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## Lifelong learning through heritage and art

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John Dewey made an important point about the specific role of history in connection with the formation of perspective in human life:

Geography and history are the two great school resources for bringing about the enlargement of the significance of a direct personal experience. The active occupations . . . reach out in space and time with respect to both nature and man. Unless they are taught for external reasons or as mere modes of skill their chief educational value is that they provide the most direct and interesting roads out into the larger world of meanings stated in history and geography. While history makes human implications explicit and geography natural connections, these subjects are two phases of the same living whole, since the life of men in association goes on in nature, not as an accidental setting, but as the material and medium of development.

(1916: 217–18)

Dewey seems to have regarded history and geography with great passion as pedagogical tools for time and space perspectives respectively. He even insisted on the interdependency between the two and he was continuously interested in the relation between the individual or personal time and space recognition and the historical and geographical perspective. Until the 1970s the aim of history lessons in the compulsory system of education in many Western countries was defined within the framework of Dewey's logic. The (national) identity was produced and reproduced through the method of postulating a relation between (national) history and personal life development. During the last three decades of the twentieth century the political and economic agenda of globalization had less need for national history and heritage and art organizations and institutions searched for other challenges.

Following the latest developments in Europe after 2000 with a focus on third world immigration and European integration, we see in some young nation states and even in some older ones a revival of nationalism and the use of history as a tool in this respect. Countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK have been, since the year 2000, examples of countries that revived the close relation between a nation state history curriculum for compulsory education and production of pedagogical programmes in public museums, archives and art

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collections. The revival of the usefulness of Dewey's logic of the relation between the history of society and personal history in pedagogy does, however, underline the enormous strength in the learning possibilities from both material and non-material heritage.

In this chapter I will try to give an impression of these possibilities from three angles. First, we will concentrate on the learning possibilities that have developed on the basis of the organizational traditions and the nature of the collections in heritage and art institutions, such as archives, museums and galleries. Second, we will focus on the work done by researchers in order to understand the effect of using heritage in learning processes. Third, I shall try to place heritage learning in the context of target groups and thereby in the wider perspective of lifelong and lifewide learning (Ekholm and Hård, 2000). In order to understand the learning implications I suggest that, instead of writing about visitors, users or even participants, we shall here regard them all as learners.

### **Disciplines and organizational traditions in heritage learning**

Heritage learning can be defined as a specific part of cultural learning that is specified by the use of a time perspective in pedagogical practice. This may include the use of a historical perspective but it doesn't have to since the present time perspective is often apparent. Even the difficult border between the present time and timelessness occurs: but a time perspective always will be there some way or another.

Heritage learning is used as a term for the sum of learning activities from four different disciplines and traditions: museum pedagogy, archival pedagogy, heritage site pedagogy and art pedagogy. If we see the four learning activities as heritage learning disciplines, we focus on the pedagogical practice and possibilities related directly to the use of museum objects, archival records, heritage sites and art. When we see the four pedagogical practices as traditions we emphasize the organizational background for the pedagogical development. For most of the twentieth century, museums, archives, galleries and the organizations working with heritage sites developed different ways of pedagogical practice.

In real life it may be very difficult or impossible to keep the perspectives of discipline and tradition apart from each other and it may even be difficult to separate the different disciplines from each other as many archives also hold museum or art collections. There is, however, an important point that becomes very clear when we see these four different disciplines and traditions in heritage learning: archives, museums and galleries do as a rule find their roots in different sectors of society and have performed different basic public tasks. Consequently, different cultures have developed in the organizations and they have also developed different pedagogical practices. At the start of the twenty-first century, we still see fundamental differences between archives, museums and galleries in their approach to heritage learning in many countries, but some of the differences can be traced to the different status of pedagogical work in the organizations.

By focusing on the pedagogical method we can from an abstract perspective describe the four disciplines and traditions in the following way.

#### ***Archival pedagogy***

Archival pedagogy has its starting point in the archival material that will often be unique written material that has survived through time and has been collected by the archival institution. The uniqueness and the authenticity of the material are essential for the special possibilities of archival

pedagogy. This is the real authentic document, which by definition reflects the time and situation in which it was written! In pedagogical practice it therefore becomes crucial to recognize that the past is talking to us!

When the learning situation is working most effectively, the learners sense and are brought to realize that, beyond the archival material in focus at the moment, there once was a real person in a social setting, which might introduce them not only to this historical environment but also to a diverse collection of other archival material in the storeroom. This feeling incites curiosity and stimulates the experience of the possibility for further digging and research and thereby even the possibility of the true experience and joy of being a discoverer or a detective. And as the archival institutions seek to make the collections accessible in research rooms, many pedagogical activities have been developed with that traditional experience as the starting point. We may conclude from the practice of archival pedagogy that authenticity, uniqueness and potential discoveries are main factors in the learning process.

### ***Museum pedagogy***

Museum pedagogy initially appears to make a less definable impression. It takes its starting point as the different collections in the museum, but also in the illusion of authenticity that the museum curators have endeavoured to give these collections. Since the collections are almost always removed from their original or pre-museum context, it is essential for the museums to seek to create possibilities for experiencing a sense of authenticity.

