

EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGY FOR RESEARCH OF MUSEUM EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

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Abstract

In conjunction with a research under Project KP-06-M35/ 3 from 18.12.2019 entitled: “Research of contemporary educational programs of cultural institutions in Bulgaria” (funded by the National Science Fund, part of the Ministry of Education and Science), the team of the project prepared an information card to present the main characteristics of the implemented educational programs in Bulgarian museums in 2019 and early 2020. The purpose of the applied experimental methodology is to outline the main directions for specifying categories, related to quantitative and qualitative indicators to meet certain educational needs. The object of the research are the regional historical museums in the country, which are 27 in number.

The information card contains two main sections. The first describes the general characteristics of the museum’s educational program in the following areas: name of the museum institution; the region where the museum is located; name of the educational program; a group of pedagogical methods to which the program activities relate; form of conducting; scientific field to which the educational program is related; information for conducting the educational program together with another institution(s)/organization; periodicity of conducting, etc.

The second section, entitled “Target groups”, presents information on who the educational program is aimed at on the following indications: education; age; family and kinship, etc.

The expected results of the applied methodology are related to the improvement of the quality of both formal and non-formal education in the country in relation to the inter-institutional cooperation between the various educational and cultural organizations.

Keywords: Innovation, methodology, research projects, museum, educational programs.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the importance of cultural heritage for the development of society and for the formation of civil position has been formulated in several international legal acts and documents. Countries that have ratified international conventions undertake to include cultural heritage at all levels of education, not necessarily as a separate school discipline, but as a rich source of research in other ones. Cultural heritage is a carrier of socially significant information [1]. This is proven by 2017 Eurobarometer survey on the subject, which indicates that 88% of European citizens agree that Europe’s cultural heritage should be taught in schools, since it tells us about our history and culture. Supporting education related to heritage was also one of the objectives of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and it is still pursued through the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage. [2]. It is an indispensable resource for building the personality and for forming a value system, especially in the implementation of a quality educational process.

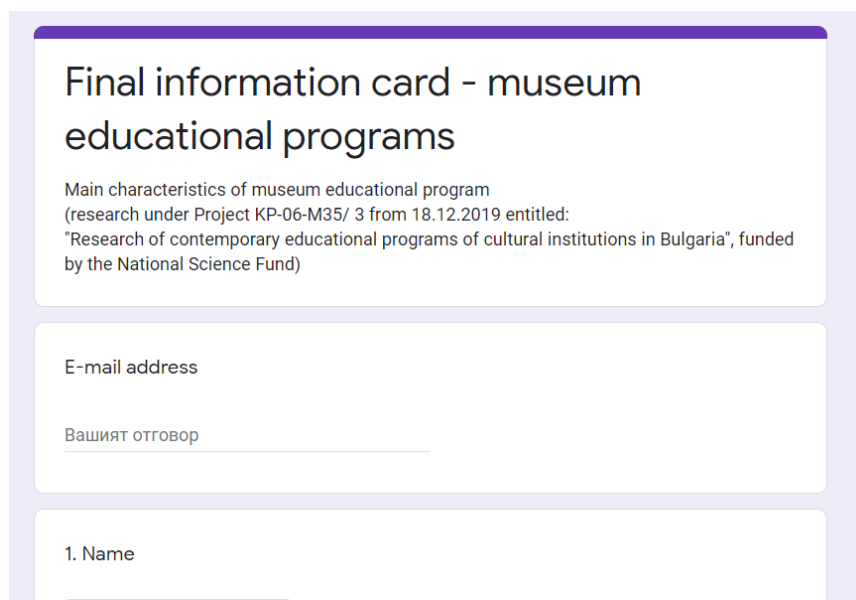
The main role for access to cultural values, i.e., for their socialization in the modern society, have cultural institutions [3]. This paper proposes an experimental methodology for researching museum educational programs. It aims to outline the main directions for deriving categories related to quantitative and qualitative indicators on meeting certain educational needs. The object of research are the regional historical museums in the country, which are 27 in number, divided into six areas Northwestern, North Central, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest and South Central areas.

