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“My museum is your  
museum”

## Exploring museums with people with intellectual disabilities

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“My museum is your museum” Exploring museums with people with intellectual disabilities.

## **Programme Intellectual disabled visitors in your museum.**

By Mireille Defreyne

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### ***Information about the programme***

“My museum, your museum” is a two-day training course on accessibility of children, youngsters and young people with a mental disability to museums and cultural expositions.

#### **1. This programme is aiming at the following categories of people**

- People who sit on trustees boards of museums and institutions that organize cultural expositions
- People who are involved in decisions over the architectural and interior design of the museum and the collection to crucially expand the focus on access to museums for a diverse public including intellectual disabled
- Educational guides or officers in the museum and in the exposition
- People who develop educational materials, guided tours,...
- Teachers who are involved in the education of intellectual disabled children, youngsters and young adults in general
- Anyone that is interested in the socio-cultural inclusion and cultural participation of people with an intellectual disability

#### **2. Principle aim of the course**

The general aim of the workshop is to examine the insight in the matter of intellectual disability, diversity and accessibility regarding museums and cultural expositions and to improve the accessibility of museums for intellectual disabled.

#### **3. Target group: intellectual disabled children and youngsters (6 years – 18 years) and young adults with an intellectual disability.**

#### **4. Content of the programme**

1. Intellectual disability
  2. The concept of the museum: diversity and access
  3. PWID exploring the museum with their family in their free time
  4. Exploring the museum with groups of school and other institutions
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# 1. Intellectual disability

## 1. *ID from a historical point of view*

### **How do we think about intellectual disabled people?**

Intellectual disability (ID) or mental retardation is one of the most common disabilities. Braddock and Parish (2002) have defined disability as socially determined interpretation of impairment by others.

Through history people have interpreted these impairments differently. Thus the whole concept of ID and how to define or categorize people with ID (PWID) has been affected by how people in different cultures and in different periods of time have defined it and understood it.

In history different names have been used: e.g. idiots, feeble-minded, people that cannot attend normalcy, defective, mentally subnormal, weak-minded, mentally retarded, people with an intellectual disability.

These names are not chosen arbitrary but reflect the way people thought and think about PWID. Rehabilitation of PWID has similarly been affected by changing concepts and attitudes.

Until the end of 1800 scientific literatures does not make a difference between dementia and ID. The attention for ID has started around 1850 and has known three periods. The first period was characterized by a naïve optimism where was thought that education and treatment could “cure” these people This first period turned into a second period of pessimism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century where ID was seen as an incurable disease which was confirmed by the theories of eugenics that made ID hereditary. It led to institutionalization and even to sterilization of PWID. A third new more realistic period developed after the Second World War. Around the world, the last four decades have seen an increased focus on early intervention, community-based rehabilitation, definition and diagnosis, human rights, and legislation, with particular stress on deinstitutionalization (Beadle-Brown et al. 2007)

Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Greece, and Belgium have begun deinstitutionalizing ID but institutional care continues to dominate. Deinstitutionalization is just beginning in countries including France, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and many PWID live in poor quality group settings (Beadle-Brown et al. 2007).

Education, health, disability, and social welfare were the key governmental sectors involved in programs and policies related to ID, though the types of services available or the accessibility of such services for all vary across countries. Services were more widespread in high income countries which reported that almost 90% of them have high levels of access (>75% to governmental services) compared to only 10% of low income countries which reported similar levels of access.

In conclusion, the diagnosis of intellectual disability developed over time as societies became more complex and psychological testing gained popularity.

Nevertheless, a lot remains to be done, both from the services perspective and the policy perspective. While attitudes have changed and knowledge about etiology and treatment have improved, PWID still continue to be a neglected community across most countries, especially the resource poor countries, and this adds to the growing burden of ID on the community, in such countries.

One of the main purposes of this programme is to improve accessibility for PWID to participate fully at cultural life including visiting museums.

What defines ID for you? Give a number from 1 – 4 following what you think is what best defines ID.

- People that have a cognitive dysfunction
- People that cannot (fully) perform the tasks of everyday life
- People that cannot satisfy the needs that the society expects from a person
- PWID is a term that should not exist. It is discriminatory. In order to concede to a wide diversity of people the society should aim for more inclusion.

Discuss the results in the group.

Definition by the American Society on Mental Retardation (2002):

*“Mental Retardation is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before age 18.”*

This definition implies that PWID miss some competences:

- conceptual competences: the ability to read, write, handle money, to make choices,...
- social competences: ability to build relationships, to take responsibility, to follow rules,...
- practical competences: carry out daily life activities, eat, hygiene, mobility, use telephone and public transport,...

We can also turn these negative descriptions into positive descriptors. What can PWID do? What is possible for these people?

## 2. **Classification of PWID**

Because there are huge differences in the level of the functionality of PWID, a further classification in degree of mental retardation is made.

