



Using museum education as a tolerance facilitator in multicultural societies: The case of Quincentennial (The 500. Years) Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews

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Abstract

Historically, the role and purpose of museums have evolved and changed in an effort to better serve communities. As such, there is a need to focus on the diversity of the audience, such as different ages, learning styles, backgrounds, and emotional and physical abilities, and to provide an enhanced learning opportunity within the physical space of the museums and galleries. In addition to this in the new century, multiculturalism has started to become a natural part of the societies. With the diversity in cultural life forms, ethnic groups, sects and different political views, countries started to seek a way of living together. Education is one of the ways to make it available for people. In order to ensure the effectiveness of educational programs, materials should offer diverse approaches to learning and choices in the learning process. This study has aimed identify the development multicultural education in museums and to argue the need for prejudice reduction as a central component of any multicultural education committed to democratic practice and the achievement of greater equality of educational opportunity. Among other goals, reinforcing museum-society relationship, facilitating the contribution of museums to the education and culture of the society and raising awareness about museum and museum studies can be listed. Induction method has been employed in the study and it has been supported with literature review, other national and international papers in this field and a pilot education program put into practice by Quincentennial (The 500.Years) Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews. This pilot education program was supported by Gabay Koroza. Çiğdem Atay and Cihan Çolak contributed to the creation of the program. © 2014 European Journal of Research on Education by IASSR.

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1. Introduction

In the present climate of globalization, museums, like most institutions, are striving to redefine themselves in terms of innovative practices and forms of cultural production. Museums are the public institutions to which people entrust their valuables. They store public's artefact, artwork, the mementoes of their daily lives and the world around them. They remind people of their history, their mistakes, and their aspirations. They encourage people to play, discover, wonder, and imagine. This paper focuses on detecting the role of museums in spreading culture of tolerance in essentially multicultural populations and emphasizing the contribution of museum- education relationship to culture of tolerance in society. Also the other aim of this article is to provide a case study for what can be done with museums in education to improve intercultural dialogue and empathy.

As the Turkey becomes more diverse (Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Jewish etc.), it is increasingly important that Turkey's citizens are open to and accepting of multiple cultural perspectives. The education reform process called "multicultural education" grew from the need for more equitable access to education and the reduction of

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discrimination and prejudice in the Turkish educational system. Parallel to this, the chapters of this article are shaped around the museum-education and tolerance axis. In chapter two, concepts like museum, museum studies, education, multiculturalism and tolerance are defined. In chapter three, the relations of these concepts with each other, education and function of museums in multicultural societies are under focus. It has been outlined the development of multicultural education, setting it firmly within the context of democratic cultural pluralism. Also it has been argued that prejudice reduction must be a central concern of any undertaking to multicultural education which is committed to respect for person. In chapter three, it will be showed briefly, how multicultural education as an overall managing concept for education within culturally diverse societies fits into generally agreed educational aims. The relationship between self-concept and prejudiced attitudes is explored and the role of intercultural contact is highlighted in the process of enabling both individuals and groups to climb out of ethnic captivity. From these considerations an overall set of guiding principles is derived against which teachers may attempt the pedagogies of prejudice reduction in the central parts of the article. "The Quincentennial Foundation (500.Years) Museum of Turkish Jews Ethnography Department Education Program" is also presented as a model for the role of museums in improving education and culture of tolerance. In the conclusion, role of museums in increasing social tolerance is emphasized and proposals on how to spread this are made.

2. Concepts

2.1. Museum and Museum Studies

Museums the place where people meet, debate, and discuss the issues pertinent to their community. "As individuals living in a complex society people may not all agree on all issues, but museums give them the forum to keep talking about them" (Burdick, 2008, p.13). The international Council of Museums (ICOM), headquartered in Paris, describes a museum as: a non-profitmaking, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment (ICOM, 2013). According to this definition, the basic activities of museums are collecting, protecting, researching, displaying, educating and interpreting. Hooper-Greenhill reduces these activities to three: protecting, researching and communicating (Greenhill, 1999). Hence the concept of museum and its activities became more open to public, active, dynamic, interactive and participating rather than elitist, passive and isolated. In this new understanding, the basic goal is to build a tie between the collections of a museum and the needs and interests of the population.

