EMOTIONS IN MUSEUM EDUCATION. POTENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RELATIONSHIP TO CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:

The educational potential of institutions which mediate cultural and historical heritage to their visitors is mostly being associated with transmission of knowledge and with education. It is so despite the fact that museums and other cultural and memory institutions are aware of the important role of psychological specifics of museum (culture, heritage protection) education and of the key role of emotions in the development of a relationship of visitors to cultural and historical heritage and in the effectiveness of education. The article pays attention to psychological aspects of education related both to the museum environment and to the visitors and their cultural competences, the role of experience, attention and regeneration of mental strength in cultural environment. It aims to emphasize the significance of additional benefits of visiting a cultural (museum) institution, such as relaxation and contemplation.

KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

emotions – museum education – museum psychology – cultural and historical heritage – cultural education

Emoce v muzejní edukaci. Potenciál pro rozvoj vztahu ke kulturně-historickému dědictví

1. Introduction

From the aspect of audience, museums are mainly regarded as educational institutions, places where people go to learn and to broaden their intellectual horizons. Some museums are also profiled as destinations attractive for tourists. However, museums can offer much more – they can also be truly healing places where people go to relax, to recharge their batteries and to improve their mental and physical condition. Of crucial importance for deepening the relationship to historical heritage is the awareness of how the knowledge from pedagogical and psychological sciences and neurosciences can be used in museum presentation and education. Particularly important is the creation of an appropriate museum environment (museum architecture), the accent on respecting the knowledge of mental (rational and sensory cognition) and emotional development of man in the process of making exhibitions and permanent displays, preparation of educational programmes and projects (with knowledge of pedagogy, psychology, didactics etc.) and their evaluation (including the feedback from visitors) in professional education and personal/social development of (future) museum pedagogues (pedeutology of museum pedagogy) and other staff in contact with visitors (including the training of staff).

Taking account of psychological principles in the effect to inside and outside of museums and other cultural and memory institutions goes far beyond the competences of museum pedagogy (and museum pedagogues, who in the Czech Republic are legislatively defined

1 WASMER ANDREWS, Linda. Museums as Healing Places: Musings on the mind-body health benefits of museums. Psychology Today [online]. 22. 12. 2010 [accessed 2019-10-19]. Available from www: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/minding-the-body/201012/museums-healing-places>.
as the so-called educators in culture; this professional profile encompasses educational work in various types of memory and cultural institutions). In the effort to develop the most complex and most efficient possible impact on the public, it enables to deepen the connections of museum education to other disciplines and areas (e.g. museum exhibition making, museum architecture, museum marketing and management etc.), having the potential for a wide and systematic interdisciplinary cooperation between museum professions. From among relevant museological subdisciplines we can mention the theories and researches in the area of museum psychology or the so-called neuromuseology. These problems have been adequately discussed and solved in the field of protection and conservation of monuments – in the so-called heritage education. In recent years, above all in foreign museums, the question of applying emotional education tools and using their didactic effects began to be pursued in addition to the remaining educational aspects. The debates, interlinking the current trend in museum education with the previous ones that accentuated knowledge, skills and attitudes, are thus focused on other aspects of educational activity and on the efficiency of a long-term impact of education on visitors.

Within the problem of education of the public towards a relationship to cultural and historical heritage, the text will focus on affective goals and tools and the potential of working with emotions, particularly in the museum environment.

2. Education towards a relationship to cultural and historical heritage

Cultural (and historical) heritage in general represents a sum of cultural assets, works and values inherited from past generations, which are further subdivided into tangible and intangible cultural property. Cultural heritage constitutes the feeling of identity and continuity and supports therewith the respect to cultural diversity and human creativity and it is in public interest to preserve these elements for the future. The social value of cultural heritage, according to Hana Havlíčková, Petr Hudec and Martina Indrová, can be considered from the perspective of three strategies of its sustainability (sustainable development), leading not only to preservation but also to further increase in the value of the legacy of past generations in the form of heritage protection, education and marketing. The social value of cultural heritage is sustainable in the long term only when the effects of these three strategies are in mutual balance. Experiences from abroad have shown that, as regards the sustainability of the world’s cultural diversity, a well-considered educational activity and its impact on the value orientation and attitudes of the public play an equally important role as the practical measures leading to physical and legislative protection of existing components of cultural heritage and promotion of emergence of new artefacts. In terms of heritage protection, the above-mentioned team of authors defines education in historical environment as a specific type of interpretation of cultural heritage, which exhibits common traits with education in museum institutions. The subject of interest are movable monuments (objects) in authentic context as well as immovable monuments and protected areas, with emphasis on their genius loci. From the pedagogical perspective we rather speak of heritage education and the pedagogue engaged in heritage education or, in other words, education in historical environment, is usually referred to with a working term

