Germany were amongst the leaders in this development and began to publish papers on museum pedagogy covering both theory (museum didactics) and, more especially, practice.

4. Results

Current developments in museum pedagogy have their institutional roots in the 1960s. In western Europe this development has been continuous while in the east it only took off after the great social and cultural transformation at the end of the twentieth century. the gradual elimination of pro-regime propaganda made possible more intensive work with the public which was not just promotion but which adapted freely to visitors' areas of interest above all.

Thanks to the work of many specialists in the theory of museum pedagogy in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century (Jürgen Rohmader, Samy Bill, Georg Hein, Wolfgang Zacharias, Vladimír Jůva, Hildegard Vieregg, Petra Šobáňová and many others), we now have a system for a professional approach to visitors involving primarily their self-development through informal learning in the museum environment. For this purpose it uses not only traditional and well-established forms of presentation activity, tours, tours with commentaries and additional activities, lectures and seminars (Šobáňová, 2012a; Kirsch, 2014) involving primarily looking and listening, but frequently also education by touching, smelling and tasting.

Common forms of contemporary museum pedagogical work include workshops and courses involving drawing, modelling and other activities related to a specific item or group of items in a museum's collection. One of the special aspects of museum pedagogy is organising activities that link intellectual concepts with practical applications. Museum education thus involves both the development of visitors' perceptual abilities and their capability to think, compare, analyse, experiment and evaluate.

Museum pedagogy is a specialised, scientific approach to a museum's communication with visitors and the museum educator is an important factor for activities in this area. These specialised workers prepare and conduct the museum's educational and accompanying programme for various groups of visitors. They also prepare accompanying museum didactic materials for exhibitions and educational programmes (e.g. an exhibition guidebook, worksheets). They coordinate and supervise the communication of scientific and other knowledge to target groups of visitors and coordinate the activity of tutors and guides.

5. Conclusion

The results of the historic development of the ideas of museum pedagogy followed from both the development of museums as institutions and the development of general pedagogy. The result is that museum pedagogy has become an important part of museums' activities that has flourished in recent years. Museum pedagogy has become part of the university system. It has been taught in several countries since the 1970s and 1980s. It can be a subject in its own right, in the German-speaking countries for example, or it can be incorporated into other subjects such as museology (museum studies), history of art or free-time pedagogy (Jagošová et al., 2010). There is no doubt that the educational activities of museums are an important step towards the popularisation of the cultural heritage preserved in our museums. They have opened up communication with many age groups of visitors, although children and young people remain the most common target group, and also the possibility of special work with handicapped visitors. Museum education also has an important part to play in lifelong learning in contemporary societies. Learning through play is increasingly popular with visitors and there is no doubt that museums attract a new audience through such activities, which become a repeated and effective use of free time if their educational objectives are achieved.

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