



Learning Museum.

Learning and Creative Partnerships between Cultural and educational Institutions

Project, Museet for Samtidskunst/ The museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark 2011-2013¹

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1.Exhibition Concept

Learning Museum 2011-2013 is a nationwide Danish developmental collaboration project involving 26 museums (cultural and natural history as well as art museums) and 13 colleges of education. The project provides students of education with unique opportunities to participate in training courses and academic internships at the country's museums. When students of education are made part of the museum space, new educational offerings and teaching resources take form. This user-driven aspect assists in creating innovative initiatives and products that provide enrichment for individuals and institutions surrounding the user himself – the future primary school teacher. Roles are exchanged and new sets of values and visions are created which ultimately strengthen the overall education of Danish primary school pupils. The essence of the project is to create and give inspiration to creative partnerships and networks in Denmark, in the Nordic countries and internationally where multidisciplinary collaboration and sharing of knowledge are in focus. The goals are to make museums visible as institutions for knowledge sharing and education and to make museum education an integral element in the required curriculum for teacher educational programs as well as integral in museums educational strategy and educational offerings. When students of education act as key points of knowledge exchange in museum educational departments, the teaching practice at the museum is strengthened and the students develop their professional and pedagogical competencies. In short, the collaboration gives the students methods and skills to apply in their own learning so that they can constantly develop from a life-long learning perspective.

¹ <http://samtidskunst.dk/en>



2. Reception

The initial results of the museum courses, academic internships and the involvement of the bachelor students have already shown that students of education want “more museum” on the agenda! Not content to settle for a simple guided tour, the students would rather use the museum proactively in their future teaching. The different cases and educational offerings they have produced show new learning initiatives which integrate a more casual, playful and sensitive approach to the collections in the museums in a very positive way. They see the museum from the children’s point of view and one could say it is a less intellectual approach with a sharper focus on pedagogical and didactic means. Combining the knowledge of the museum educator and museum curator along with the student’s competencies in the field of intermediary didactics and pedagogy has proven to be a good mix. The majority of students have also been very satisfied to learn more about the museums’ course offerings. However, the greatest motivational factor for students has clearly been the opportunity to apply their own thoughts and suggestions in practice as active project participants. This creates ownership, motivation and the desire to use the museums as an active part of their future work as school teachers.

This is, indeed, the essence of the project: To actively involve the students in the development of the museums’ course offerings and make the museum a productive learning space for the critical and involved user - namely, the future school teacher. For the museums, the collaboration has allowed them to update their knowledge of the teaching world, take their own course offerings under revision and, in so doing, better meet the needs and requirements of primary school curricula. The conversations that emerged during museum visits have proven to be of great value for museums and students alike.

3. Exhibition Design

The collaboration between the institutions is organized around educational programs:

- Subject –related specialist modules (history, art, science etc.) and pedagogical courses
- Academic Internship at the Museum

Bachelor’s thesis



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4. Visitors Approach-Activation/Participation

Upon the first meeting at the museum, the student gets an introduction to the museum as an educational institution promoting the spreading of knowledge and information. What does the museum stand for, what are its values and collaborative relations? Who works at the museum? What kind of collections are present (cultural or natural history artifacts, art, etc.). And most importantly: How does the museum plan its educational offerings for the different target groups in primary schools? After the introduction the student is given an assignment with a practical and theoretical focus. Students then work in groups with select parts of an exhibit or historical period. The group work is grounded in specific school curriculum requirements as well as specific subject-related and didactic considerations. The goal is to produce a rough draft of a teaching material or instructional tool to be used by primary school teachers and their pupils during a museum visit. Students may also be asked to take a critical stance to the museum's pre-existing educational offerings and available materials.

At the College of education/museum: Once back at the college of education the students will continue working on an assignment and subsequently present their finished product upon a return visit to the museum. Alternatively, a museum educator may come out to the college to discuss pedagogical issues and the like relating to the product. In some instances, certain educational products will be so well-developed that museums will be able to readily incorporate them into their general educational offerings.

Duration: An introductory museum session can last from three hours to an entire day or be held over the course of several museums visits. This is agreed upon between the museum and the individual participants.

Collaboration: Museum educators and teachers of education responsible for providing subject-specific coursework, work together to coordinate how project assignments can most beneficially be incorporated into the students' current coursework before, during and after their museum visits. Contact between the individual students and museum educators regarding the development of teaching materials continues throughout the course of the project collaboration.

When students of education come as interns at a museum, they develop a deeper insight into the institution's potential. There is more time for dialogue and discussion with educators and other professionals at the museums. They get the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the development of museum learning materials and relevant subjects which can be applied in their academic projects and papers. They have time to observe teaching lessons with the museums' various target groups. Perhaps most importantly, they are presented with the opportunity to teach different target groups. The internship may also provide inspiration and kick start students' empirical data-gathering process for a Bachelor's thesis. During the internship period, the students are charged with the task of developing teaching materials for the museum.

How a museum internship is incorporated into students' core requirements varies from college to college. A shorter museum internship can sometimes supplement students' student-teaching requirement (for example, 3-week and 7-week internships). With such an approach, student teachers can take their pupils to the museum and test out course offerings and/or materials which they, themselves have helped to develop.

Duration: The length of an internship depends upon museum availability and the agreed upon terms for the individual internship.

Collaboration: Students, museum educators and internship coordinators at the colleges plan each internship based on availability and capacity of the individual museum.

The museum is an ideal environment in which Bachelor students can gather empirical data for a Bachelor's thesis. In the Bachelor thesis the student has to work with empirical evidence and pedagogical and didactic methods. If collaboration and an active dialogue with the museum in question are developed during the early phases of the thesis, the project focus will also have direct relevance for the museum's educational development work and the results can be applied actively in museum practice.

An example could be how a specific exhibition can be mediated, how to use museum handouts etc. A thesis statement can be developed and related both in theory and practice to museum activities, such as, the development of teaching materials. A close and productive dialogue with museum educators and other museum staff will provide the student with ample opportunity to gather information, exchange ideas and develop his/her knowledge on an academic, pedagogical and didactic level. The Bachelor students can be perceived as the project researchers providing vital information on areas such as target groups, the use of museum handouts, learning environment, exhibitions and so forth. Such collaboration illustrates the teacher's role as a bridge builder between the school and the museum as an external learning space as well as the teacher's responsibility for the learning outcomes for the pupils. Many colleges of education even have introductory café meetings where cultural institutions are matched with interested students.

5. Conclusion: “ Learning Museum” project with respect to CO P1

Toolkit 1 – Making Europe visible. The essence of the project is to create and give inspiration to Creative partnerships and networks in Denmark, in the Nordic countries and internationally where multidisciplinary collaboration and sharing of knowledge are in focus. The goals are to make museums visible as institutions for knowledge sharing and education.



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Toolkit 2 – The Museum as a ‘social arena’. The museum becomes the arena where students, teachers and museum staff co-operate.

Toolkit 3 – Bridging-the-gap. The project provides students of education with unique opportunities to participate in training courses and academic internships at the country’s museums.

Toolkit 4 - Synaesthetic translation and transformation of contents. When students of education are made part of the museum space, new educational offerings and teaching resources take form. This user-driven aspect assists in creating innovative initiatives and products that provide enrichment for individuals and institutions surrounding the user himself – the future primary school teacher.

Toolkit 5 - Social web and interaction with new media. Activities, articles and video interviews with interns and bachelor students can be found at www.learningmuseum.dk.



Culture

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