There is a classification based on the degree of intelligence (IQ-test), one based on social adaptation (Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales) and a classification based on the age of development

Degree of	Intelligence	Social adaptation	Age of development
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retardation			
Mild mental retardation	IQ 50/55-69	VABS 50-70	6,5 – 10 y
Moderate mental retardation	IQ 35/40 – 50/55	VABS 35-50	4 – 6,5 y
Severe mental retardation	IQ 20/25 – 35/40	VABS 20-35	2 – 4 y
Profound mental retardation	IQ <20/25	VABS <20	0 – 2 y

**This programme will focus on:**

- Children of 6 – 12 years with a mild, moderate and severe mental retardation
- Youngsters between 12 – 21years with a moderate and severe mental retardation
- Possibility to transfer methods to the group of young adults between 18 – 30 years with a moderate and severe mental retardation.

**1. Children and youngsters with a mild mental retardation**

*Cognitive development*

Children and youngsters with mild mental retardation can follow the same steps of education as normally developed children and youngsters. At the end of primary school they attend an age of development of the 4<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> year.

There are problems with:

A. Meaningful processing of information

- the perception of small similarities and differences, the perception is superficial
- time and space references are less developed, they have difficulties to understand the order of events in a story
- the difference between relevant and not relevant information (details and the main point)
- comparing different parts of information, e.g. during a film they cannot see that a person has become gray and that the event takes place in a different period of time,
- combining different parts of information
- seeing and holding logical relationships; e.g. don't see that when water is poured in a different pot, the quantity stays the same

## B. The understanding of abstract information or virtual events and relationships

- problems to understand phrases as: If we would..., then...
- they are bound to the concrete, what they can see, feel,... what is observable
- they stick to what they have lived through, their own lived world
- strongly focused on imitation and reproduction, asking for their own creative input and fantasy is difficult, they need an example, a model
- also transfer from one situation to another is difficult
- in situations that cause stress, they rely on instinctive solutions, learned solutions are not being used
- limited understanding of logical structures
- a slow, incoherent way of thinking

### *Language development*

- limited vocabulary and use of known words
- focus on concrete language use
- short sentences
- complex sentences with words that express relationships between fragments of sentences and sentences are difficult
- figurative and poetic language is difficult, also proverbs are not always understood

#### Exercise:

Translate the following text used for normally developed children of about 11 years to the language of children of the same age with an age development of 7 years.

Paleontology is the study of the history of life. Scientists who study paleontology are called paleontologists. Paleontologists use fossils to try to figure out three main things about fossils: Identity and origin of the fossil, the fossil's environment, and what the fossil can tell us about the history of the earth. Because paleontologists are interested in finding out about all life on earth, they study all kinds of fossils, not just dinosaur bones. There are many different types of paleontologists. Some study fossil plants, some study fossil fish, some study fossil mammals, and some study dinosaurs. Pick a type of fossil and there's bound to be a paleontologist that studies that type of fossil.

### *Motoric development*

Children with a mild mental retardation have not many problems concerning motoric development. However:

- disordered tension of the muscles: if the tension is too high → attention problems; if too low → passivity

- the body scheme is less automatically found: head, knees,...
- limited feeling of orientation and direction
- retarded coordination between eyes and hands
- difficulties with the learning of coordinated and combined movements

### *Social and emotional development*

The social and emotional development for children with a mild mental retardation does not always develop as spontaneously as for children with normal development.

- They need more explicit information about social conventions, they need a clear instruction and some opportunities to train the conventions
- They live here and now, and they want a quick satisfaction of their needs. They have a low frustration tolerance
- Others can easily influence them. Social pressure is difficult to ignore.
- They have a negative self-image, they are unrealistic in their expectations and they have difficulties to reflect about their behaviour.
- They have difficulties to find readily solutions to problems that occur

### **Summary**

Cognitive functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- retardation in development of all cognitive functions and processes</li> <li>- slow process to insight and understanding</li> <li>- low conscious and directed control over thoughts and behaviour</li> <li>- problems to give attention and to concentrate</li> <li>- less references because of lower memory capacity</li> <li>- lack of initiative</li> <li>- not very curious and questioning</li> </ul>
Function independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- difficulties with problem solved thinking</li> <li>- low meta cognitive thinking</li> <li>- limited conscious and control over thoughts and behavior</li> <li>- difficult transfer facilities</li> <li>- problems with attention and concentration</li> </ul>
Social and emotional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- low insight in feelings</li> <li>- low capacity of empathy</li> <li>- egocentric</li> <li>- problems with social competences and social communication</li> <li>- difficulties to solve problems in a constructive way</li> </ul>

### **Consequences for didactics and methodology for children and youngsters with a mild intellectual disability.**

A few rules of thumb:

