

Ensuring equal opportunities from the outside

Grassroots education proposals



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Indeed, there is no difficulty affirming that schools have increasingly been asked to add a broader range of contents, values, tasks and responsibilities that overwhelm day-to-day work. The efforts and willingness of schools to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities to access quality education and culture are enormous, and their track record shows this.

From this perspective, the complementarity provided by other educational agents surrounding the centres makes it possible to diversify and consolidate the opportunities from another context, from outside. It often implies leaving the traditional framework of the educational centres, broadening the view towards narratives that are different from school logic and close to the reality and context of future citizens. Favouring and fostering dialogical interaction between schools and educational agents in the surrounding area would make it possible to not only put proposals together and respond to schoolchildren's curricular needs but to go beyond them: from the strict pleasure of knowledge to the solution of specific problems that concern the people who build and live in those contexts.

In this sense, museums and heritage, among many others, become constant stimuli for lifelong learning and a possible way to guarantee educational equity. The experience we precisely share here¹ is based on the premise that if we want educational equity, we must work and interact with and from the context and do so with the direct protagonists and from the beginning of

the generation of any educational proposal. And that, among other aspects, means introducing the participation of future users in the definition and structure of the educational plans of museum institutions.

A MULTIPLYING SUM

Intending to create a proposal that combines culture+education+equal opportunities and multiplies knowledge, debate and construction of values, "Adhoc Cultura" and the Faculty of Education of the University of Barcelona are launching a methodology (MIESAC + CDP²) on based on a process of co-creation that aims to build educational and cultural proposals that lead us to reflect on and construct our own critical visions of our reality. We do this through a process of reflection and educational innovation in the cultural field to renew, consolidate and promote educational activities and actions in the museum institution.

The aim is to guarantee a more active participation of end-users from the early generation of new proposals developed by museums. Therefore, we understand equity from an essential, fundamental point of view: the guaranteed fair opportunities for everyone to exercise

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their capacity for positive influence and respect on their own lives and others', constructing and expressing their words and life experience in different contexts and platforms.

Through the direct intervention in participatory and co-creation dynamics, the project gives a voice to people, in this case, teachers, families and children (and other agents such as value groups³, local traders, local artists, members of other educational institutions, etc.). And so they can make the proposals they would like to work on and that the museum, together with the school, could articulate.

Participating from minute zero would allow:

- Directly identifying the specific needs of children and schools.
- Giving everyone a voice: every child is called upon to give his/her opinion, to propose, to raise doubts and solutions.
- Gathering children's and young people's own "ways" of

solving problematic situations.


- Ensuring that the proposals are better suited to the needs of children and schools.
- To promote a critical and proactive practice about what surrounds us and matters to us.

BASES OF THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology is based on the union of three work nuclei: internal analysis, co-creation and open innovation.

- Internal analysis based on active listening and detailed study of the data provided by each of the entities participating in the project (in this case, the educational centre and the museum).
- Through participatory dynamics⁴, co-creation identifies and defines the challenges/problems we are facing.
- Open innovation: generating and sharing, among different talents, processes and tools that lead us to construct different ideas, often outside the usual channels, platforms and channels.





It is a way of understanding the renewal of institutions and educational and cultural proposals (from their concept, programming, and actions). It would avoid a top-down process or even an outside-in one: a company advising on what to do outside the institution.

It is based on the protagonism of the people who make up the institutions themselves, both users and, especially, those who are not. It is imperative to turn to other groups that do not always participate in the life of museums. Children, young people and their families, who do not have museums as reference institutions, but who could join them, given certain circumstances.

Each dynamic produces an intellectual richness nourishing the project to be implemented from a more inclusive approach.

FIRST FINDINGS. WE CONTINUE TO WORK

Without wishing to be exhaustive, during four years of implementing the project in a total of 8 museums, with an impact of about 250 people and a “hackathon” with seven museums, 30 young people and six mentors⁵, we have been able to gather some evidence:

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- Willing to guarantee everyone’s option to offer their point of view and contribute with their proposals requires a different perspective on how to elaborate in educational proposals and understand the museum-school relationship.
- The “process” itself, certain conditions provided, is already a tool for equity and inclusion, a means for direct action in what we want to happen in our cultural and educational environment.
- Implementation of a multitude of skills. Cooperative work, decision-making, critical thinking, creativity, listening skills, etc., are just some of the skills that children and young people can exploit.
- This direct participation in generating proposals generates a sense of belonging for children, young people, teachers, etc. Knowing that “a part of me” is in that proposal makes them want to know how it develops and, in a way, feeling ambassadors for other people (e.g. families).
- Often, such processes require a “daring” and “risk-taking” that not everyone is willing to do. In these processes, the outcome cannot be guaranteed from the start, and the uncertainty of “not knowing what will come out” is not acceptable to all institutional decision-makers.
- There is still a lot of room for action on how to intensify museum-school relationships and to involve citizens at school frequently and in a differentiated way. For example, in the follow-up of the proposals, their evaluation, etc.

