

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE ANIMATION OF LEISURE AND RECREATION VERSUS THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE

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Abstract. This article is an empirical study on the possible use of non-formal education in the broadly understood animation of leisure time. The study was conducted using a diagnostic survey method, as well as the techniques of questionnaire and observation, during the last meeting under the project “Non-Formal and Formal Partnership in Adult Education” (Grundtvig Reference Number 2013-RO1-GRU06-29569 2) in Romania, at the turn of February and March 2015. The study included 16 non-formal education trainers from Greece, Latvia, Poland and Romania. The aim of the study was to show the impact of the project on the beneficiaries and the development of their individual social competence, as well as to demonstrate the work techniques of trainers with different social groups. An animator plays an important role in the organization of leisure time of the society, hence their continuous education seems almost necessary. The improvement of individual social competence of the trainers surveyed will certainly contribute to their attempt to pass a various range of games, plays and other activities (including non-formal education) to the participants of the classes.

Key words: leisure time animation, non-formal education, games and activities, social competence, recreation

Introduction

Leisure time animation is the increasing need of tourists travelling to different parts of the world. Thereby it “has become (...) an indispensable element of operation of multiple hospitality facilities” (Paczyńska-Jędrycka, Eider, 2015, p. 281). Currently, the notion of leisure time animation can be encountered almost everywhere. Its most popular form is definitely a hotel animation service. However, it can also take place while travelling, as mentioned by R. Szafranowicz-Małozięć (2015). Animations are organized with the help of animators in different places, for example popular children’s birthday parties in amusement parks or ropes courses. Animators frequently organize games and fun activities during integration trips, so you can get to know the whereabouts of the place and its history (Eider, Paczyńska-Jędrycka, Krupecki, 2014).

Leisure time animation as a service within the organization of leisure of different social groups certainly requires appropriate preparation of the staff of animators. On the one hand, the availability of courses educating for this purpose is large. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that the training itself, and thus acquiring skills in the knowledge of various ways of spending leisure time, is nowadays certainly not enough. It is necessary to possess the appropriate personality traits allowing for conducting any animation and continuous further training in this regard. It is thus about a lifelong learning, which aim is learning through experience.

Therefore referring to the current demand of the market of leisure time services, as well as to the increasing role of human capital, it would be a good idea to focus on the use of non-formal education in the broadly understood leisure time animation. Non-formal education is understood, *inter alia*, as the one which takes place "in passing" (Fatyga, 2005, p. 20). "Non-formal education actually lasts a lifetime, it is this form of gaining knowledge which is based on the experience. The significant advantage is "touching" the life, experiencing it and drawing conclusions and knowledge from these experiences, and thanks to it acquiring the practical skills" (Kurzępa, 2005, p. 48). Such unconscious acquisition of knowledge and specific skills or competencies in the course of play will certainly raise the quality and standard of animation services. On the one hand we are discussing here the process of teaching, on the other hand the process of marketing. In the educational aspect it should be noted that the organization of leisure time puts "emphasis on personality development and implementation of the potential capabilities of an individual" (Ostaszewski, 2007, p. 509). In terms of marketing, however, we should refer to the concept of rivalry that K. Wrona (2013, p. 25) defines in the following way: "the implementation of the structure and mechanics of games (points, distinctions, levels, challenges, awards) into the real world in order to stimulate the involvement of users, changes in their behavior and solving the problems of different types". It is therefore necessary to underline the fact that the animation of leisure time, a variety of games and recreation activities, are frequently not only autotelic, but they are also used to achieve various effects, including the promotion of a particular brand.

So is playing just for fun enough in the reality in which we live? According to the authors – not any more. A good solution is to move forward and make use of fun (eg. during increasingly popular children's birthday parties in the mini clubs, during the holidays – hotel animation service, animation during the trip, playing games and having fun at camps for children and youth, during training – group animation) to pass on the broadly understood knowledge, skills and social competence. This should be done in such a way that children, youth or adults automatically absorb the aforementioned knowledge and skills. The combination of traditional games and activities, along with their modifications should be enriched with new activities based on a model of non-formal education and creativity of animators. As defined by K.J. Szmids (2013, p. 25): "Creativity training is a system of individual or group exercises, used to stimulate and develop the capacity to generate new and valuable ideas of solving the cognitive and practical problems". While animating the leisure time of both children and adults, a good idea is to take advantage of educational elements that will improve the quality of services provided. T. Boris (2010, p. 59) emphasizes the need to move away from the classical education in favour of education for sustainable development, "which should include various dimensions of quality of life". This will surely contribute to shaping the social competence of an individual, and thus of human capital (Paczyńska-Jędrycka, Frąckowiak, Łubkowska, 2014; Paczyńska-Jędrycka, Łubkowska, Jońca, 2015) which is an inherent link in the development of the region and country (Łubkowska, Eider, 2014). "Animation (...) has become the method of work, going beyond the issue of internal analysis of the group process. It recognised the environmental and institutional context in which groups operate" (Litwicka, 2011, p. 10). The functioning of the group, the emergence of a leader, are also the elements of many games or fun activities.