2.2. Museum Education

Museums are dedicated to serving the communities they are in. Not only do they strive to provide exhibits pertinent to the interests of their community members, they also serve as centres for people to gather to discuss and reflect upon the important issues in their communities. Museums provide meeting halls, town hall forums, rooms for parties and celebrations, and performances. A local museum is a place where a community's stories are told, and hence places where its members gather to share, wonder, debate, and reflect. "Museums today have taken on the broad mission of helping us understand the ever- evolving world around us by offering us a place to explore, question, and discuss events pertinent to our communities" (Burdick, 2008, p.18). According to modern understanding of education, museums drive people to think, make observations and build connections between facts. They give opportunities to increase human knowledge and establish the behaviour of comparing the knowledge obtained. "Museums point out the contrasts and help the visitor reach a conclusion by interpreting" (Gartenhaus, 2000, p.12). They should be in contact with the society and support the population's information process. Museums are the biggest milestones in formal and lifelong education of the people. Modern museums are the biggest support behind the education of the society by preparing educational programs for different groups like children, young people, families and adults bearing in mind their different fields of interests. Museum education shaped according

to these attitudes and values: “Feelings, perceptions, opinions about ourselves (e.g. self-esteem), opinions or attitudes toward other people, increased capacity for tolerance, empathy, increased motivation” (Black, 2005, p.154).

2.3. *Informal Learning at Museums*

The museum experience is different from the school experience. Visitors choose to come to museums because they offer educational experiences that are informal and unique in the context of other leisure activities. In addition so much learning is depend on physical context. For example, kids experience the world with their bodies, minds, and emotions. Their exuberance for life is infectious. How can designers prepare space for kids that acknowledges their innate delight with themselves and the world around them, while helping them to focus on exploration and learning? “Play is the way in which young children learn and older children engage subject matter best” (McRainey & Russick, 2010, p.209). Informal learning is central to the museum experience. To achieve educational aims, museum exhibitions feature interactive electronic media; demonstrations; storytelling; theatrical, dance, and musical performances; and hands-on activities. Interactive and multimedia museum presentations embody educational concepts emphasizing multiple intelligences, diverse learning styles, and a range of culturally defined learning modalities. Educational programs in museums are a natural extension of their exhibition and interpretation roles. Educational staff plan programs and run classes as a means of telling visitors about the exhibits. They may give tours, host lecture series, or run workshops to intrigue or inform the public about their museum. “Educational programs often extend beyond the walls of a museum, to schools or other public venues, to reach those people who might not otherwise come to museums” (Burdick, 2008, p.18).

2.4. *Culture – Multiculturalism and Tolerance*

“Multiculturalism is the coexistence of differences between ethnicities, languages, sexual orientations, sexes, ages, disabilities, social classes, educational backgrounds, religious beliefs, and other cultural differences (Çırık, 2008, p. 27-40). For multiculturalism, we should first open the concept of culture. Culture is accepted as the accumulated civilization of a society or societies. Additionally, culture is not innate or inherent but consists of the behaviors obtained by the individual after birth. Therefore it has a past, it is historical and it has a future; it is continuous and changeable; it is obtained in the society and it is social. In the same environment, culture is satisfactory, integrating and harmonizing. Therefore multiculturalism which will house more than one culture inside would be a source of richness when followed in the framework of correct policies.