...
heritage pedagogue. The main objective of heritage education is to develop a positive relationship of all generations to cultural and historical heritage. In connection with transmission of education content in the context of heritage education, the interpretation of cultural heritage is defined as an art to explain the significance and cultural heritage education, the interpretation of content in the context of heritage historical heritage. In connection of all generations to cultural and to develop a positive relationship for leisure activities from the considerations about individual historical heritage.

3. Psychological preconditions and specifics for the formation and development of a relationship to cultural and historical heritage

The umbrella aspect of the formation and development of a relationship to cultural and historical heritage. It is the term educator in culture, which in the Czech legislation (Czech National System of Occupations) since 2018 covers the educational activity of workers in cultural and memory institutions, particularly museums, heritage buildings and libraries. Unlike this cumulative definition, a pedagogical worker, referred to as heritage pedagogue, is defined as a person who is able to recognize the educational potential of a particular heritage building, site or process and to mediate it to the public, following the educational goals and procedures appropriate to the relevant audience; heritage pedagogue is a guide to those who learn about the environment of cultural heritage. The development of a museum institution, apart from the education and relaxation level of visiting the museum, also consists in the type and quality of conveniences and other services offered to visitors. The act of visiting museums and its effects are also notably influenced by the physical and sensory accessibility of the museum, information ability, price, time demands, perception of the institution’s image and offer, as well as by the opportunity to apply one’s own thought, employ emotions, develop social contacts and enjoy the possibility to have some rest and refreshment. Each visitor in each museum should feel welcome. This feeling is then strengthened by cosiness and cleanness, display of interest for visitors and by a comfortable interior design achieved through furniture, decorations, colours, fragrances and sounds.

3.1 Experience in cultural education

The expected experience in cultural institutions is tightly related to the personality of every single visitor. Determinant factors are the visitor’s cultural competence and the external and internal conditions of visiting a museum (e.g. motivation, personal preferences and their transformations during the lifetime, expected benefits) as well as the socio-cultural context. Cultural heritage is the topic of debates between representatives of various countries, regions and spheres of activities with different level of involvement of individuals – individualised perception of some cultural values and key issues and aspects, which can comprise nationality, sex, ethnicity, social rank, confession, poverty, civilisation diseases, professional qualification and age. As regards the emotional effect, we must therefore take into consideration that some individuals may perceive their museum experience as a trigger of negative feelings, such as the feeling of detachment, severance or ignorance, or they may feel the urge to find oneself.

Museum visitors, exactly like the museums themselves, create certain typology of their own personal profiles. The extent and quality of...
their experiences and the personal 
**benefits of visiting museums**
are tightly related to preferences for particular types of museums according to their profile and the relevant expected experiences. Linda Wasmer Andrews, with reference to a research conducted by the Smithsonian Institution, characterizes four types of experiences, which the museum visitor perceives as the most self-satisfying ones:

1) **object experiences** – enabling to observe unique, valuable or aesthetically high-valued objects, 

2) **cognitive experiences** – influencing the acquisition of knowledge or deepening of understanding, 

3) **introspective experiences** – influencing the imagination in time and space or understanding the meaning of events, 

4) **social experiences** – influencing the interaction with others or observation of the learning process in children.

The majority of museums offer a combination of one part or of all of these four types, where the object experience is mostly dominant in art museums, cognitive experience in technical museums, introspective experience in historical museums and social experience in children's museums.

