

Possibilities of using museum educational environment for creating projects for pupils with mild mental disabilities

(overview essay)

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Annotation: *The paper focuses in theoretical level on the museum environment that can be used for education of students with mild mental disabilities. Ethnographic Museum in Olomouc is a place that can be used in the context of education for project teaching. We will present a draft of a specific project, which can be used by teachers in primary and special schools.*

Keywords: *museum, education, pupil with special educational needs, mild mental retardation, Regional Museum in Olomouc, project based learning, special school, project*

1 Introduction

Strategic documents, in which the state guarantees the care of basic education, ie. Framework educational programs (FEP) incurred in connection with the National Education Development Programme called White Paper (2001), along with school curricula. They allow teachers more flexibly meet the specific needs of students, encourage their creative and independent thinking, lead them to active and creative activities. This arises the space for the selection of appropriate teaching methods, forms and teaching strategies to promote and develop skills above, in order to achieve the target competencies as well as respect and take into account the individual characteristics and needs of individual pupils. *In the education of pupils with mild mental disabilities it is possible and desirable to fulfill the same objectives, which are listed in the FEP, but under the conditions of application of approaches, methods and forms corresponding with specificities and personal development of pupils. Necessary for education is to create optimal conditions that require particularly friendly atmosphere*

and work climate to pupils love school attendance, not fear any failures and within its capabilities, to achieve universal primary education. (FEP – LMP, 2005, p. 9)

Modern education should be motivating and effective. It should be built on the reality of modern life, to create conditions for the individual development of each pupil and independent, creative and critical thinking. These criteria correspond to the principles of project-based learning, which become part of innovative efforts not only in the Czech education system, but also in foreign education.

2 Project teaching

The project teaching is discussed in the White Paper (2001) in connection with the development of interdisciplinary relations, teaching in integrated units, new forms of teaching to facilitate internal differentiation and strengthen individualisation in education.

Potměšil (2007, p. 92) considers the project teaching in the long term for a specific kind of transition phase in the learning process when this transition occurs in formally and methodically clearly defined ambience of a traditional teaching in the classroom, into an environment similar to real life situations that occur outside the school building. This aspect reflects the possibility of realization of these projects in the area of the museum. Project indicates activity focused on solving one or more problems or problem areas. *“To fulfill this task, you need to find a lot of new information, process and use existing knowledge from different disciplines, establish cooperation with experts, be able to organize their work in time and space, find a different solution in the event of an error, formulate their own opinion, discuss, collaborate etc. So instead of borrowing ready findings from other fields (often in addition without a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose), pupils discover these findings in the project teaching by themselves, and because of the need.”* (Kašová 1995, p. 73). If there is an activity at school as a project, it can be assessed at the moment when it is quite clear what is the access of pupil to this activity. If they assume the responsibility for it, it is their own project. The pupil is one who seeks to achieve defined goals. (Cisar et al., 1938)

Project instruction respects individual characteristics and needs of students, especially in the way which mediates new knowledge. These findings are presented to the students not as complete facts, but as problematic tasks / issues that foster creative thinking, logical reasoning and the subsequent searching for a solution. The students with teacher's help solve a complex task (a project), which is partly or entirely of practical needs. It is expected that the task will be for students interesting that its solutions take as a personal problem. (Kalhous, Obst, 2001, p. 121).

Projects intended for the target group of students with disabilities should be focused on one clearly formulated problem which is specified, for example, by the correct formulation of the question. The content should relate to specific topics from everyday life situations in which the student is well oriented. This process develops thinking associated with concrete reality. Projects integrate knowledge from all areas of everyday life. When solving individual problems or difficult situations, for example in the context of group cooperation, it leads to the fulfillment of predetermined educational goals.

3 Educational environment OF museum

The term education is used in general pedagogy and didactics as synonymous with the term “learning”. (Průcha, Waltrova, Mares, 2003, p. 53). Thoughts are mainly related to the school environment, where there is a directed learning. Education may act on an individual outside the school, eg. in a museum environment.

Code of Ethics for Museums ICOM (2006, p. 17) defines a museum as follows: *We are a non-profit permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquire, preserve, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment in order to study, education, training and pleasure.* Increasingly, these institutions among the activities that they grab, classify an educational area too. The museum’s education is a means not only of perception but also of an understanding of phenomena, relationships and regularities in the world today. World history is linked with the world of the future.