- Exercises and assignments are built up step by step. It is necessary to split up long instructions in small parts. This opens the possibility to feedback along the way and it improves the motivation of the children and youngsters.
  - If one partial instruction gives problems, it is recommendable to spend more time for training.
- The instruction should be short and build up gradually. Don't give two different instructions at a time.
- Include repetition of the instructions. Avoid that this becomes boring by including variation. Repetition is necessary for consolidation.
- For acquisition of new information five phases can be distinguished:
  - 1, Exploration: the children can explore the materials following an intense observation (see later)
  - 2, Demonstration and imitation
  - 3, Verbal instruction: can be carried out with the demonstration-phase
  - 4, Verbalising: the children put in words what they have learned of what they have to do
  - 5, Carry out autonomously
- If new words have to be explained and consolidated:
  - 1, The level of handling: the sense of the word can be deduced from the concrete activity or situation.
  - 2, The level of images
  - 3, The level of the story: the word is used in a story. The story must be very easy and recognizable.
- To keep up motivation it is important:
  - 1, to provide a reward
  - 2, attractive material, images, colours
  - 3, a transparent structure
  - 4, a positive atmosphere, we can do it together
  - 5, give help, but make sure that there is an evolution towards autonomous work
  - 6, express positive expectations
  - 7, Use assignments in recognizable contexts
- Materials should be introduced gradually and not all at once
- Choose only one way to solve a problem, sometimes it is difficult for them to choose the best method
- React in a responsible way to incorrect answers or solutions, it is important to signal that the answer or solution is not correct. But it is important to say it in a positive way. The reaction should point to the error and not towards the child itself. Keep on motivating, inspiring,...
- Doing is more important than listening and telling

- Help the children also in their relationships with each other. Ask them with whom they will work together,...
- Take account of the possibility that their emotional reaction is more extreme than can be expected

## 2. **Children, youngsters and young adults with moderate mental retardation**

### Description

Adult PWID reach a level of development of a child of maximum 8 years old. They can write their name and they can read simple functional words (toilet, exit, bus,...) A series of daily handlings can be carried out autonomously (hygiene, clothes, clean, put the table, do some shopping,...) if this has been trained intensively and there is a transparent structure in the steps to follow. These people need support to consolidate and maintain these acquisitions.

Children with a moderate mental retardation are directed on the here and now and their direct environment. They can find the way for trained routes, but lose their way when they leave the path. Their interests go to the daily life, they want to talk about their dog, their new shoes, their birthday party and their family. They have very often a favorite subject to talk about.

On the language area there is a big variety. Some can talk in simple and short sentences, others use loose word structures. Their articulation can be very difficult to understand. Very limited vocabulary that refers to the daily life.

They recognize various persons and they have remembrance of concrete events. They keep up to habits and new things make them uncomfortable. To build up routine it takes time and patience.

They are not able to carry out very fine motoric movements and to give a finishing touch to their movements. The eye-hand-coordination is not well developed. Sometimes they are afraid to fall if they have to jump or climb.

They think in patterns and they think about the things that they are directly attracted to by their senses.

On the self-sufficiency they are autonomous. They can eat alone, cloth,...) Also these things have to be trained.

On the social level they are spontaneous. They are very affectionate and they have a pronounced need for physical contact. They express their feelings immediately but these are versatile. They have no problems talking to strangers, sometimes in an exaggerated way. The most elementary rules of social behavior can be taught.

## **Consequences for didactics and methodology for children and youngsters with a mild intellectual disability.**

### **A few rules of thumb:**

- With these children and youngsters everything has to be taught in a very concrete and explicit way. Even things that are evident. Much attention has to be reserved for the practical organization.
- Learning is based on routines and repetition. It is good to take on routines that they already know
- They are not directed towards language, they can listen to instruction. This does not mean that they really understand. Even if it something that they already should know. Learning is about demonstrating and imitating and doing together.
- Pictures, images and signs are very important to communicate.
- They can obey rules. This is comparable with the youngest children in kindergarten. It is important to constantly repeat the rules.
- The children have very few fantasy. If the assignments involves a play, it is important that the mentor participates, takes initiative and plays the role model. The children and youngsters will imitate.

### **3. Children, youngsters and young adults with severe mental retardation**

#### Description

Similar to moderate ID, but in a more severe way. In this group it is very common that there is a multiple disability: mobility,

#### *Cognitive development*

Adults With a severe ID reach a development of a child between 2 and 8 years old. They can write their name. They cannot read or write.

They are living in the here and now and are living the concrete environment. They are very egocentric, because they don't have abilities to empathize. They can recognize people. They feel uncomfortable in new situations. Routine and structure are very important.

They have difficulties to concentrate on an assignment.

#### *Language and communication*

Limited vocabulary, basal word constructions, no sentences and difficult articulation.

#### *Motoric development*

Need lots of motoric stimulation in a professional designed program.

