SOCIAL PROFILE OF MODERN SCHOOLERS AS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR MUSEUM PEDAGOGY

Elena Polyudova¹, Elena Olesina²

¹Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (UNITED STATES)
²Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

Abstract

Although education is perceived as a process of getting knowledge, social adaptation of school students as one of communal skills that must not be underestimated. Social adaptation, or socialization, in modern Pedagogy, generally is considered as a process of instituting a person into social environment by understanding and acquiring social roles and skills. Socialization process in the context of school years is a long period of educating, upbringing, and forming a person. To outline the socialization from personal perspectives, the authors demarcate a special area of the socialization - a “social profile” of modern school students as a set of personal characteristics students have and also competencies and skills students have to develop. This perspective divides the term into two parts: determining modern school students traits, and defining areas of the zone of proximate social development. Outlining these two parts of socialization, the article considers them from perspectives of Museum Pedagogy, connecting museum environment and activities as a representational part of socio-cultural heritage. It is considered as one of factors that impacts socialization.

Though the range of museum activities could be resourceful for the process of socialization, it is hard to pursue without understanding personal traits of modern students. To delineate this intangible area, the article defines a specific term, “social profile” of school students, applied to Museum Pedagogy. The term includes different components that help museum educators and curators to understand where to apply resources to include museums into social environment. The article relates the social profile with museum activities that could be organized as special “social fields” in museum environment; and describes possible areas of social application for museum visits.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of social profile is not a firsthand idea because traditionally educators have a system of measuring students’ ability to perceive information. The traditional approach includes certain education-related categories, such as age, type of education, psychological characteristics of the age, and, as a result, educational characteristics of pupils. School educators keep this traditional system in mind when plan a visit to a museum for a certain group of school students. At the same time, museum curators and educators also consider different educational and social traits when prepare tours and handouts for school visits. Moreover, modern museum pedagogy works on the issue of defining different aspects of social background to specify the picture of the school audience: “Historical framing, comparisons between science museums and other types of museums, creation of a specific statute for seconded teachers, critical analysis of the mechanisms for evaluating the knowledge acquired during the visit to the museum, but also questioning the status of the pupil at the museum, these works are generally characterized by a proselyte presentation of the class's visit to the museum and by a critical discourse often quite virulent about the alleged lack of communication between these two emblematic institutions of the secular and hegemonic conception of knowledge and culture” (Cohen-Azria, 2000) [9]. To illustrate even more current set of problems existing in the field, let us analyze recently developed concepts. Modern scholars elaborate a system of societal aspects...
regarding museum pedagogy, from social class in audience segmentation and social inclusion of social interaction in creating museum environment to social marketing [4]. Although G. Black defines the types of museum interactions, he does not mention specific educational traits of schoolers. Other studies present findings in dividing visitors based on their age and levels of education: “educated and informed” [6]. It is resourceful for the beginning of creating programs, but does not go further, to outcomes of visits. Also, the findings are not applicable for interaction between schools and museums for they consider only the dialogue inside of museums’ visits.

An intuitive approach exists in the praxis of museums when museum's administration tries to resolve the issue of social differentiation on the perceptive level without any additional academic research, based on the common sense, which is, apparently, could be resourceful and productive. For example, at Stanford Art Museum, Palo Alto, California, USA, the staff is trained not only to greet visitors, but also politely inquire about their interests, needs, and expectations visitors have when entering the museum. Here, we see the vox populi when real productive praxis is more efficient that the scholastic view. In this case, practitioners feel the situation better, by not only reflecting the existing problem, but also resolving it without overthinking it and immediately converting the issue into practical actions.

The problem modern museum and education community discusses is a lack of communication between school educators and their attempts to connect with museum professionals (Cohen-Azria, Gonzalez, Kalugina, Olesina, Poli, Polyudova). “This problem, as has already been pointed out, opens the way to interdisciplinary research (didactics and museology, educational psychology and museology, didactics and semiology, didactics and communication)” [9]. Scholars and practitioners throughout the world develop different terms and practical ways to resolve the issue.

2 METHODOLOGY

The article presents one educational project based on the experiential connection of school educators and scholars. The social profile considered in the article was destined to help all professionals involved in museum activities to organize efficient experience for school students in art museums.

The experiment embraces following educational and cultural institutions in Moscow:

- schools #46, 324, 345, 354, 875, 1955;
- museums: State Tretyakov Gallery, Museum of Moscow, House-museum of M. A. Bulgakov, Moscow State Museum of S. A. Esenin, Museum Union of Museum Culture named after M. I. Glinka, Center of Modern Culture “Garazh” (Moscow).

In other Russian cities, the total amount of educational and school institutions was 19. The total amount of 12-15 year old school students participated in the experiment was 670.

The phases of the experiment:

- 2018 - diagnostic - working on the definition of the “social profile”; development of the diagnostic materials; psychological and educational preparation of the experiment participants.
- 2019 - acting - creating predisposed conditions for collaboration between a school and a museum; running special classes in schools and museums; analysis of the results. (The phase is in the progress. At this time, there are only preliminary results of the experiment).

To reach the point of practical application modern theories represent, our team has decided to narrow a description based on the point of school students and their visits to art museums. Creating such specific and narrow profile supports two goals. First, it develops theories existed up to the current time, leading it to the final specific level of a specific definition. Second, it serves to practical application museum educators can use right now, from the moment of creating the chart and the scale. The combination of theoretical and practical perspectives enhances the importance of academic research and brings it to the next level of productivity.

The research team has started from the basic principles of educational profiles as was mentioned in the Introduction.

The standard educational profile includes the most reasonable points for studying purposes:

- age,
- type of education,
psychological characteristics of the age.

