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Museum As Information and Communicative Educational Institution

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Abstract

This article discusses new functions of museums and considers the role of a school museum as an information and communication space within an educational institution. The author presents a variety of genres of school museums and examines their communicative potential in the context of the culture of participation. It is important to note that a range of pedagogical challenges aimed at developing polycode texts in the museum space includes the students' participation in the creation of a virtual museum. New forms of school museums (news Museum, mini-city Museum) and activities (art residence) are proposed. The activity of school Museum is viewed through the prism of informal education. Special attention is paid to using an interactive technology as an effective learning tool. The creation of a virtual school Museum acts as a new learning tool. Therefore, the author concludes that a school museum and its operation need examining from the perspective of informal education.

Keywords: school museum; information and communication space; educational institution, polycode text; virtual museum; informal education

1. Introduction

Modern education is in a state of paradigm shift: traditional education associated with the translation and reproduction of a certain set of knowledge, mastering the skills and abilities that ensure the application of this knowledge in certain conditions, undergoes changes. The emphasis is being shifted towards the construction of ways to obtain new knowledge necessary for the solution of educational tasks. This leads to an understanding of the need for new subjective experience – self-education and reflection as the most important components of personal development. Hence, such attention is paid to education as the sphere forming not only rational and intellectual abilities of children and adolescents, but also developing the emotional, personal, spiritual and moral components of the individual.

It means that the priority remains for such educational spaces that provide the opportunity to include the learner in a variety of activities (gaming and training, design,

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research and performance) and communication. School museums at a new stage of their development can become the cultural and educational environment in which opportunities for personal development are fulfilled and acquisition of new socio-cultural experience is taking place.

If the first stage – from the second half of the XVIII century to the early twentieth century – museums at educational institutions solved the problem of providing visibility of the learning process. This applies to the first university museums – "Museum" of the Mining Institute of St. Petersburg, Mineralogical and Zoological museums of Moscow University, and museums in zemstvo schools. They also implemented scientific and educational tasks through the publication/ presentation of natural objects or artifacts. Then in the post-revolutionary period, museums were given a new socio-political function and their role as public institutions was defined as educating citizens in the spirit of communism in the cultural and ideological environment.

The educational function dominated throughout the twentieth century emphasizing the task of disseminating knowledge of a scientific nature. Work with the visitors was ideological and educational in nature, in which the emphasis was on the development of the proposed information. Special attention was focused on the design of exhibitions, stands, museum corners, and the guides presented the stories about the exhibits, which was the basis for excursions. Communication was unidirectional – from the guide to the visitor. The nature of the museum text was focused on the passive perception of the museum objects – real, written, and visual. Dynamic perception of the museum exhibition was associated with the physical movement of the visitor from stand to stand, but the actual "route" was originally determined and that provided a linear and unidirectional movement.

Since the end of the 1980s, changes in the museum practices have been connected with the formation of the museum communication model [1], which considers the visitor as an active participant of the cultural dialogue based on partnership. The museum text becomes nonlinear and assumes the complex structure of the projected interactive museum space.

The transformations of museums connected with redefinition/addition of traditional functions they performed in culture – collecting, storage, studying and representation of cultural and historical information – create conditions for search of new forms of interaction with the visitors. As V.V. Motina rightly remarks, the modern museum is to become the place of a cultural and historical dialogue, and for this purpose it needs to look for new forms of communication between the audience and cultural values [2].

In this context, school museums can become the spaces where the creative visitor is being actualized, both ready to perceive the most different cultural practices and capable of creative and transformative activity.

2. Methods

The research is used the discursive analysis enabling revealing the dependence of school museum practices on the sociocultural environment and discovering their communicative potential.

3. Discussion

The establishment of the communicative pragmatic paradigm in education assumes transformation of school museums into the spaces of socio-cultural interaction. Openness as a new functional quality of the institutions, that earlier were closed in themselves, implies the search of new forms and methods of work adequate to the solution of the new educational tasks.

