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Museum pedagogy in the service of cultivating the aesthetic culture of studious youth

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Rezumat

Pedagogia muzeală în serviciul formării culturii estetice a tineretului studios

Pedagogia muzeală are un rol semnificativ în formarea culturii estetice a tineretului studios, prin crearea unor medii inedite de cercetare, învățare și aprofundare a cunoștințelor în diverse domenii precum: istoria, cultura, știința și arta. Această lucrare reprezintă un studiu teoretico-aplicativ, axat pe valorificarea resurselor muzeale și a patrimoniului cultural în procesul de cultivare estetică a tinerei generații.

Scopul cercetării rezidă în conceptualizarea formării culturii estetice a studenților-arhitecți și designeri prin integrarea unor principii și metode pedagogice specifice educației muzeale, adaptate realității socio-culturale contemporane, menite să contribuie la eficientizarea culturalizării estetice și la sporirea performanțelor academice ale acestora. În articol sunt expuse succint unele viziuni ale cercetătorilor: C. Cucoș, T. Filipski, A. Munteanu, M. Юхневич etc. cu privire la sensibilizarea estetică a studenților-arhitecți și designeri în contextul valorificării patrimoniului cultural.

La fel, sunt propuse o serie de ***strategii pedagogice*** de educație muzeală, aplicabile în cadrul universităților cu profil artistic și orientate spre exploatarea optimă a potențialului educațional al muzeelor în procesul de formare a culturii estetice a studenților-arhitecți și designeri. Totodată, sunt prezentate exemple de bune practici educaționale care elucidează importanța muzeelor în dezvoltarea competențelor artistice și culturale ale studenților-arhitecți și designeri, oferindu-le oportunități de implicare în realizarea proiectelor de restaurare, conservare, revitalizare și reabilitare a monumentelor istorice și a bunurilor culturale, contribuind astfel la protejarea și promovarea valorilor artistice și arhitecturale, la consolidarea conștiinței și culturii profesionale etc.

Cuvinte cheie: pedagogie muzeală, educație muzeală, estetică, cultură, tezaur muzeal, valori istorice

Summary

Museum pedagogy in the service of cultivating the aesthetic culture of studious youth

Museum pedagogy plays a significant role in shaping the aesthetic culture of diligent youth by creating innovative environments for research, learning, and deepening knowledge in various fields such as history, culture, science, and art. This paper represents a theoretical and applied study focused on the utilization of museum resources and cultural heritage in the process of cultivating the aesthetic sensibility of the younger generation.

The purpose of the research lies in conceptualizing the development of the aesthetic culture of architecture and design students through the integration of pedagogical principles and methods specific to museum education, adapted to contemporary socio-cultural realities, aimed at enhancing aesthetic culturalization and improving their academic performance. The article briefly presents some perspectives of researchers: C. Cucoș, T. Filipski, A. Munteanu, M. Yukhnevich, etc. regarding the aesthetic sensitization of architecture and design students in the context of cultural heritage utilization.

Additionally, a set of museum education pedagogical strategies is proposed, applicable within universities with an artistic profile and oriented toward the optimal exploitation of the educational potential of museums in the process of developing the aesthetic culture of architecture and design students. Furthermore, examples of good educational practices are presented, highlighting the importance of museums in developing the artistic and cultural competences of architecture and design students by providing opportunities for their involvement in projects of restoration, conservation, revitalization, and rehabilitation of historical monuments and cultural assets, thereby contributing to the protection and promotion of artistic and architectural values, as well as to the consolidation of professional awareness and cultural responsibility.

Keywords: museum pedagogy, museum education, aesthetics, culture, museum treasury, historical values

Essentially, aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that deeply analyzes the value of *Beauty*. The approach of aesthetics includes the conceptualization and appreciation of both natural beauty and beauty created by humans, encompassing cultural heritage, objects, and works of art.

In this context, both the conceptualization and, especially, the appreciation of beauty are the objectives of aesthetic education, which represents a dimension of education and an essential component of the educational ideal. It is precisely aesthetic education that aims to shape an individual's aesthetic culture.

This serves as the motivation for the present study, which focuses on elucidating the role of museum pedagogy in shaping the aesthetic culture of young scholars. The research examines concrete examples from the training of architecture students and the educational strategies applied by university educators in collaboration with museums, which have proven to be effective in their professional training and the development of their aesthetic culture.

In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that the importance of museums in cultivating individuals is not a recent discovery. However, in certain historical periods, not all social classes had free access to them. Nevertheless, throughout history, a clear trend of interaction between museums, the public, and educational institutions can be observed, aimed at educating and enriching the younger generation.