## **Consequences for didactics and methodology for children and youngsters with a mild intellectual disability.**

### **A few rules of thumb:**

- Children, youngsters and adults with a severe ID don't have a group spirit or group consciousness. Even if it involves a small group of 6 children, it will be necessary to seek contact with each person individually.
- Each individual contact should be used to stimulate. Play, live and learn are not separated.
- This people need physical contact. They live with their body. The physical contact also provides a feeling of safety, security and comfort.
- This means that they communicate with their body. It is important to be attentive and to interpret their body language. Sometimes they are very competent to read the feelings of others: anger, fear, pain, joy,...

#### Assignment for Workshop 1:

Contact a school, institution or organization that educates PWID. Try to apply the definition and vision on ID to a group of people or to different groups. Is it possible to apply strictly the classification? What difficulties do you experience to classify? Talk about it to a responsible person or to a professional mentor.

Do you recognize in the way the mentors are educating the children or youngsters some recommends that are mentioned above?

## **2. The concept of the museum: diversity and access**

### **1. *Museums, integration and social inclusion***

We are all disabled in one way or another. Some don't see in a regular way, others don't hear anymore like they heard before, some have mobility problems. Normally we subscribe these disabilities to the group of older people, but we have to be very conscious about the fact that limitations do not describe whole collective groups. Access to museums and expositions concerns every group and every individual person. The exclusion of the groups for whom the participation is limited by intellectual or physical barriers makes our museums and expositions less efficient in their responsibility towards the civil society: the right for every person to have access to culture.

The intellectual disabled visitor is first of all a human being. We cannot forget this especially when referring to the different types of visitors. Human beings, and also disabled human beings, are so different from one another that we cannot overlook those personal needs that must be recognized and satisfied.

Recently the general objective of museums and expositions has changed from an emblematic one to a social objective. Therefore the focus has been replaced from the collection itself to the visitor.

In fact that leaves us two groups: people that want to visit the museum and people that have no interest in visiting the museum. And the first group needs “access”.

### **The idea of “access”**

If the museum has become a social place, then it is necessary that all possible visitors have access to the museum. Before the museum was owned by the city and by the director of the museum. Now the general idea is:

“Our museum becomes a bit your museum”

The idea of ‘access’ has clearly proven useful. Access is a term that puts a focus on the barriers for intellectual disabled people and their family or their teachers and mentors. It helps museums to think about how they exclude this target group (the problem) and in the meantime it allows them also to think about how to work on inclusion (the solution).

An interesting project (funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council) took place in 2009 in the UK initiated by Melanie Nind and Jane Searle. They got together people with intellectual disabilities, people who support them and people who research intellectual disability to discuss the meanings of ‘access’.

One of the outcomes of the discussion was a ‘multi-dimensional model’ of access:

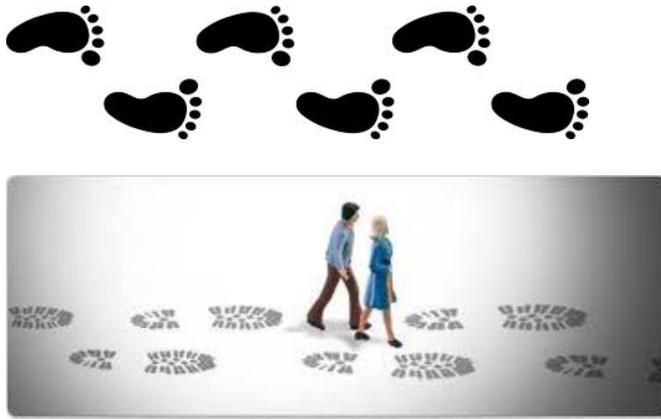
#### **1. “Make it easy for me to find my way around”**

Physical access to things (essential but not sufficient; access goes beyond the physical means of entering or approaching).

For example: intellectual disabled can easily loose orientation in the museum when they apart themselves from the group. Can they easily find the toilets, the tour line,...

Exercise: which foot traces would you use in what part of your museum?





Visitors in general do not like to get lost and certainly intellectual disabled don't. It is important to spend time to let them get familiar to the space around them. This requires time and information. But the visitor should not be overloaded with too much information.

- People with a learning disability do not usually have wide experience of heritage sites, and do not know what is available at venues to use them to their full potential.
- It often needs lots of shorter visits for people with a learning disability to get the most out of a venue.
- Information is best delivered when it is given lots of times in small chunks.
- There is often an overlap in approaches to access that means a solution designed for some is also solution for many others.

Warmth of welcome includes quality of the staff, signage, orientation at the beginning of the visit and colour schemes.

- There is a lack of symbols in use in interpretation and where there is use it is often of an inconsistent nature.
- Most sites have unclear way finding.
- There need to be clear, large, symbol-based signs.
- There need to be signs to make clear what can be done in different spaces (e.g. what can be touched and what can be sat on).
- The use of colour coding for directions is helpful. Contrasting colours on floors and walls help to define a space.
- Signs need to be clearly visible. The artifacts they relate to needs to be evident.
- Signs should not be crowded, and should use large strongly contrasted fonts.
- A simplified text identifying key information should be used with supporting symbols/pictures.