Today, school museums hold discussions and "round tables" devoted to the topical issues of the history and the present, creative presentations of the students, teachers and parents. They also implement various cultural and educational projects. School museums aspire to use interactive forms of work with high school students, holding excursions involving game elements, for example, quests; dramatized excursions; master classes on creation of wartime objects, etc. The students are welcome to participate in the museum actions, such as the Night of Museums.

Formation of the information and communication educational environment, which is a set of conditions providing implementation of activities and interaction of the users with the information resource through the IT interactive means, has become one of the innovations of the modern school. Identification of the place and the importance of the school museum in the information and communication educational environment becomes a relevant task. It is possible to note that new opportunities have been open with the use of information technologies: creation of the virtual museum expositions, organization of the virtual excursions and network interaction of the remote school museums.

Let us outline some activities of the school museum as an information and communication educational institution.

We consider the school museum as a social institution fixed in the space of an educational establishment and providing reproduction of the joint practical activities of the students, teaching staff and social partners. We understand the information and communicative educational institution as a social practice relating to the organization of joint activities of the students, teachers and social partners, thus providing realization of educational needs for the communication mediated by IT.

Communication in the museum space provides a dialogue between the individual and culture through the museum object, and this familiarizes with the historical and cultural heritage. Communication practice in the museum is built on the concept of "a culture of participation", that is an active realization of social activity of the individual or a group of people.

The culture of participation becomes a necessary condition for the existence of the new type of the museum – not only "a treasury", but also a communicative platform – an informal space created for fruitful communication and discussion of problematic situations and/or ideas by the representatives of various social groups. In such circumstances, "the museum becomes the moderator of the dialogue and the platform ready to give the chance to different people and different groups of community to represent their position, to contribute significantly and participate" [3].

How feasible is the idea of the culture of participation in the space of the school museum? This question was partly answered during the analysis of the children's participation in the socially important projects – the research carried out by R. Hart [4]. He considers that participation in the "grown-up affairs" is essential for the children's personal development, their independence and readiness for adulthood. For instance, the work at the school museum can become one of such affairs. The nature of children and teenagers' participation in the school museum projects from the moment of their creation and the choice of their orientation to the determination of their uniqueness and distinctive features, depends not only on the students' personal aspirations and interests, but also on the teacher.

What high school students do within the space of an educational institution museum is in some way set by its genre, which is the conventional form of its existence in the culture. Researchers distinguish the following genres of school museums: the museum exposition (an exhibition), the museum workshop (a studio), the museum laboratory, the museum club, the museum theater, the museum-adaptation center, the museum-excursion bureau, the museum-game room, the museum-cafe, and the museum-fair. Each of these genres is described in the Methodological Recommendations on the organization of school museums and development of children's local history associations [5],

but not all of the genres enlisted are realized as school museum projects. At the same time, their "communicative potential" is very high as it allows engaging children of the most different ages and involving teachers and parents in the cooperation, actualizing students' "personal resources, opportunities and reserves", providing an active position in the interaction with other people [6].

Developing the idea of the genre variety of the school museum, we could expand the offered list at the expense of the "adult" museums already existing in the world. The format of those can contribute to the development of the students' communicative potential.

Museum of news. An analog of such museum is the American Newseum – the museum in Washington devoted to journalism and realization of the right to freedom of speech. One of its exhibitions clearly presents the idea of the museum: One Nation with News for All. The ways of news presentation and reportage photos become the basic museum objects, and the public discussion provoked by the exhibitions defines a critical view on the role of media in the life of our contemporaries.

Let us imagine what the school museum of news can exhibit. Apparently, there are exhibitions devoted to the significant events of the national history (Russian, regional, of this or that settlement, of a particular family) where the past comes to life in the newspaper clippings and photos. Such exhibitions can become a result of research work, and a "round table" or debates on various issues can be held in the form of a museum class, where the students get a new experience of historical reflection. Assuming that the exposition will be devoted to today's issues, the discussion will go in line with the understanding of the current issues about "how the news is made" and "what fake information is". So, the school museum can become the space for activity of a school press center or a media club.