A representative example from Antiquity is the *Museum of Alexandria*, which housed collections of artifacts, manuscripts, and works of literature and art. Integrated within its structure was also a university, featuring the city's most valuable library.

Researchers in the history and socio-humanistic field [15; 16; 17] point out that although museums in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Modern Era had different organizational structures and statuses, they managed to preserve and promote the stored heritage, including valuable objects and works of art, as well as certain models of public engagement. These aspects have been significant not only for culture, education, and the study of authentic works but also for the development of contemporary science and aesthetics [1; 4; 14].

In the contemporary era, particularly in the second half of the last century and in postmodernity/the 21st century, museums have undergone an architectural reconversion of both their interiors and exteriors, as well as a transformation in their activities. They have adopted a new institutional paradigm centered on active participation in the education and aesthetic cultivation of the general public. Museums now integrate innovative strategies and methods for presenting collections, organizing activities, and implementing diverse educational formats—interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary—adapted to socio-cultural transformations [13; 15] and the requirements of museum pedagogy, which has already established itself as a branch of general pedagogy.

Thus, in the context of modern education, museums have become essential educational spaces for the cultural, aesthetic, and professional development of young people, particularly students from specialized educational institutions (architecture, landscape architecture, design, painting, graphics, etc.). Museum pedagogy offers unique learning opportunities through direct interaction with works of art and cultural artifacts, significantly contributing to the development of aesthetic sensitivity and taste, the stimulation of critical and creative thinking, and the enhancement of students' analytical and synthesis skills. Direct observation of exhibits and works of art encourages students to research and deeply appreciate the diversity of artistic styles and techniques used by their predecessors over time, integrating these influences into their own work [5; 10; 11; 12].

Given that museum pedagogy is a field of educational sciences, a branch of general pedagogy, and an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary science that promotes the historical values of culture—with its specific goal being the implementation of museum education [5, p.12]—and that aesthetic education is the dimension of learning aimed at preparing individuals to perceive, interpret, internalize, and create values [3, p.13], the optimization of the learning process, cultural development, and aesthetic awareness of the public can be successfully achieved through the study, understanding, and appreciation of museum heritage.

The formation of students' aesthetic culture allows us to highlight the following objectives of aesthetic education, which are also relevant to museum education:

General objective:

The formation and development of aesthetic consciousness in human personality, which can be achieved in a museum context through the study and understanding of fundamental concepts of beauty as reflected in art, nature, and culture, stimulating aesthetic appreciation in all its forms (artistic, natural, social, cultural, etc.).

Specific objectives:

The formation and development of both theoretical and practical aesthetic consciousness through the exploration of museum heritage, researching principles and theories of beauty, taste, and aesthetic judgment (the nature of beauty, harmony, expressiveness, and how aesthetic values are perceived across different cultures and historical periods) and applying them in everyday life and creative fields (visual arts, architecture, design, music, literature, etc.).

Concrete/actionable objectives:

Derived from the operationalization of specific objectives, these are achievable through educational activities organized and conducted in formal or non-formal settings, with broad exposure to beauty as it exists or is promoted in society, nature, and art, aligned with general pedagogical values [2, p. 227].

Museums hold a privileged status in assuming the responsibility of cultivating individuals through the appreciation of beauty, becoming an educational opportunity for aesthetic formation, both through the development of specific activities and the establishment of explicit partnerships between museums and educational institutions [3, p. 210], as well as through the involvement of all social institutions.

The goals of museum education and the goals of aesthetic education are cumulative and complementary, depending on the specific content of curricular and extracurricular programs. Museum education is an essential approach in shaping students' aesthetic culture and involves correlating several theoretical and praxeological aspects, including the accumulation of aesthetic experience, the study of the origin and nature of works of art, and the identification of ways to interact between the recipient, authentic art, reality, and society.

The Republic of Moldova, along with the other signatory states of the Faro Convention on Cultural Heritage and Education, under the provisions of Article 13, undertakes the following commitments:

- To integrate the dimension of cultural heritage at all levels of education as an effective tool for interconnection with other areas of knowledge;
- To strengthen the link between cultural heritage education and lifelong learning;
- To promote interdisciplinary research on cultural heritage in educational institutions and museums;
- To support continuous professional development, as well as the exchange of knowledge and practical skills both within and outside the educational system [18, p. 5].

Based on the above, we can conclude that our country is developing, ratifying, and implementing state policies aimed at ensuring the protection, research, sustainability, and promotion of cultural heritage focused on museum education and the formation of the aesthetic culture of young students.