## **2. "I want to learn something new"**

Also PWID want to learn something new. They want to find out about the things that they are interested in.

For example: concrete and abstract vocabulary; choice of collection in the museum,...

Exercise: go back to workshop 1 and find out what content could interest PWID.

→ media used

→ level of language

→ contemplative or highly experimental

- Sites are most effective when more senses are being used.
- There should be more use of sound, but it is important that the sound is not muffled and that there are not too many sounds going on at once.
- Audio text at the press of a button is well received.
- Videos and music create a sense of place and reduce a reliance upon reading text to access information.
- Interactive computer games are popular.
- Hands on exhibits create a very accessible space, but opportunities are currently limited.
- Exhibits need to have strong contrast in colour and texture to be accessible to all.

### **3. “I don’t want to feel helpless”**

This is about power and having the ability and influence to achieve and maintain access.

For example:

#### **People as effective resources**

- The most effective access facilitator is a tour guide who engages with people and builds on their current understanding.
- The use of costumes brings a space to life.
- Providing simplified materials for guides within rooms would help both staff and visitors in discussing a site and its artifacts.

### **4. “Make me feel welcome”**

This is about relationships and communication, personal facilitation and interpersonal interaction.

For example: The way in which people are greeted upon entering the museum or the exhibition. The visitor has to feel comfortable from the very beginning to be able to enjoy the rest of the visit.

For example: is also the museum guardian able to communicate with the intellectual disabled?

- On arrival people with a learning disability need to be made to feel welcome.
- Disability awareness training is needed for staff. This training should involve people with learning disabilities.
- There needs to be plenty of seating available throughout a site.

**5. “Accept me for who I am and what I know”**  
**“Help me to understand and let me talk too”**  
**“Let me choose, give me some control”**

This is about advocacy. Making real choices and voicing them – an overlapping concept with access.

For example: can the intellectual disabled make his own choices?

Exercise: what choices can/could PWID make in your museum?

**6. “Let me participate”**

Also PWID have the right to participation in groups, events, democratic processes.

See further workshop 3: example of the Castle of Gaasbeek, Belgium.

**7. “Meet my basic needs”**  
**“I came to spend time with my family/with my friends”**

This is about quality of life (belonging to communities, enjoying independence/interdependence and social networks)

For example: is it allowed, stimulated to interact with not intellectual disabled?

Such a model is helpful because it speaks to the complexity of museums as places, spaces, objects, collections, ideas, interactions and actors in public policy. It is not enough to apply merely adjustments to the museum as a building, the collection and way the collection is presented.

**The term “access” can be dangerous in two ways:**

1. We first build for the normal and then we adapt

- We first build a museum and the content for “normal” people and then adapt to intellectual disabled

The building itself, the collection, the way it is presented, the content and the context do not have first to be developed and then afterwards adapted to the intellectual disabled. The whole concept has to be developed from the beginning as

a concept that takes account of inclusion, of among other groups, intellectual disabled.

2. We provide access through the eyes of how a normal person sees an intellectual disabled

- The choices made to include intellectual disabled are made from wrong perceptions (from a point of view of the normal or how the normal see the intellectual disabled) of how intellectual disabled people experience the world, the museum.

For example: that it has not only to be easier, the museum can present content that has to do with their experiences as a human being being intellectual disabled. The danger is that once adaptation by making it easier is supplied, a broader engagement to think about inclusion is put aside.

Source:

(Melanie Nind and Jane Searle (2009) 'Concepts of access for people with learning difficulties: towards a shared understanding', *Disability & Society*, 24 (3)

## ***2. Calendar age versus development age***

With children and people with an ID, it is difficult to estimate how to communicate with them. It seems like a mind of a two-year-old child is trapped in a body of an adolescent or an adult. But he is certainly not a two-year-old person, even if there are preferences, behaviour,... that we would associate with that age (playing with noises, with materials, motoric movement,...) we cannot not interpret these preferences and behaviour as we should do for a 2-year-old child.

As a rule of thumb we can take the calendar age as determinative for the atmosphere, the activities and the way to communicate. An adolescent or an adult has not the same daytime planning as a two year old. Communication towards a child is not the same as communication with an adult. This seems very logical, but with children with a ID it is not always easy to find a good balance.

Assignment for workshop 2:

List that has to be checked and compared with the description of the PWID and the rules of thumb for each group (see workshop 1). It would be very interesting to walk through the museum with the mentor that you met during the assignment of workshop 1.