"Mini-town" museum. The mini-town form has been a quite widespread practice of museumification of cultural spaces in the last decades. For example, in the late 1970s, several German museums jointly created the museum "Mini-Munich" where visitors could learn about the culture and mode of life of Bavaria how life was organized in the ancient German cities, and also could get to know which occupations were widespread and try their hand at them. In various regions of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Austria, a model of the time machine developed with the help of computer technologies is exposed. These things can transport visitors back through the ages revealing the mysteries of the past and allowing them to touch the European history and culture.

Certainly, we do not suggest the creation of a whole settlement in the school museum, but a large number of school museums possess the objects of the past; so, the creation of small "cities of the craftsmen", "cities of arts" or "cities of the scientists" is possible. It is possible to recreate even a whole city placing the models of the famous buildings in the museum space. It can be a space that gives children free rein of imagination. Such "mini-cities" can be also considered a place for historical reconstructions producing the effect of immersion in the everyday life of the past eras. In this way, they are similar to the genre of the museum theater or museum club.

Apparently, the genre variety of school museums is significant not by itself, but only in the context of the "how to make school museums attractive for modern school students" problem.

Art-residence. The idea of organizing art residences was put forward when considering about artistic transformation of the urban environment and originally included transformation of the dormitories and abandoned areas into the places attractive for life and creative activities. The art-residence format is very popular with young artists who are invited with their art projects that can change the "face" of the territory and help form a new image of the earlier depressive area.

This experience can be transferred to the school museum if the students are offered to create art projects on a certain theme connected with the museum scope or the exposition. New design solutions, artistic allusions or information represented in the forms of an almanac, a photo album or a virtual exposition can "revive" the school museum and make it more attractive for creative initiatives [7].

All the school museums genres possess a common feature – application of the interactive technologies.

As it is known, interactive forms of education imply all the participants' deep involvement in the process of communication and information exchange, the nature of representation and perception of which constantly varies [8].

Thus, an interactive lesson in the museum space can be exemplified with the children and teenagers' participation in the documentation of local history. For example, to form the cultural identity of the high school students in the American and Mexican museums, the students were asked to act as historians telling about their community. During the project, the students collected and systematized family stories, produced creative works which, in turn, became exhibits and received a new "reading" in the context of the daily history.

Creation of a school virtual museum can become one of the productive forms realizing the ideas of the culture of participation in the school museum.

Today, there is a large number of virtual museums and exhibitions in the Internet; virtual branches of large museums open and virtual tours are conducted; virtual travels around historical towns and ecological routes are developed, which may have no analogues in the real world. Virtual "projections" of museums create a new environment, rich with artifacts that can be touched without leaving home [9, 10].

Depending on the specifics and its capacity the museum can determine what exactly its virtual version is and in what form: whether it will be a particular exhibit presentation or a whole exposition, one museum or a museum complex. Also, in what forms acquaintance with the virtual museum will take place – in the form of a travel, an excursion or an entertaining quest. Special focus is given to the content of the virtual museum, the language of information presentation and the ways of its visualization.

In view of the above, within the framework of museum and pedagogical activity there is a problem connected not only with the development of the individual communicative potential, but also with the ability to work with the museum text as with a polycode one. Training in reading and creation of syncretic messages, characteristic of the modern culture (creolized, video verbal texts), becomes a pedagogical task [11]. Training in their creation is not a problem of any of the traditional school subjects. Thus, the school museum can act as a platform of informal education solving the educational tasks through inclusion in active communicative practices.

4. Conclusion

Summing up the results, we note that the school museum as an information and communication educational institution allows educators to solve the educational problems focused on the development of students' "the 21st century skills": acquisition of social interaction experience in the course of creative and research activity. Development of school museums in the conditions of educational modernization assumes new formats of working with students.

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