

MUSEUM – BETWEEN HISTORY AND EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

“Action for children. Backing the future”, a project developed in United Kingdom, identified six key service pathways to child well-being (Aked, J.; Steuer, N.; Lawlor, E.; Spratt, S., 2009). These pathways help create the conditions for improving children’s psychological and social well-being, and influencing positive outcomes over the longer term. They were found to have applicability in universal and targeted service settings and they are in line with results of previous studies (Gardner, 2005; Goleman, 2004). These pathways includes building relationships based on stability and trust and link children into their wider community, promoting of positive emotions and experiences to help ensure happy childhoods and drive longer term positive outcomes, encouraging to use their strengths in a practical way. This approach combines consideration of the structural factors affecting the circumstances of children’s lives, together with the psychological and social aspects of their well-being. The combined approach is important due to the dynamic nature of well-being, where positive experiences (‘feeling good’) and outcomes (‘doing well’) arise through the interplay between children’s external circumstances, their inner resources, and their capabilities and interactions with the world around them.

In order to illustrate the importance of this combined approach, we developed a long-term partnership with several museums from Braşov. Students from the first grade of primary education learned about history, local traditions and cultural identity in formal or non-formal context and transferred their acquisitions in everyday life. They could also teach their parents about the history of houses or costumes and they built together memories for a lifetime.

KEYWORDS: children’s well-being, community, experiences, interactions, outcomes, partnership.

1. INTRODUCTION

The school year 2012-2013 marked a shift in the structure and organization of school education in Romania. Introducing the controversial preparatory class brings together the entire curricular cycle of fundamental acquisitions into compulsory primary education. The real impact of this unified approach will be revealed by analyzing and interpreting the results of the process evaluation applied at the end of the curricular cycle, namely assessing just those purchases made in the spirit of new school programs that offer competences training. Including hours of personal development aims, in addition to training of emotional or relational skills such as self-knowledge or

empathy, to stimulate curiosity, to channel age-specific interests, accountability and cooperation, respect for individuality and to promote interaction for shaping the pleasure of learning and motivation for learning as foundations of future authentic learning. Transferring purchases, which works both ways, from formal to non-formal and informal learning, especially by mastering into patterns daily heterogeneous influences means not only reorganization of the classrooms, but also rethinking educational relations as interactions and experiences of the actors of educational communities. Promoting long-term partnerships with various institutions of the local community is therefore useful both as a model of cooperation and as efficient way to authentic educational resources: library and museum. Working in partnership with several museums from Braşov demonstrates that the interactive approach, which transforms rigid visiting space into a creative workshop and classrooms into reconstitution archaeological site produces positive results with multiple and lasting effects on everyone involved: students, parents, educators. For each of these categories, the efficiency is measured in the same terms, reporting results to the resources invested. The quality of results depends on the quality of resources.

2. MUSEUMS AS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN THE POSTMODERN EDUCATION

Theory of experience is based on the continuity category or experiential continuum (Dewey, 1977, p 185), a principle that reveals valuable experiences in terms of education. According to this principle, every experience affects the quality of subsequent experiences from the perspective of internal learning resources and by extending further external conditions of learning, the quality of present experience influencing how the principle is applied. Thus, if an experience stimulates curiosity and interest, determining a purpose, it becomes a driving force whose value can be appreciated only by direction and its application point and only by the adult educator who has responsibility for organizing the educational experience conditions without imposing external control, influencing the formation of attitudes and intervening upon existing environmental, physical and social, which favors the acquisitions that lead to growth (Dewey, 1977, pp. 187-191). In agreement with the theory of experience, taking advantage of the generosity and flexibility of curricula, we have initiated and coordinated throughout the 2012-2013 school year, a partnership with the Museum of History in Braşov County through which was passed a museum education program, and two thematic partnerships: one centered on Easter traditions and conducted in collaboration with the Museum of Ethnography in Braşov and other organized in the national program "School Otherwise. To know more, to be better" in cooperation with the Museum "Casa Muresenilor". The direct beneficiaries of these projects were students registered for a preparatory class in a school from Braşov, students who could build their

own learning experiences in a friendly school and beyond its gates. Indirect beneficiaries were, on the one hand, parents who could understand that the attitude towards school must be reconsidered (Goleman, 2004, p. 280) and, on the other hand, teachers who were able to demonstrate that it is time for change.