In addition to museums, the cultural heritage system includes and some other organizations (archives, community centres, libraries, galleries, centres of arts and culture, etc.), which have a common mission – conservation and preservation of the memory of human civilization. Knowledge of it – this is the essence of education in terms of cultural heritage and institutions are directly responsible for this. The proposed methodology for studying museum educational programs could be adapted in the future for the above-mentioned institutions, considering their specific characteristics.

2 METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this research, an approach was chosen for statistical processing and analysis of data related to quantitative and qualitative indicators regarding the conducted educational programs in Bulgarian museums in 2019.

The research team of the project selected the criteria to systematize some key features in the so-called "Information card" (Fig. 1), positioned in Google Forms, which achieves a clear and fast systematization of the received data.



The image shows a Google Form titled "Final information card - museum educational programs". The form is divided into three main sections. The top section contains the title and a description of the research project: "Main characteristics of museum educational program (research under Project KP-06-M35/ 3 from 18.12.2019 entitled: 'Research of contemporary educational programs of cultural institutions in Bulgaria', funded by the National Science Fund)". The middle section is labeled "E-mail address" and contains a text input field with the placeholder text "Вашият отговор". The bottom section is labeled "1. Name" and contains a text input field.

Fig. 1 The information card

The information card contains two main sections. The first covers general information of the museum's educational program in the following areas: region and city in which the museum is located; name of the educational program; a group of pedagogical methods to which the program activities relate; form of conducting and/or type of the educational program; scientific field to which the educational program is related; information for conducting the educational program together with another institution(s)/ organization; if the educational program is implemented and/or created by project; frequency of conducting the initiatives (one time, periodically, all year round), etc.

The second section, entitled "Target groups", presents information about who the educational program is aimed at on the following grounds: educational indication; age sign; family and kinship indication, combination of indications, etc.

During the study, the information card was tested and after considering the need for some adjustments, the criteria were refined.

3 RESULTS

The expected results of the applied methodology are related to the improvement of the quality of both formal and non-formal education in the country in relation to the inter-institutional cooperation between the various educational and cultural organizations. The statistics are currently being processed and will be published at a later stage, and this paper aims to present the chosen research approach to the scientific community.

3.1 First criterion: Location of the museum institution

According to the Bulgarian legislation, the museum institutions research, preserve and present the cultural-historical values with cognitive, educational and aesthetic purpose [4]. One of the factors that influences the choice of visiting a museum is its geographical location. The state policy in the Republic of Bulgaria for regional development creates conditions for balanced and sustainable development of the regions and municipalities and covers a system of normatively regulated documents, resources and

actions of the competent authorities. For the purposes of planning, programming, management, resource provision, monitoring and evaluation of the regional development, regions are divided into levels (areas) in accordance with the requirements of the common classification of territorial units for statistical purposes applied in the European Union [5]. Based on that, the Republic of Bulgaria is divided into six planning areas, each of which includes from 4 to 5 regional cities (Fig. 2). In Art. 40 of the Cultural Heritage Act it is stated that each city has an independent regional history museum (a total of 27 for the country), which are funded by the municipalities on whose territory they are seated, and for their maintenance are provided additional funds from the state budget [4].

Fig. 2 The information card – first criterion: location of the museum institution

Reporting on the location of the respective museum (its proximity or remoteness), in combination with information on the thematic scope, can quickly orient the individual users of the educational programs and direct them to a specific museum institution.

3.2 Second criterion: Thematic scope

The thematic scope of the respective educational programs is noted in the following part of the information card in the following directions:

3.2.1 Name of the museum educational program

The name guides users to the highlights and guidelines for the educational objectives of the program. The attractiveness of the name has a first signal influence on visitors when choosing them. During the research, extremely diverse names of educational programs stand out, which is a proof of the great resource that the museums in the country have at their disposal.

Here are some examples from various regional history museums: “The House in the Prehistoric and Thracian Ages”; “Green Adventures in the Museum”; “Restoration Workshop”; “Grandma and Grandpa Fashion”; “Thracian treasure hunters” and others.

3.2.2 Educational methods and form of conducting

The next direction is related to the applied educational methods according to the source of information, which are as follows: Verbal (story, talk, lesson); Visual (observation, demonstration); Practical (exercises, practical classes). The information card also envisages a combination of the methods used in the educational programs, if any are applied.