Several authors pay an increased attention to the typology of experiences; for example, Neil and Philip Kotler specify the recreational, social, educational, aesthetical (visual and sensory), celebrative and enchanting museum experiences. These are described by John Falk and Lynn Dierking as a result of interaction between three contexts – personal (visitor’s), social (in interaction with the surrounding world) and physical (museum).

However, Ladislav Kesner at the same time warns about an excessive use of the Czech term prožitík (in fact enjoyment, not mere experience) in relation to museums (this might be connected with possible inaccurate translation of texts from the English language where the word experience has two Czech equivalents with slightly different meaning – zážitík/prožitík and zkušenost, comm. LJ) in the context of various interactive, adrenaline, authentic and participative activities at the expense of “normal” regarding and viewing. This generates a dangerous contradiction between “active experience” and simple “regarding”, i.e. “perception of static objects or the experience of space in a monument.”

3.2 **Attention and regeneration of mental strength while visiting a cultural institution**

The premises of a museum (or some other cultural and memory institution) represent a constant emotional, intellectual and visually stimulating environment of a particular institution. It encompasses three mutually interlinked elements, namely atmosphere – dynamics – experience, which are related both to the building itself, its interior spaces and exhibition rooms, and to the overall climate of the institution, i.e. how it emotionally impacts the visitors and how they feel inside.

The importance of natural environment and authentic places – in contrast to impressive monumental buildings overflowing with numbers of exhibits and symbols with many educational meanings (causing the risk of overstimulation of visitors by an excessive amount of stimuli – comm. LJ) – is accentuated in the **attention regeneration theory** by the psychologists Rachel and Stephen Kaplan (1980s). According to this theory, many usual daily activities require a directed (voluntary) attention, which is determined by a great deal of cognitive effort. Excessive directed attention may lead to the so-called directed attention fatigue (mental exhaustion), which is characterised by the inability to concentrate, irritability, impulsiveness, frustration, fatigue and lower performance efficiency in fulfilling the duties. Regeneration of this ability demands the activation of automatic attention. The Kaplan theory, verified by research and confirming the effective impact of spending time in nature (natural environment contains fascinating objects that automatically captivate human attention and help to mitigate the negative effect of directed attention fatigue), is characterised by four important attributes. Australian researcher Jan Packer applied them to the potential of museum environment and modified them as follows:

1) **fascination** or involuntary attention focused on all interesting things around us, 

2) taking a walk outdoors or visiting a museum as a **place of retreat** from daily routine and an opportunity to let oneself be absorbed by a new world,

17 WASMER ANDREWS, Linda. Museums as Healing Places: Musings on the mind-body health benefits of museums. Psychology Today [online]. 22. 12. 2010 [accessed 2019-10-19]. Available from www: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/minding-the-body/201012/museums-healing-places>.

18 KESNER, Ladislav. Marketing a management muzel a památek. Praha: Grada, 2005, p. 117.

19 Ibidem, pp. 116–117.

20 AMBROSE, Timothy and Crispin PAINE. Museum Basics. London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 220–222.

21 WASMER ANDREWS, Linda. Museums as Healing Places: Musings on the mind-body health benefits of museums. Psychology Today [online]. 22. 12. 2010 [accessed 2019-10-19]. Available from www: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/minding-the-body/201012/museums-healing-places>.
3) occupation of attention or
detection of many stimuli to be
processed or to be kept in mind,

4) consonance with the
environment, or examination of
exhibits which satisfy our personal
interests and needs.

It turns out that the peace of mind
achieved during leisure “walks”
(no matter if by enjoying art, by
admiring science or by immersing
oneself in remote times and places)
may help individuals feel relief
and “take a breath again”. In
Packer’s research (2008), the visitors
who were asked to name the benefits
of museum experiences leading
to regeneration of attention have
mentioned e.g. relaxedness, well-
being, serenity and contemplation.

Particularly beneficial in this
regard proved to be the interactive,
stimulating, didactic and funny
presentations as well as the
necessity to offer enough rest areas
for possible relaxation, seating and
refreshment. On the other hand,
there is an undesirable museum
fatigue syndrome (colloquially
called “museum feet”), which is
a specific type of exhaustion of
museum visitors from a prolonged
standing or slow walking through
a museum without any possibility
of taking a rest. It can be caused
and further worsened mainly by
learning in standing position, which
is typical of museums and other
cultural and memory institutions,
by disorientation in exhibition rooms
and exhibits, use of the eyesight
without any longer connection to the
other senses like touch, hearing and
smell, long observation of different
but very similarly looking objects,
lack of contrasts, monotonous
environment, crowds of people,
inappropriate temperature.

