

# Museum as an Educational Resource

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**Abstract** — The article assesses the role of museums in the process of forming professional competencies of would-be teachers studying at the History Department. The museum space for future history teachers is an area where the students not only have museum practice. They come to the museum to work with documents while writing their course papers and theses and also bring schoolchildren there during their teaching practice. There are also classes in a variety of subjects given to the students themselves during the educational process. The effectiveness of museum pedagogy is recognized all over the world, as evidenced by the wide geography of research on this issue: Greece, Spain, Canada, Russia, the United States, Taiwan, Turkey, Croatia, etc. The information about the effectiveness of using the potential of museums within higher education was collected through various procedures: the study of reports and diaries of teaching practice based on the museums in the region, reviews of the museum staff about the work of the trainees, analysis of the essays written by the students on the topic “Museum as a pedagogical phenomenon” and evaluation sheets of the viewed expositions. The made conclusions are based on descriptive analysis, a statistical method, and a questionnaire. Being immersed in the life of the museums during the training practice, as well as in the capacity of visitors, the students themselves appreciated the quality of the exhibitions and interactive classes. This work allows us to confidently state that cooperation between universities and museums should grow stronger and expand.

**Keywords** — *interactive forms of education, museum pedagogy, museum, educational process, professional competence.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, we have regarded the museum as a repository of artifacts or natural objects that were recognized as important for preservation, study, and display for each new generation. During the educational process, museum expositions were mainly used as visual illustrations of the studied subjects. Students perceived visiting the museum, at best, as entertainment, and at worst, as an indispensable but boring extracurricular activity.

In modern education, the attitude to the potential of museum expositions has changed significantly, especially when it comes to the training of would-be teachers who must have a broad outlook, communicative qualities, and a creative

approach towards solving various issues of the educational process. To form professional competencies of future teachers, it is necessary to use active teaching methods, and search for them has led university teachers to the museum space. The lecture-seminar system of teaching assumes a rather passive role of students, it is necessary to bring them into the category of “active players”.

The tandem of the educational process and the museum environment has become relevant and effective, both in connection with the search for active forms of teaching and in connection with the change in the museum environment, the increased communicative function of the museum.

Currently, museum employees prefer not so much the popularizing but educational function of expositions, which have ceased to be static, entirely illustrative. Traditional ways of getting to know the exhibits are combined with the use of multimedia technologies and other audio-visual tools. The museum is becoming a more flexible environment in which static exhibits coexist with various interactive, virtual forms of interaction with visitors.

Museum specialists and teachers agree on an understanding of the need for useful cooperation for both sides. This is evidenced by the attention paid to this problem by specialists from different subject areas in different regions of the world.

It should be noted that a significant number of researchers have paid attention to the issues of methods of including classes based on museum expositions in the educational process [1, 2], and forming a special social and educational environment for students with the help of museum pedagogy [3, 4, 5].

Museum pedagogy has found application in training environmental specialists in Taiwan and Cuba [6, 7]. The management of higher educational institutions readily attracted students to the life of the museum, and joint research projects were developed.

An interesting experience of creating a “flexible virtual space connecting schools and museums” [8] was introduced in Spain. As part of this program, there was an integration of

exhibition objects, telepresence of museum employees, simulation, and training virtual quests. As a result, the educational motivation has increased, and the OpenSim virtual platform has become the basis for multilateral cooperation between educational institutions in the region. The question of interactive classes based on museum expositions is found in many studies [9, 10], this type of educational activity enables to feel the involvement of students in the studied problem.

Researchers working in all regions of the world emphasize the need for close contacts between museums and educational institutions, expressing the opinion that joint efforts will ensure "the revival and promotion of cultural heritage in the direction of innovative educational approaches" [11, p. 101] leading to the cultural stability of society. Besides, museum centers have become one of the environments that stimulate the research interest of students [12], and joint research projects, training programs, consulting and other forms of cooperation bring invaluable benefits to improving the experience of scientific work of students.

The purpose of the article is to justify the feasibility of using the educational resource of museums of Yekaterinburg. Expansion of the digital space and making it more humanitarian [13], both in the educational process and in the museum space, will make it possible to prepare graduates of the institutions of "pedagogical education" to solve a number of professional tasks defined by the Federal state educational standard: pedagogical, methodological, project, cultural and educational ones [14, p. 4].

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Today, interdisciplinarity has become one of the most important methodological principles of modern Russian education. School modernization is closely related to the transition to the concept of "life-long education". The new educational paradigm is aimed at developing students' abilities to acquire knowledge independently, rather than to assimilate a large amount of it in a ready-made form.

Practical use of museum pedagogy has a wide range and the choice of a specific tool depends on the training profile of intending teachers and the subject area of the training course. This paper analyzes the experience of cooperation between the Department of Russian history of the Ural State Pedagogical University and a number of museums of Yekaterinburg in the process of training teachers at the History Department.

Various procedures were used to determine the vectors of cooperation and evaluate its effectiveness. In accordance with the curriculum for students at the History Department, it is assumed that the teaching practice will be based on the local museums. The reports and diaries of practice, reviews of the museum staff about the work of the trainees allow us to draw conclusions about the degree of formation of the planned professional competencies. Entries in the book of reviews of excursions conducted by the trainees also indicate the possession of the necessary content and communication skills.

In the process of studying various historical subjects, students took part in training sessions based on museum

expositions and, as a result, they were asked to write an essay on the topic "Museum as a pedagogical phenomenon", and they also filled out evaluation sheets on the viewed expositions. A comparative analysis of the responses made it possible to develop recommendations for the museums' employees.

The success of cooperation between the University and the city's museums was confirmed by the analysis of the source and historiography database of course papers and final qualifying works of the students at the History Department.