Thus, it is necessary to mention that museum education and the formation of aesthetic culture in students can be achieved through several dimensions, such as:

- ***Professional***, by developing skills and competencies for analyzing and interpreting works of art in a professional context (architecture, design, visual arts, etc.);
- ***Scientific***, through the development of scientific works, combining research methods in museology with those specific to the field of study;
- ***Humanistic***, by promoting cultural and moral values, encouraging empathy and understanding of cultural diversity through universal themes (architecture, design, visual arts, etc.) displayed in museums;
- ***Aesthetic***, by cultivating aesthetic sensitivity, observing and interpreting beauty, proportions, and harmony reflected in various artifacts [16, p. 92].

A major objective of museum pedagogy is to encourage educational cooperation between museums and educational institutions, which involves developing and implementing educational strategies aimed at exploring and leveraging the formative potential of museums.

Based on our in-depth research on the formative potential of museums and the pedagogical experience marked by the relevant outcomes of the students involved, we propose a set of pedagogical strategies for implementing museum education,

which in our view would enhance the formation of aesthetic culture in students from specialized universities and strengthen cooperation between educational institutions and museums:

- Organizing guided tours in architecture, art, and history museums to analyze and perceive through the lens of *functionality versus aesthetics*, architectural styles, artistic styles, construction techniques, restoration, revitalization, etc.
- Organizing visits to national and regional museums to better understand the cultural context, architectural traditions, and artistic heritage inherited from previous generations.
- Creating practical workshops in museums by involving visual artists, architects, designers, etc., where students can paint, draw, or design inspired by the museum exhibits.
- Involving students in virtual or physical reconstruction projects of historical sites and displaying them in museums, using 3D modeling software.
- Organizing temporary exhibitions in museums dedicated to architecture, design, visual arts, etc., with student involvement alongside renowned personalities to present their own works for a bilateral exchange of experiences.
- Developing research programs focused on historical documentation, scientific research, photography, etc., in which students conduct case studies on artifacts, works of art, or heritage sites with the status of historical monuments.
- Organizing thematic conferences in museums that address important topics such as: museum treasure, sustainable architecture, urban design, heritage conservation, etc., for students to actively participate in discussions, debates, or presentations.
- Involving students in creating and presenting virtual tours or interactive guides that cover the most important tourist destinations, architectural landmarks, museum collections, etc., to support *the museum's accessibility for all*.
- Engaging students in volunteer educational programs for museum visitors, allowing students to demonstrate their verbal communication skills by explaining concepts related to architecture, painting, design, aesthetics, etc.

It is worth mentioning that an important technological element is that these strategies can be applied to support and complement the specialized university curricula. Through guided tours and practical activities carried out in museums, students research and better understand the historical, contextual, and cultural journey of creating works of art, architecture, and design. Museums become living laboratories where the theoretical knowledge acquired can be implemented in practice and reflected in their subsequent creations.

Next, we will present relevant examples of experimental validation of the targeted museum education strategies, designed to facilitate the development of aesthetic culture in students from specialized universities, carried out within the collaboration between the *Technical University of Moldova* (TUM) and the *National Museum of Art of Moldova, the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History in Chișinau,* etc., where architecture and design students participated in educational and volunteer programs that included thematic visits, creative workshops, thematic exhibitions, creating drawings inspired by museum collections, restoration, renovation, and revitalization projects, etc., in interior design or the architecture of buildings.

A commendable practice to follow was the development and implementation of the concept-project titled: ***Restoration of the Balioz Manor in Ivancea village, Orhei district***, a true expression of native architectural values, carried out by architecture student Judi Malec, with project coordination by TUM university lecturer Radu Andronic. The project involved a multifaceted and complex investigation of the issue, incorporating a set of scientific research methods such as: scientific documentation, photo documentation, SWOT analysis of the land and existing buildings, urban planning analysis and evaluation, surveys, case studies, comparison, and interpretation of the results, all of which were directed towards achieving the pre-established objectives.

Following preliminary research on the actual condition of the manor's park and buildings, it was found that certain areas were in a poor condition and required urgent intervention through concrete restoration and renovation actions, starting from the technology, functionality, beauty, and initial aesthetic expression. Thus, the analytical study of the investigated issue and the scientific approach led to the prefiguration of a praxiological dimension of an integral, creative, and innovative approach, reflected in the proposed concept-project, which was successfully completed.