2.1. Braşov County History Museum – “The Story of Houses”

The project “*Applications of archeology in museum education*” was part of a broader approach to accessibility of the permanent exhibition devoted to archeology. “The Story of Houses” is the name under which this project has been presented to its beneficiaries. Those were part of two age groups: young children aged 6-7 enrolled in the first grade of primary education, and students of 9-10 years, three fourth grade and one third. The complexity of activities was different for each of the two audiences. Two meetings were held with each class separately, at intervals of about two weeks, according to schedule with each teacher-coordinator. At first, students were led through the permanent exhibition and followed, in the breakfast room archeology, a presentation on how people lived in different historical eras. Secondly, practical work-shops held in the classrooms of the participants were adapted for the two age groups. Students from preparatory classes worked in teams and prepared five different puzzles to reconstruct housing and settlements viewed at the first meeting. The other recipients were challenged to reconstruct, also working in teams, one housing model under the guidance of museum educator. They imitated prehistoric wattle houses and walls plastered with clay (Savu, 2013).

2.2. Ethnographic Museum of Braşov – “The Story of Painted Eggs”

The "Custom of decorating eggs in Romanian tradition" was held from March 1 to April 30, 2013 in collaboration with the Museum of Ethnography in Braşov. The purpose of the partnership was to involve the local community by harnessing the educational potential of museums, and one of its objectives aimed cultivating respect for Romanian authentic values. Preparatory class students were introduced in the technique of wax-painting eggs, known specific symbols and meanings of colors used. They formed their positive attitude towards teamwork, practiced and developed communication skills, internalized rules of behavior generally valid. They had fun and spent together with their parents or grandparents beautiful moments that sustained their future learning.

2.3. “Casa Mureşenilor” Museum from Braşov – “The Story of Costumes”

The "Braşov in Earlier Times" developed in cooperation with "Casa Mureşenilor" Museum from Braşov was the final event of the week "School Otherwise. To know more, to be better", carried out between April 1 to 7, 2013. The theme of this week was "The child and his world" and the activities were focused on promoting volunteering, on shaping socio-cultural identity, on expanding the cultural horizons of students. "The Story of Costumes" was the

name of the activity that started with the interactive presentation of the evolution of clothing objects in the nineteenth century. Based on these informations, students of preparatory class, the youngest participants in this type of activity in the recent history of the cultural settlement, together with parents and grandparents who accompanied them during travel, made clothing items using crepe paper. They were divided into four groups and each of them produced a different kind of costume: crinoline, twist, redingote or tuxedo. The names sound pretentious, but the imagination of children and adults and the unique underline of details scored a memorable activity, kept for reference.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Realities crossed over by the educational system in Romania show that in the efficiency equation we know the expected results defined in terms of competences and the resources used according to our own understanding of influence of experiential continuum (Dewey, 1977). Investing in education is the most important investment a society could achieve (Văideanu, 1988) and concerning for the well-being of the students, that generate positive outcomes in their activities, including educational and professional, would benefit the entire society in short, medium and long term (Aked, J., Steuer, N., Lawlor, E., Spratt, S., 2009). Education for Democratic Citizenship, whose principles are found in defining the key competences at European level, is intrinsically linked to the institution of partnership. This institution must be rethink from the new perspective of educational relations between teacher and student, teacher, student and parents, school and community (Goleman, 2004, Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Reconfiguration of classroom's management in terms of focusing on the student's needs and expectations, on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and on the responsibility to provide equal opportunities for all uneven development (Brazelton, 1992, Gardner, 2005; Dewey, 1988, Hamburg , 1992) first determines the change of attitude in understanding that interaction is more than the sum of its parts and that only by interacting added value of any process or product might be obtained (Brazelton, 1992, Gardner, 2005; Dewey, 1988, Hamburg, 1992). The attitude, considered as part of the competence or separately as an independent unit, is assessed according to other rules (Bar-On, 2011; Dafinoiu, 2002). The attitude towards learning and school's activities should also be judged according to other rules, those that take into account whether the student is motivated, interested, responsible or accountable, free to argue its point of view and creative in finding solutions (Saarni, 1990; Roco, 2004 , Goleman, 2007). Such outcomes could be found when the student is considered a partner at his home, in his classroom, in his wider community.

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