A good overall concept of
institution premises and their
equipment, which is further
strengthened by a systematic and
didactically and psychologically
well-considered educational effect,
enhances the understanding of
how the participation in cultural
and creative activities can produce
an evident and measurable
impact on physical health and
well-being of visitors, or how
a regular cultural consumption
(e.g. visiting a museum, gallery or
concert) “stimulates the existence
of humans and brings them balance,
representing a value which prolongs
their life”. Although many questions
still remain unanswered, this topic,
just as intentional promotion of
visitor’s emotional experience,
represents a huge potential for
museums.

3.3 Emotions in museum
education

The cognitive, sensorimotor and
social learning are pursued with
increasing intensity, mainly in
museum education. Apart from
that, an intensified professional
discussion is also held on the
necessity of cultural institutions
to develop a directed working
with emotions and to support
the emotional impact on visitors,
which influences the quality of
visitor’s cultural experience.

Such an example might be the
2019 Connected Audience
conference in Berlin, which was dealing with
this problem. The main thematic
sessions within the conference were
based on its subtitle The Role of
Emotions in Museum and Cultural
Experiences. They were focused on:

1) building respect, magic and
empathy in museums and in
cultural experiences,

2) the role of emotions in visitor
engagement and satisfaction,

3) emotion as the driving force in
decision making and its potential
for creation of the programme offer
and marketing of institutions.

We understand emotions as the
fundamental aspects of human
behaviour, which influence learning
and the development of memories.
They are determined by social
factors and may help establish
connections which are very
important for cultural institutions
and their activities in the field of
development of audience. Museum
experiences in the past were
concentrated too much on the
transmission of knowledge, based
on intellect and logic. However,
researches have shown that emotions are the key factor for the engagement of visitors and that the impact of emotional effect distinctly influences the experiences and effects of the effort to satisfy individual needs of visitors and to establish efficient connections to local communities. For museums and other cultural institutions, the working with emotions represents a challenge in exhibition making and development of their educational activity and particular programmes and activities targeted at audience.

From the perspective of museum didactics, the creation of educational programmes and fulfilment of the educational mission of various presentation forms and museum work with visitors involve experiential education. It is a didactic approach based on working with emotions and on acquisition of knowledge through visitor’s own experience, often in combination with object learning, which is a characteristic feature of museum institutions. In order to strengthen the effectiveness of museum education, it is suitable to deliberately promote the so-called optimal experience (flow) – the setting of a positive state of mind, full of concentration, in which the museum activities are conducted by participants very successfully, they are enjoyed by the visitors and are accompanied by the feeling of spontaneous delight and captivation, where everybody forgets the time and overcomes the boundaries of self.29

4. Conclusions
In recent years, apart from the educational role of museums and other cultural institutions also some other aspects have been discussed with increasing intensity – cultural competences of visitors and their motivation to visit a cultural institution, inner processes which are taking place during education and are based on, and retrospectively influence, the visitor’s personality from a psychological perspective. These processes, besides the didactic quality of education, also incorporate the maintaining of attention and deliberate working with the emotions of visitors, and promotion of “well-being”. Cultural education (museum education, heritage education), apart from the requirement for cognitive or social development, thus gradually draws attention to musings on other levels of qualitative benefits for the visitors, which have the potential to positively influence the quality of everyday life of individuals. Institutions are able to achieve this undoubtedly ambitious objective by promoting the development of affective goals and education tools and by the effort to transform the institution into an environment which stimulates, guides and helps regenerate the mental strength of visitors. The current vision of cultural and memory institutions, which is so far noticeable in theoretical works and in the practice of museum institutions, is to exert a balanced effect on intellect, socio-cultural and value development and emotions, to promote motivation, interest and attention of visitors and to offer space for contemplation and recreation of strength in an adequately stimulating environment.

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