The building itself:

- Lift, stairs, staircase railing, rest place, meeting place, toilets, light, floor, pictograms, doors, marks on the floor and the walls, windows, transits,...
- Text form and reading level, guides, forms and sizes of information panels and documentation, how high or low, tactile scale models, audio guides, subtitles, audiovisual information, animations,...
- Seats, room for noisy activities, for creative activities,...

- Reception desk

The collection:

- can some objects be touched (replicas,...)
- what has relationship to the things that can interest PWID?

The information:

- are some texts simple, supported with images, with role-plays,

The people working in the museum and that have a relation with the public:

- reception
- toilets
- guards
- guides
- ...

Evaluation: is it necessary to give the personal an introductory course in the matter of ID?

Educational material?

- e.g. coffer with materials that can be sculptured,...

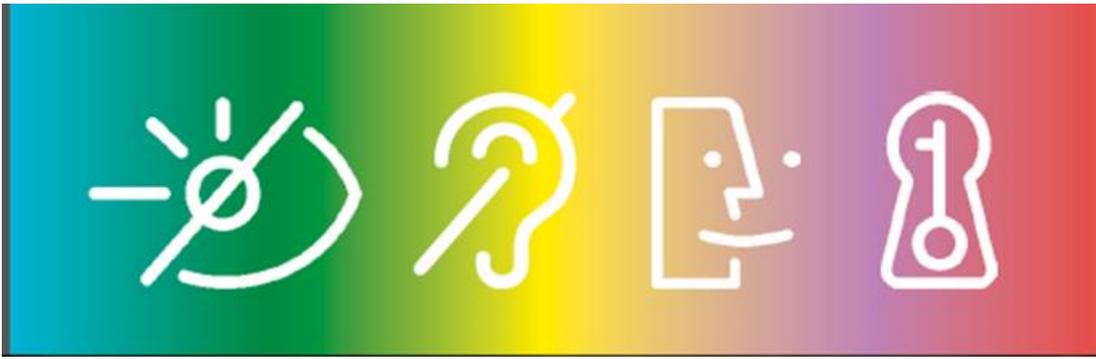
### **3. PWID exploring the museum with their family in their free time**

#### **1. How to attract PWID? How to develop a brochure, a website,...?**

- Heritage Sites need to tell people with a learning disability, and their supporters, about what specific services are available at their site, such as workshops.
- Sites need to proactively engage with this area of the community, encouraging involvement in mainstream activities.
- Pre-visit information would benefit these users.

A good example is the development of a publicity and information brochure "Museum op maat" (Dutch for "customized museums") developed by the education team of "Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België" to communicate their programme for 2012 – 2013. They focused on accessibility and inclusion.

They use four different symbols for the visual disabled, for the people with a hearing impairment, for people with a mental or physical disability and for people with economical, social or cultural difficulties.



They also launched a website and a blog that uses the same symbols. Via the website and the blog it is possible to pre-visit the museum.

In the brochure and on the website, they present their special programmes, practical information and interesting articles,... about culture, museums and diversity.

The pictograms and colours are also used in the museum itself.

Exercise: evaluate the brochure, the website,... of your museum, can PWID and their family, their mentors find out about how the museum can be visited by PWID?

## **2, How to develop a guide brochure for PWID to guide the visitor in the museum?**

Here we can apply the information on PWID and the didactic and pedagogical information.

Some rules of thumb:

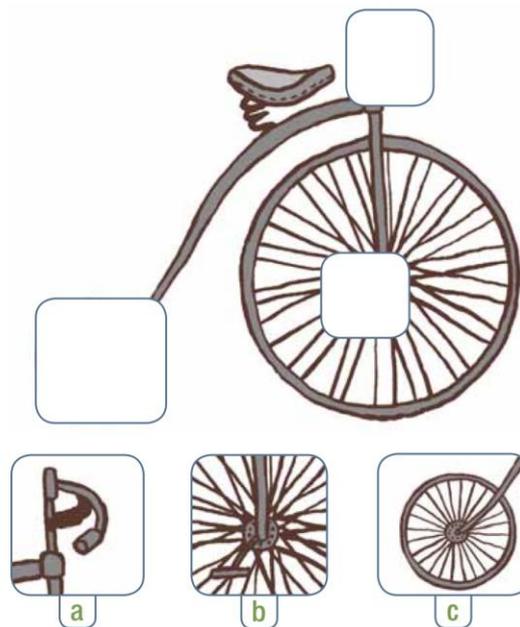
- Provide a place where the person with ID can write his name. This personalizes the brochure and as said in workshop 1: PWID can write their name.
- Create a figure that will guide the visitor through the museum. Give this figure a name and a profile. The figure is present in the book and is present in the museum itself. The sort of figure differs with the age of the visitor. The figure can be accompanied by a pet like a cat or a dog.
- It is possible to use pictograms (as foot traces, colored lines,...) to lead the person through the museum. As said in workshop 1 and 2, PWID need support for orientation to feel safe and comfortable.
- Provide a place where the visitor can draw the object that he finds most attractive in each room. As we learned in workshop 1, PWID like to imitate and to reproduce.
- Search for simple instructions in each room of the museum.