The collections are primarily accessible through professional presentations. Traditionally this takes the form of exhibitions and the pedagogical programmes that will have been developed together with the exhibition. Therefore the pedagogical programme will also present an interpretation – more or less obvious – and the heritage presentation will be arranged in order to give the learner an experience with a predefined purpose. The visitors' or participants', that is, the learners', ability to adapt to the impressions and feel sympathy with the different experiences in the presentation is central to the learning experience. It may very well have been like this! Or, if it is a presentation of the present time, the basic impression of the learners should be: It probably is like this! That is true for both indoor and open air museums.

On the basis of experience from the practice of museum pedagogy we may conclude that the convincing illusions of authenticity through the presentation of the collections and the use of the learners' ability to feel sympathy are the main factors in the learning process.

### ***Heritage site pedagogy***

Heritage site pedagogy has its starting point in the landscape with archaeological excavation sites still existing as houses or other human constructions. As with archival pedagogy, the authenticity of the material is central, but now we have the authentic object placed in the original surroundings. Heritage site pedagogy is probably the oldest discipline of all heritage pedagogies: even in the oldest times the heritage site was used as a place for storytelling. Also, in our time, the visual experience of the heritage site will often be accompanied by a guide or information text.

The strong feeling of authenticity at the heritage site is central to this pedagogy. It happened here! The experience of the authentic three-dimensional rudiments of the past creates an atmosphere of standing in the middle of the 'history'. The learners thereby get help to imagine the past. By combining the visual impression and maybe even sounds, smells and the possibility to 'touch the past', the learners through the use of all senses create images. From the practice

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of heritage site pedagogy we can conclude that the authentic object placed in the original surroundings is the sole important factor in the learning process.

### **Art pedagogy**

Art pedagogy may be said to have two equally important starting points. It is not least because of this equality that art pedagogy stands out as very different from the other disciplines and traditions of heritage pedagogy. On the one hand, art pedagogy deals with the images and other creations of art that surround us. On the other hand, it includes such pictures, films or other creations that to some extent claim to be documentary.

The field between the two aspects is often an interesting field of tension, which is exploited in this form of pedagogy. The border between fact and fiction seems to disappear.

In another way, art pedagogy also has two other equally important starting points, since it often includes both the pedagogical possibilities of the experience of other people's works of art and the learners' own creative work. We may conclude from the practice of art pedagogy that the conscious use of the borderland between fact and fiction and the meeting between the interpretation of other people's work and the learners' own creativity are the main factors in the learning process.

This perspective on the disciplines and traditions within heritage learning has so far proved to be quite operational in analytical practice. Even in recent times, when many initiatives have been taken to strengthen collaboration between the old institutions behind these pedagogical traditions, we can often see the characteristics of the basic disciplines.

## **The outcomes or effects of heritage learning**

When John Dewey placed history in an educational context almost a hundred years ago it was natural to expect that a historical perspective was the essential learning outcome. By transferring the focus from the traditional term 'history' to the postmodern use of the term 'heritage', the expectations of the outcomes have also changed.

The study of the learning process as such has been at the centre of learning research for three decades or more (Kolb, 1984; Jarvis, 1987, 2006). Different heritage and art organizations have chosen to follow one or another school (Gibbs *et al.*, 2007). In recent years the branch of heritage and art organizations has focused more on the learning outcome. The UK may serve as the most coherent example. The Department of Museum Studies at Leicester University has, for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), developed a fivefold description of what they call the GLO – generic learning outcome – from heritage learning activities (MLA, 2005). The description is interesting and represents professional heritage thinking as it is presented at the beginning at the twenty-first century and, at the same time, some of the challenges in thinking we have before us:

### **Making links and relationships between things**

#### ***Communication skills – Physical skills***

##### *Knowledge and understanding*

Knowing what or about something  
Learning facts or information

##### *Skills*

Knowing how to do something  
Being able to do new things

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Making sense of something	Intellectual skills
Deepening understanding	Information management skills
How museums, libraries and archives operate	Social skills
<i>Attitudes and values</i>	<i>Enjoyment, inspiration, creativity</i>
Feelings	Having fun
Perceptions	Being surprised
Opinions about ourselves, e.g. self esteem	Innovative thoughts
Opinions or attitudes towards other people	Creativity
Increased capacity for tolerance	Exploration, experimentation and making
Empathy	Being inspired
Increased motivation	
Attitudes towards an organization	
<i>Positive and negative attitudes about an experience</i>	
Activity, behaviour, progression	
What people do	
What people intend to do	
What people have done	
Reported or observed actions	
A change in the way that people manage their lives	

It is interesting and central to this form of understanding of learning in heritage organizations that the classic description of learning outcomes in knowledge, skills and attitudes seems not to be enough. The classical learning process, defined as the processes through which an experience is transformed into knowledge, skills and attitudes, seems only to cover some of the outcome from heritage learning (Jarvis, 1987). From a traditional perspective one might claim that the outcomes here labelled 'enjoyment, inspiration, creativity' form an integrated part of attitudes and values. In the same way the outcome labelled 'activity, behaviour, progression' can be seen as just one special aspect of skills. But there is an interesting point that comes to light when we see enjoyment and changed behaviour as independent learning outcomes.