3. **Multicultural Education in Multicultural Societies**

In modern societies, individuals are expected to have interaction with different cultural groups and to develop positive attitudes in their interactions. Hence, when developed countries are solving their problems with education, they focus on multiculturalism, as well. “Multicultural education program seeks to create equal opportunities for all the students regardless of their race, ethnicity and social background and hence it seeks to change and restructure the entire school medium” (Zirkel, 2008, p.1147–1181). Multicultural education process should not be participated only by the students from formal education but also by other members of the society. For example, to complete the multicultural development of students at school, contributions of the families are also very important. Research has shown that experiences during the childhood are very effective in forming their cultural understanding. “During the first three years of their lives, children develop their understanding of their racial identity and the cultural characteristics of their group” (Çırık, 2008, p. 27-40).

Many countries are struggling to find the best model to promote the concept of "citizenship education," which encourages national unity and cultural understanding while acknowledging and celebrating ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in its students. In multinational and multicultural countries like USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and UK, multicultural education programs are implemented in the form of obligatory classes from pre-school period

to university. Also, in such countries, museums are an indispensable part of this process with their collections and programs. There is a delicate balance between promoting diversity and encouraging unity among groups through national education policy. Through its education policy, the state can provide opportunities for different groups to maintain aspects of their culture while building a nation in which these groups are structurally included and to which they feel some degree of loyalty and belonging. What some countries are learning is that it is important for citizens in a diverse democratic society to maintain attachments to their cultural communities as well as to participate effectively in the shared national culture.

In addition most governments provide inadequate training for teachers and school administrators to assist them in understanding the importance of promoting coexistence in the school system or classroom. As a consequence, some teachers are not equipped to deal with diversity within the classroom, nor do they have a syllabus to teach a nation's history effectively. Lack of training often stems from a more general problem, which is that most governments struggle to provide the funding for schools to address the educational needs different ethnic, religious, or cultural groups in an equitable way. Training needs to be provided not just to teachers and school administrators, but also to those who are pushing for change in education policies at the national level. Thus, advocates for coexistence training in the education system need to be taught how to deal in an effective manner with negative backlash to their policies. A lack of diversity at the leadership level in an education system may affect the impact of coexistence education. The assumption is any worthwhile educational philosophy needs to be based on two central premises: "to provide an equitable and high-quality education for all students, to provide an apprenticeship for active participation in democracy to prepare students for their roles as active and critical citizens" (Nieto, 2002, p.186). So multicultural education is for everybody, and it seeks not to integrate people into only one's existing society but also to improve for all.

3.1. Function of Museum Education in Multicultural Societies

In the twenty-first century, museums exist within new political and cultural contexts. "The museums are arguably more accessible, both intellectually and physically, to the public and to their communities of interest, than in previous century" (Barret, 2011, p.115). Multicultural education should focus on changing the learning mediums and sites to facilitate tolerance between different cultures of the members of the society. Museums particularly attract attention as the most commonly used as a learning site. The most effective sources are presented at the museums to promote education for multicultural societies by driving the students to understand and respect the people with different beliefs and cultures from themselves, to develop a positive attitude towards living in a pluralistic society, to get informed about religions and cultures, to build skills to adopt new ideas and by supporting the personal, moral and spiritual development of students and other individuals in the society.

The potential for museums to take the lead in interpreting our culturally diverse heritage is great. The hierarchy of developing cultural attitudes is: awareness, understanding/knowledge, tolerance/acceptance; appreciation. Museums, thanks to their function of hosting objects from different communities and civilizations, gain importance as one of the most contributing sites to tolerance culture by providing rich experiences full of differences to their visitors and giving them different points of view. However multiculturalism is an undeniable reality for today's museums with collections and audiences from diverse cultures. To ensure long-term sustainability and relevance, museums must actively engage with diverse communities, respond to visitor needs, and rethink accepted education and interpretation practices. For example, "in an American society that is becoming increasingly more diverse, multicultural education provides an array of models for educational institutions such as museums to meet the diverse needs of their constituencies" (Lynne, 2005, p.25).