Examples: In the museum for transport

- Put a circle around the objects that can move



- What part is missing?



- Insert a design of a member card that can be cut and used several times (e.g. 6 stamps gives right to...)

PAGE 17

Carte de membre  
du **Club EUREKA**



Remplis ta carte

Colle ta  
photo ici

Nom : .....

Prénom : .....

Né(e) le : ..... / ..... / .....

Signature

- People with learning disabilities have found it best to work in short bursts across a longer period of time. An ongoing relationship of regular visits across a period of several months is appropriate.

Exercise: evaluate your museum on objects and artifacts that are a part of the daily life of the PWID and create interesting questions and instruction using images. In workshop 1 we learned that PWID like to reproduce rather than to produce and create them.

### 3, How to find out why this person is visiting the museum?

Probably for the same reasons as other people might come:

- intellectually motivated → learning
- emotionally motivated → aesthetic and emotional delight
- socially motivated → recreation and sociability

In the words of PWID themselves:

- To see something you know you are already interested in or know about
- To share important ideas with each other
- To find out about your own interests and talents

How can we know what are the preferences for intellectual disabled people?

Participation is the answer! Museums should involve PWID in the process of development of the museum and the educational:

- If a museum wants to develop educational material for visiting the museum, they should attend meetings with the people with learning disabilities.

- The enthusiasm of people with learning disabilities for new experiences, and the pace at which they work, means that supporters/staff can easily direct a process with their own ideas, ways of working and/or ambitions without being aware of it.
- Supporters/staff must always constantly reflect on whether the people with learning disabilities are directing the process or whether they are being required to follow.
- Having a social element to projects is beneficial for all involved.
- Heritage sites need to provide individuals with the opportunity to assess proposed changes before they are finally implemented.

### **An example of collaboration between a museum site “The castle of Gaasbeek” in Belgium and an institution for PWID.**

De Castle of Gaasbeek started on the 1st of April of 2010 with the use of audio guides for adults. But following repeated questions by families with youngsters and young adults with a mental disability for an adapted version of the audio guide, the museum decides that they would value this group of people. They wanted to guide them in a qualitative way.

They developed an audio tour with the aid of people with a mental disability, designed for people with a mild to moderate mental disability. They worked also together with a theatre director that has experience in the field of theatre made by PWID. The director wrote a customized scenario. The texts for the audio guide are spoken by the PWID themselves.

This audio guide is also interesting for the other visitors of the museum. They get the opportunity to look differently at the castle. In this way, this project is a way of “inverted inclusion”. People with a disability offer in their own creative way a different view on the castle.

The project offers for the youngsters and young adults of the institute VZW Schoonderhage a unique opportunity to express them in a creative way, to participate at culture, to help develop a device that many people will use and for what they will be admired.

The project started with an audition before the theatre director for PWID. The selected people carry out a number of workshops. Via these workshops, the PWID learn to feel the castle and the museum. The final aim was to distill the texts that will be heard on the audio guides.

This collaboration offers many advantages for both partners. For the museum it results in a special tour for PWID guided with an audio guide made for and by PWID. For the PWID it was a useful way of participation and inclusion.

### **4, Good practice of an atelier “the fanfare”**

In the museum “Het huis van Alijn” in Belgium, Gent, the education team has developed a tour with atelier for PWID. It is aimed to children as well as to adolescents and even to young adults.

This is the make up of the tour and atelier:

1. Welcome
2. Creating atmosphere of the 19th C. Involving fanfare on the street

In the museum there is a room to show movies and to visualize pictures with sound experience. A short movie with marching fanfares through the streets are shown.

Conclusion: fanfare is about hammy moments and about sad moments

3. Short tour through the museum. Only the part that involves the fanfare is visited. This takes about 15 minutes times. The visitors can react freely on the objects and artifacts. They have two cards, one with “zap” and another with “wow”. They can use the cards to express their feelings towards the objects.
4. Gathering in the room for the atelier
5. The guide tells a short sad story. The he asks if any visitor has lived a sad story. The visitors tell freely. After every sad story a sad march music is played.

The guide and the visitors march in a sad way (a funeral march). The guide and the visitors use the percussion instruments during the march.

Idem for a happy event.

6. As a final step, the guide and the visitors play a happy march and are marching as they were a real fanfare. Other visitors stepped with them spontaneously.

Assignment for workshop 3:

Prolong the collaboration with the institute of PWID and set up a plan to work together where the PWID can participate at the improvement of the accessibility of the museum for PWID.

Suggestions:

- development of ateliers
- development of audio guides
- development of a storytelling through the museum by images (graphic novel) → search for relations between the collection and the personal life experiences of PWID.