The museum has a strong potential in the field of education. These programs allow you to work with all age groups of pupils, regardless of the type of educational institution attended. Educators mainly use them in the field of motivation. Through these factors, increasing interest for new and innovative things is achieved. The aim is to develop natural curiosity and effort to teach students perceive things and phenomena comprehensively. This non-violent manner deepens the value orientation. Museum environment takes into account the individual needs of students and a teaching situation, which take into account individual learning opportunities and demands of students with mild mental disabilities.

In the process of education, the museum becomes an active entity that creates or helps to create so-called animation programs. They develop educational programs that complement school education, enrich, and if they are prepared to sufficient professional level, become an inspiration to teachers themselves. The museum is hereby made available to schools and becomes an educational environment that opens up mutual cooperation between museums as cultural institutions and schools. If the mentioned institution does not have educational programs for schools or un-

cooperate with special educators, the teacher himself can create a project that will come out or follow collections, exhibitions or permanent exhibitions in this particular museum.

Education of students in the museum environment can be in three basic levels. For greater clarity these models in Figures 1, 2 and 3 are shown.

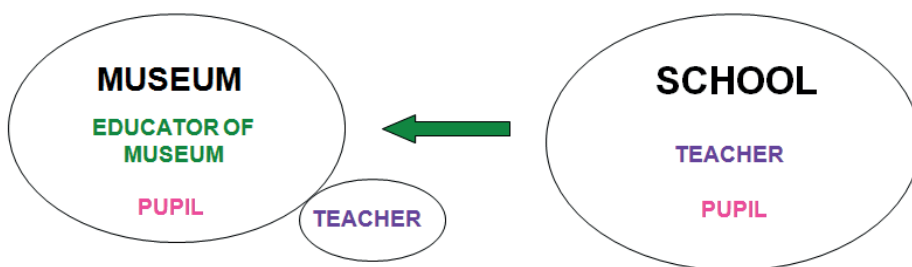


Figure 1: Transmission of education in museum environment (without the intervention of a teacher)

The illustration above shows that, the educational process takes place at the level of teacher – pupil and a museum. Here is the role of teachers taken by a museum educator. The teacher remains as an impartial observer outside of this activity (Figure 1).

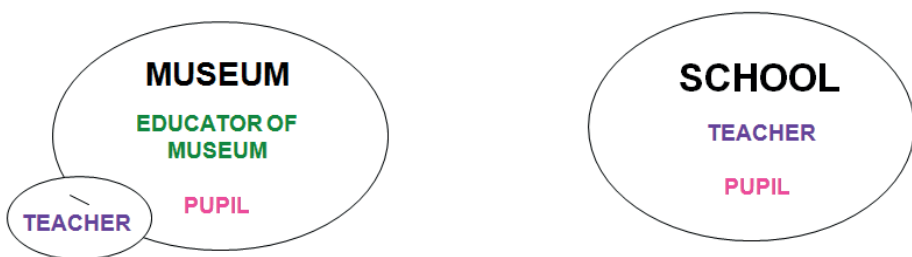


Figure 2: Transmission of education to a museum (with partial intervention of a teacher)

The second option is a situation where the educational activity mainly deals with a museum educator, the teacher remains outside it. They intervene only at disciplinary or other offenses, ensures compliance with rules etc. Into an educational activity they enter only minimally. Their activity is higher, although it is only limited to directing discipline.



Figure 3: Transfer of education in a museum (cooperation with the teacher)

The third option is the museum educator collaboration with the teacher of a relevant certificated subject. The teacher actively participates in the creation of an educational program, is working with museum educator at the creation of jobs or methodological papers.

Special educators play an important role in the potential that museums offer alongside with museum educators. For students with mild intellectual disabilities this presence is an essential part of the museum educator training. Only special education teacher can recognize the specifics of education for pupils with learning difficulties and is able to design and create measures that arise from current health condition or diagnosis of a pupil. Along with the museum educator they can customize the learning process implemented in the museum to the psychological level (clarity, concreteness, logic, plenty of external stimuli, repetition) and physical development of the pupil (wheelchair access, plenty of space for activities etc.).

For the fulfillment of these conditions, the museum environment actually offers educational facilities for all pupils, including those integrated. The museum becomes a single integration space that connects students, teachers, lecturers, museum educators, special educators, professionals and general public.