Diverse materials should be used to present diverse viewpoints. Students should become comfortable with the fact that often there is more than one perspective, and rather than believing only one version, they should learn to expect and seek out multiple versions. For this aim progress has been slow but steady. "The Smithsonian found that its museum visitors are racially and ethnically more diverse, younger, and more educated in 2004 than in 1994. For example, the median age of visitors in 2004 was thirty-six years of age compared with thirty-eight years in 1994.

Increasingly, museum staff are aware of the cultural diversity of their audience and make efforts to include exhibitions and programs that appeal to specific audience segments” (Hein, 2005, p.148). In other words, it can be said that, today museums are the ideal workshop for social and cultural investigation. They are places where information can be exchanged without intimidation and where cultural and personal pride can be reinforced. Through proper programming, museums can provide an environment for all people to have an enjoyable learning opportunity and experience the excitement of intellectual exploration (Edson and Dean, 1996, p.200).

3.1.1. An Example of Museum Education-Tolerance Relationship in Multicultural Societies: The Case of The Quincentennial (500 Years) Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews

Museums and galleries can be used for multicultural work in several ways. The collections themselves are often from distant parts of the world and can open up perspectives on different ways of life, and different solutions to common problems. For the school pupils, using museum collections was exciting. The materiality of collections combined with imaginative and often very unusual activities produce an immediacy of engagement that pupils and their teachers found compelling and intriguing. Also in museums arts which are inseparable from daily life produce artefacts that are not only functional but also symbolic of complex relationships within the society. For example, “one of the most significant characteristics of learning in museums is its power to shape identities” (Greenhill, 2010, p.170-178). Since people visit museums primarily to satisfy one or more identity-related needs, it is not surprising that the major outcomes most visitors derive from their museum visit experience relate to identity-building (Falk, 2009, p.74).

At Quincentennial (500 Years) Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews, children visiting the Jews exhibition which contains Jewish religious artefacts and watched traditional clothes. A pilot education program was put in practice to use “The Quincentennial (500.Years) Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews for education”. This pilot education program seeks to broaden and deepen approaches to the arts, to extend knowledge of the diversity of cultures and assert their relevance to education and contemporary society. The activity which was carried out on Mondays had a target audience of primary school 4th and 5th grade students and use between the months of January to April 10, in 2011. This pilot training program was conducted by including year celebrations. Training workshops for school children include two Muslim and Jewish school and exchange students from two classes participated from Hungarian and Italy. Approximately 200 students participated in the pilot training workshop. The purposes of the activity were to show the common points of and the interaction between the Muslim and Jewish lives in İstanbul with the artefacts in the ethnography section of the museum; to strengthen the relationship between the museum and the society; to enable the museum to contribute to the education and cultural development of the society and to raise awareness about the museum and the concept of museums in general. The target of the activity was to teach the history of İstanbul to the primary school 4th and 5th grade students so that they are more conscious of history of the place they live, to draw attention to the common grounds of the Turkish and Jewish cultures with the ethnographic artefacts, to weaken the concept of “the other” by showing the shared points of the two cultures. Also the other important target is to develop the awareness for protecting historical sites and objects and to promote the museum. The foreseen gains of the activity are that the 4th grade students witness the change in their culture between the past and the present using the artefacts at the museum as a part of the “I am Learning My Past” unit of “Culture and Legacy” (Öğretim Programları, Sosyal Bilgiler Dersi 4-5. Sınıflar Öğretim Programı ve Klavuzu. 2011) section of the social studies class while the 5th grade students learn the importance of the coexistence of different cultures and communities by going to the museum and observing the artefacts as a part of the “Turkey Step by Step” unit of “Culture and Legacy” (Öğretim Programları, Sosyal Bilgiler Dersi 4-5. Sınıflar Öğretim Programı ve Klavuzu. 2011) section of the social studies class. This education program consists of three elements: prevised activities at the museum, visiting the museum, positivist activities at the museum. In the prevised activities, with the name learning and getting to know each other game (names used in Turkish and Jewish communities, their meanings, similarities and differences) it is aimed that the children from different communities and cultures develop empathy towards each other. With the memory and matching game, children were asked to get more information about the artefacts at the ethnography Museum. During the museum visit, the main focus was on comparing and

understanding different life styles. Hence the following parts were visited: 1. Clothing 2. Birth 3.Circumcision 4. Dowry 5. Wedding 6. Jewelry. After the museum visit, to reinforce the knowledge obtained about art workshop, concepts, history and objects during the visit, “Ketubah” activity was made.