## III. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

In accordance with the agreements on cooperation with the Museum of History of Yekaterinburg, the Sverdlovsk Regional Museum of Local Lore named after Claire, and the Ernst Neizvestny Museum of Art, students studying at the History Department are trained on their basis. This article analyzes the experience of 2017 – 2019.

The trainees were familiarized with the expositions and collections of the museums, took part in the preparation of an exposition section or a changing exhibition, and prepared a scenario for an excursion, an interactive class or an event at the museum for schoolchildren. The museums' workers consider that the trainees showed a sincere interest in the issue of improving and developing the communicative function of the museum expositions, and during the period 2017 – 2019 they proposed seven projects of interactive classes or quests to organize on the basis of the museums: three projects within the Museum of the History of Yekaterinburg, three ones on the basis of the Museum of Local Lore, and one project within The Ernst Neizvestny Museum of Art (the museum implements high-tech technologies for representing the life and work of the great sculptor).

The interest and readiness for creative reinterpretation of the museum materials were evaluated on merit by the museums' staff, 87 % of trainees received excellent marks on the results of the practice, 13 % got "good".

Based on the discussion of the topic of the essay "Museum as a pedagogical phenomenon", the fact of weak acquaintance of the majority of students (67 %) with museums of Yekaterinburg was revealed, and some of them (7 %) for the first time in their lives crossed the threshold of this type of cultural and educational institution.

While arguing the students aired different opinions. To some of them, the traditional presentation of exhibits, like that one in the Museum of Local Lore, seemed more adorable. For instance, the insinuating silence of the rooms, the opportunity to immerse yourself in the entourage of different epochs. Someone was attracted by interactive classes with visitors of different ages, widely offered by the Museum of the History of Yekaterinburg as they experienced inclusion in the specifics of the time directly. "The lesson of penmanship" comes to the mind, and as Maria Bokhan wrote: "... an important reason for visiting museums is the possibility of practical development of the knowledge that we get at lectures. For me, it was an amazing experience to be able to take an ancient pen in my

hand, try to write the “first” clumsy letters, and feel like a student who, several centuries ago, just as diligently tried to write his name on a sheet of paper.” The Ernst Neizvestny Museum of Art was highly appreciated, where artifacts and technical tools are delicately combined to allow the visitor to delve into the work of the famous countryman.

In the 2018–2019 academic year, teachers and students of the Ural State Pedagogical University and employees of the Sverdlovsk Regional Museum of Local Lore organized a campaign. The students were entrusted with the right to “check” museums for “efficiency and quality”. The first site was the old Poklevsky-Kozell mansion, which houses the classic interior exhibition of the Museum of Local Lore telling about the daily life of the old Yekaterinburg of the late XIX – early XX centuries. After that, the experts went to the Ernst Neizvestny Museum of Art, where the students were immersed in the modern world of museum technologies.

After getting acquainted with the museum expositions, the students evaluated the quality of the museum sites in terms of content, reliability of historical material, attractiveness of the expositions and involvement in the exhibition atmosphere.

What is an interesting museum? Will they bring their students there to study the history of their native city and region? Should museums use gadgets, apply innovative technologies? And how should they build a dialogue with historical exhibits that are of historical value?

According to the performance by 25 students, the following results were stated. The leader for all indicators was the Ernst Neizvestny Museum of Art, where information tools were widely presented. They did not prevent listeners from perceiving the content of the material. The attraction and involvement in the exhibition atmosphere was particularly noted, as visitors were able to make their route themselves and build an interesting dialogue with the historical exhibits in modern language.

The analysis of the responses enabled to correct the organization of museum classes, increasing their concentration in anticipation of the professional (or teaching) practice, so that the students practicing in teaching could test museum pedagogy.

Besides, the students’ feedback made it possible to formulate proposals for the employees of the mentioned museums, in particular, of the Sverdlovsk Regional Museum of Local Lore named after Claire. It is impossible to improve technical equipment without special funding, but to expand interactivity, introduce special classes during which visitors could be part of the cognitive activity process.

The museums of the city are a source of information for local history research made by the students at the History Department. The funds contain an impressive array of materials, photos and films, documentary sources, printed publications, and in the course of sociological research entries from books of visitors’ reviews, etc. can be used. Young researchers who are trained at the History Department are increasingly seeking advice from the museum staff.

Working within the framework of integration of university and museum pedagogy allows broadening the horizons of intending teachers, getting acquainted with the educational potential of the museum environment of the region, and to introduce the basics of museum pedagogy into the professional activities.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Using the educational potential of the museum environment, of course, enriches the educational process, but it causes a lot of difficulties. First, these are organizational problems, for instance the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between a pedagogical university and a museum which is a non-core organization. Second, it is the inflexibility of the school schedule, in which it is impossible to include an off-site class, and moreover, the absolute presence of students is very problematic during the second half of the day. Third, not every museum has a team of employees who are ready to go beyond their usual duties.

So far, cooperation in the field of research work is difficult. We would like to express much gratitude to the staff of the library of the Sverdlovsk Regional Museum of Local Lore named after Claire, who are willing to provide advice and assistance to our students in selecting materials for their course papers and final qualifying works.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Currently, the convergence of universities and museums is gaining momentum, which allows us to update the educational process, make it modern through digitalization and humanitarization.

The museum, as an educational resource, provides exclusive additional or alternative knowledge, it is informal and voluntary and enables to realize the creative potential of the researcher, personal emotional experience that enhances the information received.

The use of the museum environment for the organization of educational and research work, as well as the organization of teaching practice for students at the History Department enables to fully solve the tasks set by the government in the Federal state educational standard 3++ [14, p. 4, 6].

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