Šobán (2007, p. 33) speaks of the existence of the animation for so-called “a special visitor”, who refers to persons with mental retardation or physical disabilities. “*We do not have to prepare for them the special program, sometimes it is enough just to adapt existing animation. I approve a consultation with a special teacher or a group leader, by which I determine whether the program participants manage different tasks and how the form of an entire animation would be intelligible to them.*”

3.1 Ethnographic Museum in Olomouc

Ethnographic Museum in Olomouc is one of the museums, which can be used for creating its own projects. It currently offers already created educational programs for schools. It manages exposure, exhibits objects and collections mainly from the natural and social sciences.

Permanent exhibits relate to the following areas: Nature of Olomouc Region, Olomouc – Fifteen century city, Endangered Plant Species, The story stone, The Gallery of Celebrities in Olomouc Region, Olomouc University).

These exposures can be assigned to the individual educational areas FEP LMP (2007, p. 14) and use them as suggestions for creation of projects.

Table 1: Exposure and their connection with the FEP LMP (2007)

PERMANENT EXHIBITION	EDUCATION AREA
Nature Olomouc Region	Man and Nature
Olomouc – Fifteen Century City	People and society Arts and Culture Language and Communication
Endangered Plant Species	Man and Nature
The story stone	Man and Nature
The Gallery of Celebrities in Olomouc Region	People and society Arts and Culture Language and Communication
Palacky University in Olomouc	People and society Arts and Culture Language and Communication

4 Forms of integration of pupils with mild mental retardation

Mild mental retardation: IQ is between 50–69 (in adult mental age equivalent to a 9–12 year old). This leads to difficulties in school learning. But many adults are able to operate successfully and maintain social relationships (Vítková, 2003, p. 135).

Possible forms of special education of students with disabilities are defined § 3 of the Decree 73/2005 Coll. about the education of children, pupils and students with special educational needs and children, pupils and students extraordinarily talented (amended by Decree no. 147/2011 Coll.). This is a form of *individual integration* in

elementary school classrooms or schools for pupils with a disability according to their individual education plan. Furthermore, it is a form of *group integration* in the classroom, department or study group established for students with disabilities in regular or special school, and subsequently for pupils with different kinds of disabilities in elementary school for pupils with disabilities.

There is no public effort to address the integration as a process that in our school began to assert in the first half of the nineties. There is only the fact that the sub-element integration of pupils with mild mental disabilities into regular educational activities may be their full involvement in the project work and animation programs implemented in the museum environment, so called Museum Education.

5 Project “Nature at the museum”

One of the newly created projects is the project with the working title “Nature in the museum.” The content refers to the permanent exhibition of the Regional Museum in Olomouc titled: *Nature of Olomouc Region*. Thematically, it ranks according to the FEP LMP (2007) to the educational area *Man and Nature* (educational field: natural history) and *Man and his World* (topic: diversity of nature).

Target group: pupils with LMP (age between 12–13 years)

Timing of the project: a total of 4 lessons: 1 hour (preparatory phase in the classroom, handing out of worksheets), 2 hours of fieldwork (visit the Natural History Museum in Olomouc), 1 hour at school (evaluation)

Place of project implementation: school (class), Regional Museum in Olomouc

Material: Project Worksheets

Project objective: Introduction of the museum as an institution that presents the natural wealth of the Olomouc region. The project will develop communicative, social and personal competencies.

Progress of the project:

Preparation of the project (organizational and technical support for museums, preparing theoretical basis for content issues of the project, preparing a worksheet for students, preparing methodology with sub-steps)

Implementation of the project

1st lesson: *introduction to the issues of the project, its theme, inducing motivation*

2nd lesson: *fieldwork: visit to the Natural History Museum in Olomouc* Students will receive worksheets and record information they look for in the museum into them. There is even an opportunity to get themed pictures. Found answers to questions are

recorded in the worksheets. These sheets are a set of questions for which students look for answers.

Example of a partial task:

An error has occurred in the printer. Only parts of photos are printed. Determine which animals are in the pictures? You find the answer on the trunk covered with bird feathers.



3. lesson: group work at school

Students work with worksheets.

4. lesson: evaluation

In terms of internal and external evaluation of students together discuss the project and define possible solutions for further work.

Conclusion and recommendations

Preparing own projects using the museum, its collections and exhibitions and actual participation in the animation programs of a specific museum is a time-consuming process. The practice shows that it is possible to apply here an inclusive approach to pupils with disabilities. Education of children with any type of disability, not only with mild intellectual disabilities should take place in socialization outside the designated educational institution, eg. in a museum environment.

We recommend intensifying cooperation between museums as institutions with the educational potential and subjects which educate students with any disability.

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(reviewed twice)

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