In addition, their form of implementation is specified, according to the proven classification in museum pedagogy [6], namely: Conversation; Lesson; Presentation; Atelier/seminar/workshop; Game;

Competition. In cases where a combination of the listed methods is used, or others are used, it is again possible to reflect this (Fig. 3).

The image shows a digital form with a light purple border. It contains the following sections:

- Form of conducting/type of educational program:
- 7. Form/type: Below this is a dropdown menu with the text "Избор" and a downward arrow.
- If in the above question the marked position is 7 or 9, please specify:
- 8. Combination of types of activities/other activities: Below this is a text input field with the placeholder text "ВАШИЯТ ОТГОВОР".

Fig. 3 The information card – second criterion: thematic scope (form of conducting/type of educational program section)

3.2.3 Relation to science/scientific field and historical period

For the educational program to meet specific educational needs, the team set itself the goal of researching which sciences and/or scientific fields the individual programs are related to. Given the specifics of the expositions in the selected museums, the following scientific fields were specified: History; Archeology; Ethnography; Anthropology; Local history; Literature, as well as a combination of them.

For the team to be able to give specific recommendations for institutional cooperation between museums and school education in the country, the research includes the correlation of each educational program to a specific historical period (if applicable). This would help to improve, on the one hand, the quality of history education in the formal educational system (primary, secondary and higher), and, on the other hand, to learn about the national cultural heritage.

The specifics of the periodization of the Bulgarian history are considered, which in some historical epochs/periods is different from that of the Western European one.

Archaeological science proves that in the Bulgarian lands there is evidence of human activity since prehistory, as the regional historical museums have artefacts in their expositions from all historical epochs, as follows: Prehistory; Antiquity; Early Byzantine period; Middle Ages; Revival; New History (1878-1944); Recent History (1944-1989).

During the approbation in filling in the information cards, the team reported a common phenomenon – the museum educational programs combine two consecutive historical periods. Hence in the final version there was an option to mark them: Combination (Prehistory and Antiquity); Combination (Antiquity and the Middle Ages); Combination (Middle Ages and Revival); Combination (Revival and New History); Combination (New and Recent History); Other combinations.

3.2.4 Relation to a specific type of cultural heritage

Cultural heritage covers the intangible and tangible immovable and movable heritage as a set of cultural values that are carriers of historical memory, national identity and have scientific or cultural value [4]. To assess the national cultural heritage, it must be meaningful, and this would not be possible without knowledge of the origin and formation of material monuments of cultural heritage, which in essence reflect the spiritual, cultural and technological achievements of the era to which they belong. The museum environment offers ideal conditions for getting to know and studying it.

In this thematic aspect the educational programs applied in the regional historical museums are categorized in its two main directions: tangible (movable and immovable) and intangible cultural heritage and/or their combinations.

3.2.5 Relation to a specific type of art

Museum educational programs are highly child-centred, suggesting activities often related to the arts. One of the tasks of the research is to establish to which of them each educational initiative has (or does not have) relation, which will help parents and teachers in their choice. Now, the relation to applied arts is the highest, in which children should make a product related to traditional crafts and holidays (Christmas, Easter, etc.), which are a part of the national intangible heritage. Other categories of arts that are considered are fine arts, music and dance.

3.3 Third criterion: Organizational and institutional aspect

The following main hypotheses were formulated in advance in the development of the project proposal: The educational initiatives of the cultural institutions are a basic factor for sustainable development of education as a whole; The dynamic processes in the modern information society and the rapid spread of new technologies impose the need for innovative methodological and pedagogical approaches to improve the quality of education; Regional history museums have an indispensable resource for integrating cultural heritage into the system of formal and non-formal education. A key element in the research is to establish the degree of interaction of cultural institutions with the school educational system in the country.

As a result, the information card indicates specific data whether the educational program is conducted jointly with another institution and/or organization. In the presence of joint initiatives, the type of the partner (for example: kindergarten, school, university, library, municipality, community centre, NGOs) and its name are noted (Fig. 4).