In the following, we will present other results achieved by architecture and design students, which also demonstrated the effectiveness of museum education in their aesthetic formation in both formal and nonformal contexts. We considered it important to identify and adjust educational activities to the needs and requirements of the participants, aimed at encouraging the exploration, understanding, and interpretation of aesthetic values through the museum's heritage of historical, scientific, architectural, artistic, technological, etc. interest. The active and interested involvement of students from academic groups ARH-191, ARH-192, and ARH-193 from the Department of Architecture (DA), Faculty of Urbanism and Architecture (FUA), TUM, in the realization of the *architectural-spatial revitalization project of a fragment from the historic center of Chișinau* involved highlighting two essential stages:

- Leveraging and expanding the theoretical knowledge acquired in the courses of *Architectural Design and Urban Studies, as the theoretical and historical foundation for the diploma*, through: scientific documentation, historical analysis, and architectural-urban evaluation of the existing environment (the historic center of Chișinau), photo documentation, case studies, etc.;
- Applying theoretical knowledge in practice by identifying innovative (functional, aesthetic, and sustainable technological) solutions that respond to historical, political, socio-cultural, etc. interests (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4).

The coordinators of the mentioned projects, professors: Dr., Associate Professor, Svetlana OLEINIC, Dr., Associate Professor, Nistor GROZAVU, and Lecturer, Teodor NAVAL, noted that the architecture students demonstrated perseverance, flexibility, creativity, collaboration skills, and rapid adaptability to the challenges of scientific and technological progress.

They also convinced us of the necessity and importance of museum education in the aesthetic formation of architecture and design students. The curricular activities in the *Interior Space Architecture II module*, held at the *National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History in Chisinau* with architecture students from the academic groups ARH-191, ARH-192, ARH-193, DA, FUA, TUM, involved scientific research of documents and exhibits to better understand the architectural styles applied in the interior and exterior design of traditional Romanian houses, materials, finishes, techniques, and technologies used in the construction of residential houses and public buildings (Figures 6, 7, 8).

The course instructor, Dr., Associate Professor, Angela MUNTEANU, states that the architecture students developed interesting projects and creations, harmoniously blending the past, present, and contemporary innovation.

The research, validation, and dissemination of results [6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12, etc.] carried out by us over the years have demonstrated the effectiveness and necessity of aligning the curricular content of university courses such as *Interior Space Architecture, Architectural Design, Urban Studies, Theoretical and Historical Foundation of the Thesis, Form Study, Painting, Architectural Aesthetics*, etc., with museum education.

Also, examples of good practices that highlight the importance of museums as educational resources in the aesthetic formation of architecture and design students can be found at the *Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest*, which has included the course *Architecture and Archaeology* in its study program. This course involves in-depth study of archaeological sites and the mechanisms of safeguarding, conserving, protecting, and promoting national cultural heritage [21].

The *Polytechnic University of Milan* also offers content and courses such as *Architectural Design and History*, supported and complemented by museum educational programs [22].

At the same time, we have established that integrating museum experiences into formal education activities faces several challenges across different dimensions: highly demanding academic programs, the lack of teaching staff with specific museum training, limited financial resources that may affect the organization of systematic visits and collaborations between universities and museums. Addressing these challenges requires a well-thought-out strategic approach that includes sustainable partnerships between the mentioned institutions, accompanied by specific educational programs and flexibility.

In conclusion, museum education activities serving the formation of students' aesthetic culture promote participatory-collaborative learning in a safe and friendly environment, encouraging students to actively engage in discussions and debates with colleagues or experts from various professional fields such as architecture, arts, en-

gineering, education, history, etc., aimed at improving interpersonal and social skills necessary for a successful career of future specialists. Museum education fosters intellectual curiosity, adaptability to new challenges, autonomy, and lifelong learning. By integrating museum activities into the university curriculum, higher education institutions can offer a holistic approach to student education, focusing on the valorization of cultural, artistic, and architectural treasures, preparing creative, well-informed specialists capable of appreciating and transmitting national and global heritage to future generations.

Additionally, the development and implementation of joint research programs, digitization of museum collections, and the creation of interactive platforms dedicated to students could strengthen the role of museum education in the formation of architects and designers, promoting educational policies that support the funding and implementation of museum projects in universities and vice versa.

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Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Evaluation of the works developed by architecture students within the Architectural-Spatial Revitalization Project of a fragment from the historic center of Chisinau [19].

Figures 6, 7, 8. Architecture students in the process of gathering information, documentation, and acquiring new knowledge regarding the selection, restoration, conservation, and symbolism of national heritage [20].