This pilot study multicultural education programs are implemented with the support of museums have many positive impacts. When the results of the researches are examined, it is seen that, the attitudes of the students about cultural differences are affected positively. By the example curriculum in the multicultural educationist and through this, children develop ideas about racial identity. Also the key study has a positive influence on student outcomes and intergroup relations.

4. Conclusion

In societies where there are different religions and different cultures, education models which are suitable for the social structure should be produced and implemented. To allow people from different cultures live together in peace and harmony, it is necessary to introduce programs on multiculturalism into education and to use museums actively as learning sites. “Multicultural Education advocates argue that the curriculum should be reworked so that it regularly presents diverse perspectives, experiences, and contributions” (Sleefer, C.E., & Grant, C.A., 2009, p.175).

In developed countries under discussion, the advocates for educational inclusion remain active. They are committed, patient and opportunistic. At each meeting with a public official, at regional conferences, and in the living rooms of private families they promote and persuade people of the region to think about the needs and rights of the disabled in a different way. In developing multicultural countries the situation is different. For example urban centres in the Turkey have witnessed considerable population growth, immigration, and changing demographic patterns. Large numbers of newcomers are not familiar with museums and other cultural organizations. Many come from rural areas lacking museums. In response, large urban museums, in particular, are striving to make their collections, exhibitions, and programs more broadly representative, and they have organized exhibitions focusing on not only-Turkish cultures.

“The idea that identity in humans represents a causative agent in motivation and behaviour begins from the premise that we are self-aware, self-motivating organisms” (Falk, 2009, p.75). Teachers and education experts should support the development of different individuals and identities while arranging multicultural learning areas. While doing this, they should especially use cooperative learning techniques, form heterogeneous student groups and support the working of group members around a common goal. In multicultural societies, the inclusion of differences in the education through museums which bring together objects from different civilisations which may contribute to the learning process of children and facilitate spreading tolerance across cultures gain special importance. To organize multiculturalism activities and to organize some of these at the museums for everybody from preschool children to grown-ups will promote the personal development of individuals. At faculties of pedagogy, multicultural education should be given as an obligatory subject and some of the classes should be held at museums, which would in return have an effect on spreading tolerance across the country.

The perceptions of many different groups in a pluralistic society must be considered in a new multicultural approach to the teaching of art throughout history in Istanbul, which hosted different cultures through the Quincentennial (500. Years) Foundation ethnography Museum of Turkish Jews. This research project demonstrates how multicultural education theory can inform general museums’ efforts to become more inclusive institutions. In this context, museum is a catalyst for change especially in terms of prejudice. So society truly cannot be democratic unless the educational systems function democratically. To make tolerance more widespread, this concept should be brought down to public and real, concrete settings. In multicultural societies art education has a role to play in this process. Museums intuitions which includes works of art from many parts of the world should be aware of discrepancies and should investigate more resources in closing the gaps. When the role of museum-education relationship in spreading tolerance in Turkey is considered, it is seen that there are not wide-scope studies in this field while the awareness is also low in population. Since it is not easy to spread tolerance culture in multicultural environments, museums which remain at an equal distance to all cultures are effective tools in this sense. Therefore,

museums should be used in formal and lifelong education to spread tolerance culture and since the aim is creating a peace society, museum areas with pluralistic approach should be actively used as a part of the education, through carefully prepared education programs.

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