- a topic students study at the moment of a visit (regarding a museum visit) and its objectives.

The research team worked collaboratively with the teachers from the groups created at several schools in Moscow, Yaroslavl, and other Russian cities. These schools have the experimental groups of teachers who are interested in improving teaching methods. The teachers work collaboratively with the scholars of the Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies. The scholars and the teachers have been discussing programs, topics and assignments of museum tours as well as students’ responses to the tours. After collecting the data of programs, objectives, teachers’ reflective notes, and students’ questionnaires, the research group analyzed them and created a preliminary student’s social profile.

In the modern world of changes, educators feel a lack of information when a group of students comes to visit a museum. It is specifically relevant for art museums because of peculiar characteristics of collections. Art museums include items of aesthetic and artistic value. Art objects create specific cultural environment, “aura”, according to W. Benjamin [4]. A visit to an art museum is more about exploring intangible cultural background rather that seeing specific physical objects, as if it is implied in museums of natural history, science, or industry. In art museums, a term “comprehension” is more relevant that the terms “understanding” or “seeing”. Going to an art museum means, from the one hand, meeting art objects from the perspective of their originality, and, from the other hand, acquiring the entire sense of the time as well as the expressive language of art. At art museums, a visit is more concentrated on personal perception and development of the aesthetic experience, not just experience of seeing and observing.

In such circumstances, when feelings and aesthetic values are the core of a visit, educators have to be aware they present the content in the proper context. It is not enough just to deliver information or point out particular issues, it is important to engage visitors’ feelings. The question here is about how educator can engage students’ feelings if they do not know modern generation’s psychological and educational traits.

Although modern society seems to be a blended structure, it exists in a more separated way. Students from different social strata could dramatically differ from each other [8], [11]. For example, students from private schools or schools of deep studying a specific subject have better attention span that their peers from regular public schools. Students’ studying skills differ based on the type of a school. Hence, a program for students from these two areas will be different by default, just based on students’ social profiles. We do not mean to stigmatize specific levels of schools, but just claim the results of well-known facts that could impact a museum visit.

What can educators do about the issue? Obviously, they cannot and must not step aside of the problem. Otherwise, the thoughtful development of museum programs could change the situation drastically. Based on research and experimental activities, the research group offers variations of different planning inside of the same program. For example, educators plan the same visit with the same outcome as a general agenda. Then, keeping in mind different social profile of students, educators develop different directors of the same tour, according to the social profile peculiarities. This strategy allows embracing all specific details that could occur inside of one program. The strategy gives an educator the opportunity to balance between different levels of perceivers and their ability to comprehend information, impression, and responses. School students are highly unpredictable, and their reaction could vary and change any second. If a museum educator sees a change in students’ perception and reaction, he/she could jump from a simpler activity to a harder one and vice versa. The most important part of the strategy is the planning itself based on students social profiles.

In the experimental process, which is still current, the research group tries to picture social profiles of modern schoolers from the perspective of creating the most efficient museum praxis. While discussing components of the profile, the group considers different aspects of social, educational, and psychological aspects. A specific attention is paid to social specifications of local areas from which students comes.

3 RESULTS

The preliminary results of the experiment were discussed among specialists of different educational fields, such as schoolteachers, museum curators, and academic scholars. Practical applications were not a part of only one group of professionals, but the essence of interconnections between the research teams. The two main types of schoolers’ profile were created as a preliminary final product for schools and museums.
The first type is called a “general” profile that includes the most common categories of students’ characteristics. This type of profile could be applied for any students’ group because it is based on general principles of school and museum philosophy. The research team has decided do not change the traditional set of information that is usually included in the basic form of museum visitors: age, type of education, psychological characteristics of the age, educational characteristics of pupils, and topic of a tour.

The second type is a specific profile that narrows the vision of educators’ objectives in terms of museum pedagogy. It could differ depends on students’ needs. We are not going to elaborate this part of typology for it will take our research to another level. Some types of special profiles could be a special needs profile, a psychological profile, a vocational profile, etc. We believe this area of research is awaiting for new scholars for the modern societal picture is highly diverse and needs special attention.

The special attention of the educational research the article describes was narrowed by the need to understand the ways museum educators have to apply.

Thus, the “social profile” of modern schoolers includes:

- Understanding generational traits
- Educational characteristics of a certain age
- Technological orientation of a group
- Cultural background
- Social background and skills

It is hard to define the impact a museum has on personal development that is why the experiment considers changes in basic personal parameters important for museum activities, such as participation, original point of view, communicative skills, and empathy. During two years educators, curators, and scholars have been observing the influence museum activities have on students’ personal development. The Fig. 1 represents the results of the two-year research. The first trait is “participation”, second - “original point of view”, third - “communicative traits”, fourth - “empathy”. The blue color represents the beginning stage, the red - the intermediate stage.

For modern teenagers immersed into social media and gadgets a creative point of view in understanding the world is an essential skill. Schoolers expressed this importance through interviews and conversations when they mentioned how eager they are in producing something unique and original. According to the research, such creative traits were enhanced through museum activities not only inside museums, but also in other students’ activities, such as studying, sport, hobby. Communicative ability became more flexible and was transfer from discussion of art works to life itself.
4 CONCLUSIONS

Though the range of museum activities could be resourceful for the process of socialization, it is hard to pursue without understanding personal traits of modern students. To delineate this intangible area, the article defines a specific term, “social profile” of school students, applied to Museum Pedagogy. The term includes different components that help museum educators and curators to understand where to apply resources to include museums into social environment. The article relates the social profile with museum activities that could be organized as special “social fields” in museum environment; and also describes possible areas of social application for museum visits.

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