Making use of these on the one hand allows the animator to create an appropriate atmosphere in the group, on the other hand, it allows to show to a distinguishing person the role of a leader. As a rule, a person is a leader not only while having fun, but also beyond. The tasks of the animator of recreational activities also include the appropriate stimulation of a group. He is responsible for the way it will proceed. That is why he should be a person who constantly develops and improves his existing qualifications and competence. Then he will certainly become a role model.

Methods

The study was conducted during the last project meeting (evaluation) "Non Formal and Formal Partnership in Adult Education" (Grundtvig Reference Number 2013-RO1-GRU06-29569 2) in Romania, at the turn of February and March 2015.

The study involved 16 non-formal education trainers from Greece, Latvia, Poland and Romania. As shown by the previous studies, they are mainly persons with extensive experience (Paczyńska-Jędrycka et al., 2015).

The main aim of the study was to demonstrate the impact of the project on its beneficiaries and the development of their individual social competence, as well as to demonstrate the trainers' working techniques with different social groups. The intention of the authors is to show the usefulness of various techniques of working in the field of non-formal education within the range of improving the training skills and methods, as well as promoting them among the public, regardless of age and the place where we are.

The study was conducted using a method of diagnostic survey and the techniques of questionnaire and observation (Siviński, 2006).

Results

The Project "Non Formal and Formal Partnership in Adult Education" (Grundtvig Reference Number 2013-RO1-GRU06-29569 2) started in August 2013 and lasted till July 2015. Participation in the project involved five meetings in the territory of partner countries: Poland (November 2013), Romania (March 2014), Latvia (May 2014), Greece (October 2014), Romania (February-March 2015). Each of them served mainly the exchange of international experiences and views, as well as practical activities in the field of non-formal education, where it should be emphasised that each partner country was obliged to be represented both by the institution dealing with formal, and with non-formal education. In addition to the aforementioned meetings, each country conducted workshops with different social groups. In the case of Poland, the workshops were mainly addressed to teachers, students (Faculty of Physical Culture and Health Promotion, University of Szczecin), as well as to beginning trainers in the field of non-formal education (<http://nieformalna.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Podr%C4%99cznik-Dobrych-Praktyk-PL.pdf>).

Active participation in the project allowed all the trainers (100%), participating in the evaluation meeting in Romania to develop individual social competence (Tables 1 and 2). Primarily they developed their openness to others (69.2% of responses). In second place were: team building and leadership ability, as well as overcoming the language barrier (61.5% of responses). Overcoming the language barrier was extremely important, because the official language of the project was English. Thus, it was not the native language of any of the partners. Each country had to share the content of its conducted trainings along with the achieved effects. It can therefore be

stated that overcoming the language barrier was a prerequisite for the implementation of the project. "The ability to cooperate" was developed by 53.9% of respondents.

On the one hand, it was conditioned by the necessity of cooperation during the project, as well as the exchange of experiences. On the other hand, during all the meetings the trainers acquired new techniques and methods of non-formal education, inter alia a new range of energizers, ice-breakers or team building activities. Definitely the least developed were social skills such as: the ability to talk about their emotions or difficult issues (23.1%), assertiveness (15.4%), ability to cope with stressful situations (15.4%). It is important, however, to develop these competencies. In non-formal education each activity must be summarized, as opposed to games and animation activities. Nevertheless, the summary can be moved also to the ground of animation, drawing upon the experience of trainers involved in non-formal education. It is important that each of the participants has a possibility to express their opinion on what they liked and what they did not like, what was the most difficult part of a particular activity. If a particular "game, fun" was not successful, what was the reason. Individual, as well as collective problem solving related to a given activity will certainly help both the individual and the group become a better, more open to others, freer in their comments.

Table 1. Development of social competence

Development of social competence	%
Yes	100
No	0

Source: own development based on conducted study.

Table 2. Social competence developed in trainers in the course of project

Social competence	%
Openness to others	69.2
Team building and leadership ability	61.5
Overcoming the language barrier	61.5
Ability to cooperate	53.9
Creative thinking	46.2
Self-improvement	46.2
Increase in self-confidence	38.5
Ability to discuss own emotions and difficult issues	23.1
Ability to cope with stressful situations	15.4
Assertiveness	15.4
Ability to help others	0.0
Other	0.0

Source: own development based on conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

What definitely contributed to the development of social skills mentioned above (Table 3) during the duration of the project were interpersonal contacts (53.8% of responses), including any conversations. What should be taken

into account are contacts at two levels, namely: international (between the partner countries), as well as contacts with the participants of particular training sessions. Each of the project trips included the possibility of various meetings outside of the classroom, which influenced also the personal development of the individual. Participation in various activities, games and plays (38.5% of responses) also contributed to the development of social skills of the trainers who currently train and will train the new generations of trainers, animators and class educators. Typical educational activity (including Art classes) had the least impact on their development (7.7% of responses).