The outcomes in the forms of enjoyment and changed behaviour are given attention first of all because these outcomes exist and have done so for as long as we have had real, engaging heritage pedagogical programmes. Many people who have been engaged in heritage or art learning 'know' this, but these special outcomes are probably also given special attention because this approach to heritage learning outcomes becomes more special than if they are seen as part of classical thinking about attitudes and skills.

The most interesting effect of this structuring of the outcomes of heritage learning is that formal, non-formal and informal settings can all be included. This makes it relatively easy to use the structure and terminology in a very broad spectrum of (learning) activities in heritage and art organizations. The possibility to describe and analyse the learning situations of users of both heritage and art as leisure and as self-directed studies and in formalized educational programmes within the same conceptual framework will probably be of outstanding value to the branch in the coming years.

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## Heritage learning and its place in lifelong and lifewide learning

The major challenge for heritage and art organizations is now to get the newly defined outcomes of heritage learning to correspond with the competences demanded by society. Within the conceptual framework of lifelong and lifewide learning, the international arena provides some indications about what is in demand now and will be in the near future – at least in Western society. There is a clear relation in the thinking behind the concepts of key competences from the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Unesco (Eurydice, 2000; OECD 2001, 2005; EU 2001, 2004, 2005). The focus on key competences is now also clear on an interregional and national level.

As a well-developed example of this thinking we may look more closely at the EU. The European Commission has identified eight key competences that shall be promoted and stimulated both in compulsory basic education and throughout adult education:

- communication in the mother tongue;
- communication in another language;
- basic competences in maths, science and technology;
- digital competence;
- learning to learn;
- interpersonal and civic competences;
- entrepreneurship;
- cultural expression.

The reasoning behind this can be described as a concern for employability and social cohesion (Negt, 2000; Ehlers, 2007; Zipsane, 2007b, d). The challenge for the heritage and art organizations in Europe is now to see how the learning outcomes match these competences.

Two different perspectives exist here that are very important and that indicate some advantages for museums, archives and galleries. The first perspective is about learning outcomes from experience in heritage and art organizations and this matches competences demanded for the average learner possibly better than the learning outcomes that come from some other providers. It might be claimed that this or that is learned more effectively – or may actually only be learned – through heritage learning, and this may be the case with respect to interpersonal and civic competences as well as to some forms of cultural expression (Hargreaves, 1983, 1989; KEA, 2006). The second perspective is just as important. It seems to have been proven again and again that the environment of heritage and art organizations offers learning experiences for people who may have difficulties in other settings. This experience is most obvious when we refer to the formal educational system. Something really happens for many people when they move from the classroom to the museum (Wood, 1988; Selmer-Olsen, 1993)! And what seems to be true for children seems also to be the case for adults (Brookfield, 1986; Padro, 2004; Westergren, 2005).

Heritage and art organizations may be very interesting as providers of learning outcomes that match the demanded key competences. The way the EU explains the knowledge, skills and attitudes perspective on the key competences may serve almost as a delivery list for the heritage sector. An example may be the competence of learning to learn :

LEARNING TO LEARN – essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the competence. Where learning is directed towards particular work or career goals, an individual should have **knowledge** of the competences, knowledge, skills and qualifications

required. In all cases, learning to learn requires an individual to know and understand their preferred learning strategies, the strengths and weaknesses of their skills and qualifications, and to be able to search the education and training opportunities and guidance/support available to them.

Learning to learn **skills** require firstly the acquisition of the fundamental basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT that are necessary for further learning. Building on this, an individual should be able to access, gain, process and assimilate new knowledge and skills. *This requires effective management of one's learning, career and work patterns, and in particular the ability to persevere with learning, to concentrate for extended periods and to reflect critically on the purposes and aims of learning. Individuals should be able to dedicate time to learning autonomously and with self-discipline, but also to work collaboratively as part of the learning process, draw the benefits from a heterogeneous group, and to share what they have learnt.* They should be able to evaluate their own work, and to seek advice, information and support when appropriate.

A positive **attitude** includes the motivation and confidence to pursue and succeed at learning throughout one's life. *A problem-solving attitude supports both learning and an individual's ability to handle obstacles and change.* The desire to apply prior learning and life experiences and the curiosity to look for opportunities to learn and apply learning in a variety of life-wide contexts are essential elements of a positive attitude.

(EU, 2005: 16; my bold; italics in original)

The script in italics will, I believe, be recognized by many of my colleagues in the heritage and art sector as areas close to the learning outcomes designed for our guests, users and other learners, although the learning style and environment may differ. This is just an example among many, many others. The heritage and art organizations do indeed form an integral part of lifelong and lifewide learning provision. The time and space perspective, as John Dewey saw it, is still active in heritage and art learning, but the developed disciplines, the outcomes and the production of competences in the twenty-first century go far beyond that.

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