Information for conduction of the educational program together with another institution and/or organization (if applicable):

17. Institution/Organization:

- 1 With kindergarten
- 2 With school
- 3 With university
- 4 With library
- 5 With municipality
- 6 With community center
- 7 NGOs
- 8 With another
- 9 With more than one
- 10 No information

18. Name of institution/organization (if applicable):

Вашият отговор

Fig. 4 The information card – third criterion: organizational and institutional aspect

Bulgaria's membership in two of the largest regional international organizations – the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (CE), provides an opportunity to implement a project policy in support of education. For most of the 1960s and 1970s, the European Community as an institution had priority jurisdiction over economic and technological issues, mainly in sectors related to extraction, trade and agriculture. This has changed over the years and today culture and education are becoming active areas for the smooth functioning of the common European space [6].

To point out the good examples for financing educational programs in museum institutions through the applied state project policy, the name of the program/project and additional data are noted in the information card.

3.4 Fourth criterion: Target groups

For quality implementation of the educational programs in a museum environment, the lack of homogeneity in the social structure must be considered. A single model for the continuous educational process in modern society cannot and should not exist. In forming an effective strategy in this direction, the level of needs and expectations related to museum educational programs in each structure of society should be considered. These are the so-called "target groups" – a term from marketing and advertising, which means the group of people to whom a marketing strategy or activity is directed. The segmentation of consumers into homogeneous groups is carried out by examining one or a group of features that are in general dependence on the object of the offered activity or service [8].

If a museum program is aimed at formal (institutional) education at school or university, it should meet the set educational goals at the level of specific curricula and educational standards.

In the structure of the educational system, three more basic elements are subordinated to a certain system logic. The first is the curriculum, the systematic presentation of which is very closely linked to that of scientific knowledge and achievements. The second element is the educational process, which is constructed following the complexity of the internal personal prerequisites for successful learning by integrating appropriate forms, methods and tools for teaching theoretical and practical experience. And the third element – the educational environment, which is accepted as a unity of conditions, subjects, resources and means that objectively affect the course and quality of educational activities [9].

Therefore, if the target group is selected based on educational indication, it should be aimed at students of a certain class, students specializing a certain specialty or PhD students studying in a specific scientific/professional field. Extracurricular activities are of particular importance for a quality educational process [10]. Students with the so-called special educational needs, for whom it is necessary to provide quality conditions for their socialization in modern civil society, should not be missed here.

If the educational program is aimed at non-formal education, i.e., attracting an audience at their own will in their free time, then the target groups should be selected according to other criteria (age, interests, etc.).

The last section of the information card provides for the designation of specific target groups to which a museum educational program is directed, according to the following criteria: Educational indication, Age sign, Family and kinship indication, Combination of indications (Fig. 5). For each group, information is noted in detail (specific age group, or stage of training).

Target groups [Close] [Menu]

Description (optional)

The educational program is aimed at a target group based on:

Description (optional)

23. Indication:

- 1 Educational indication
- 2 Age sign
- 3 Family and kinship indication
- 4 No target group specified
- 5 Other
- 6 Combination of indications

Fig. 5 The information card – fourth criterion: target groups

Additional information not provided for in the criteria listed above may be placed at the end of the information card.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Museum educational programs are a specific interdisciplinary museum product that offers a wealth of ideas and forms, as well as a variety of topics and methods of work [11]. The museum environment ensures the realization of the pedagogical process by assisting in the acquisition of new knowledge, the development of creative thinking and communication skills.

One of the main objectives of the present research is to promote ideas for inter-institutional cooperation for the socialization of cultural heritage and its integration into formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning. This type of research could also be useful on international level. Relationships in the fields of culture, science, education and the arts are a natural and historically determined social need, and in the modern world they are becoming one of the most significant subsystems of international relations. The processes related to the globalization of relations and the development of information and communication technologies open opportunities for rapidly expanding mutual acquaintance of countries and peoples. Countries that have been historically linked and inextricably linked for centuries with a shared common cultural heritage.

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For more information: Official website of the project – <https://educulture.unibit.bg/>; Facebook page – <https://www.facebook.com/eduCulturebg>

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