Table 3. Activities that contributed most to the development of the above-mentioned social competence

Activities	%
Interpersonal contacts (any conversations)	53.8
Animation games (energizers, ice-breakers, etc.)	38.5
Educational activities (painting, "handiwork")	7.7
Sightseeing trips	0.0
Other	0.0

Source: own development based on conducted study.

Continuous personal, as well as professional development of trainers is extremely important from both the educational and psychological point of view. Participation in the project certainly contributed to the development of their social competence, as well as to acquisition of some specific knowledge, which they can share with others while conducting animation activities or a variety of workshops. In their previous work, the trainers are principally engaged in animation games (69.2% of responses), educational activity (53.8%), classes within the scope of broadly understood physical culture (38.5% of responses) and tourism (15.4% of responses) (Table 4).

Table 4. Types of workshops conducted by trainers with various social groups

Workshops	%
Animation games (energizers, ice-breakers, etc.)	69.2
Educational activities (painting, "handiwork")	53.8
Physical activity	38.5
Sightseeing trips	15.4
Other	0.0

Source: own development based on conducted study.

As it can be observed, the trainers involved in the project have broad horizons and interests, which they share with others in their work. It should also be noted that animation games referred to in this paper, can include both an element of educational activities, physical activity or sightseeing.

Discussion and conclusions

In connection with the ongoing development of society, you should ask yourself whether the animation of leisure time both in everyday life, as well as during business trips or holidays, should remain merely good fun? On the one hand, the answer is obvious, and it is "yes". A man of today is often exposed to a lack of economic and

family stability, as well as to growing stressful situations. On the other hand, in the face of these conditions, there may be a need for lifelong learning, but learning just through play, and therefore unknowingly acquire or improve their social competence.

As shown by the survey conducted by CBOS – the Public Opinion Research Center (Boguszewski, 2015) on “Activities and experiences of the Poles in 2014”, the Poles throw parties for friends and acquaintances in their spare time at a level similar to previous years. During such a meeting you can easily use an element of animation, eg. through active participation in board games, which again have been enjoying increasing popularity in the recent years. According to these studies, an increase in the use of the restaurant for the whole families is observed. Therefore, arranging the children’s play areas or organization of family events such as collective gingerbread baking at Christmas, painting Easter eggs, etc., are becoming more commonplace. There is also an increase in the number of family recreational trips, hence the tour operators in addition to the classic range of products also create the ones which are intended mainly for families. In terms of marketing they create family catalogues, so as to get to the parents via their children.

Further on the same survey (Boguszewski, 2015) shows that more and more people are using the Internet in their leisure time. Therefore, we talk more frequently about the skilful use of modern technologies for a variety of games and recreational activities (Nadobnik, Łubkowska, 2014). CBOS survey (Boguszewski, 2015) also points out that cultural life, like the visits to galleries or museums, is still at relatively low level. B. Gradišar (2010) shows the museum tours and the acquisition of knowledge in a variety of ways, ranging from the classical, through various tasks (“worksheets” or swapping roles – a student becomes a guide). Perhaps it is worth taking advantage of such objects, making them the game board. Then exploring the history of various works of art would certainly become more easily absorbed. During holidays optional excursions are also frequently offered. Perhaps the use of new ways to explore and get to know culturally attractive destinations will encourage tourists to visit them more often.

Mentioning the CBOS survey was to show different forms of promotion of a few selected ways of spending free time. On the one hand we speak here about animation, but on the other, there was also a component of non-formal education. The question therefore arises how to connect it and use the methods of non-formal education in the leisure time animation. First, we should start with the animator. This will be the person who the form and content of the classes will depend on. Secondly, what counts will be the ability to summarize a particular game or activity. This will also give the possibility to have a say to each of the participants of the activity.

Studies carried out at the evaluation meeting of the project “Non-Formal and Formal Partnership in Adult Education” (Grundtvig Reference Number 2013-RO1-GRU06-29569 2) were designed to show that although the trainers participating in it had a lot of experience, this project enriched them both with new methods and techniques of non-formal education, as well as social competence. As it can be observed, non-formal education is an essential part of everyone’s life (including leisure time animation and all forms of recreational behaviours) because coming in contact with it we acquire new skills and qualifications, often without being aware of it. The task of the leisure time animator is to create such activities and such impact, that the participants enjoy themselves, but also enrich their social competence and gain new knowledge by means of non-formal education. Non-formal education should constitute only a part of the repertoire of animation activities, because fun in itself is also needed. The use of non-formal education in leisure time animation definitely requires from the animator a lot of experience in this field, as well as the creativity and skills to adapt different activities depending on the group, their age, efficiency, skills, and a degree of “initiation”.

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