## 4. Exploring the museum with groups of school and other institutions

The process of learning: socio-constructivism

If groups come in school contexts, the main purpose stays that the children, youngsters,... will be learning something one way or another. The following gives insight in the process of learning and the art of creation. These principles will be applied in good practices of educational packets en guided tours in museums and expositions.

### A. People learn by the natural process of association

Source: Koestler, Arthur. "The act of creation."

"The Act of Creation is a 1964 book by Arthur Koestler. It is a study of the processes of discovery, invention, imagination and creativity in humor, science, and the arts. It lays out Koestler's attempt to develop an elaborate general theory of human creativity. From describing and comparing many different examples of invention and discovery, Koestler concludes that they all share a common pattern that he terms "bisociation".

What criteria does a lesson have to meet to elicit creativity? We use three concepts for this purpose. These concepts apply both to our thinking as well as to our behaviour. We can, therefore, use them to prepare lessons (thinking) and to guide students' behaviour during the guided tours. So, the creative process is identical for thinking and doing.

- Associations

Exercise 1: every participant writes down the word “rabbit” on a sheet and chooses each time by association a next word (10x)



Exercise 2: every participant takes a pencil and draws something, e.g. a snowman. Then draws something next to the snowman and continues drawing until he has filled the page.

Conclusion:

- everyone begins with the same word/drawing → everyone ends up with a different word/drawing
- sometimes link is clear for everyone (e.g. rabbit – carrot)
- sometimes it is not clear (e.g. rabbit – fire) → then the person has to explain and by telling the listener can learn something that he or she did not know

Exercise 3:

- choose something in the room that is red
- choose something in the room that has to do with you getting here (transport)
- choose something in the room that has something to do with a very joyful thing in your life

Conclusion:

- first exercise: the association is not personal
- second: more personal
- third: more personal than the second association
- natural process that association becomes more personal association after association, this is also called “reflection”

This is associative thinking or associative drawing. These exercises clearly show that creativity is something completely natural. After all, when doing these exercises, each individual writes a different last word or draws something different. Even if one starts out with the same word or the same object.

- Provocations

Exercise 1: Every participant start with two words, e.g. ‘shoe’ and ‘bicycle wheel’. Think of three ways in which to polish shoes using a bicycle wheel.

Exercise 2: Transform the next words into movement: snow, snowstorm, snowball. Then do the same with these words; to freeze and to thaw. Partner up for this exercise, and together briefly choreograph the previous movements.

A provocation entails taking two ideas and combining those into a new idea. This does not spontaneously generate creativity, but it forces it. Provocations are faster in generating creativity, but are also faster at blocking it.

Note: this is very difficult for PWID, associative processes are preferred above provocative processes.

Exercise 3:

- make two associative series as in exercise number 1
- invent a story that relates the two results of the two associative series

Conclusion:

- this is a provocative process
- it is a creative process by combining two concepts that have been achieved on the bases of knowledge of the learner and not of the teacher

Applied on PWID: by association the PWID use their own reference scheme to build up new knowledge. By association the disabled person gives information to the guide about his way of thinking.

Bisociations

Associations and provocations lead to bisociations. Bisociations are the essence of creativity: combining two elements into what is a new element to you. This always happens through a feature that is common to both of those elements. This is a concept devised by Arthur Koestler (1964). In a series of associations, people only achieve a different final word if they leap from one field of meaning to another. (We speak of a field of meaning if we are creative in our thinking and we speak of a field of experience if we are creative in our actions). These leaps are the bisociations in which we can retrace the common feature. This is made clear by the following example.

We start out with the series of associations commencing with the word 'shoe': Shoe, lace, snake, mouse, nest, bed, bedroom, lamp, electricity, fuse.

The first field of meaning is built up around the word 'shoe'. 'Shoelace' goes together with this word. We make a leap to the field of meaning of 'animals' by using the word snake. What 'shoelace' and 'snake' have in common is 'long and flexible'. We explore the field of meaning of bedroom by using the common feature of 'nest' between 'mouse' and 'bed'. In 'shoelace' and 'snake' the common feature (long and flexible) is not in the series of associations. But it does in 'mouse' and 'bed', i.e.: nest.

In provocations, we can also go in search of a common feature. Three methods for cleaning shoes using a bicycle wheel:

1, You can replace the tire with brushes. Whilst someone is cycling, the brushes turn and you have to hold your shoe against them.

2, A wheel rim is equipped with a brush of 20 cm at the bottom. By holding the wheel rim at the top, you can clean your shoe without having to bend down.

3, That same wheel rim is now equipped with two brushes and a tube of shoe polish between them. Now you can clean your shoes with the one brush, and apply shoe polish

from the tube and polish the shoe with the other brush. And all this without having to bend down. There is not even any need for you to tidy away the shoe cleaning equipment; you simply hang the wheel rim on a hook.

For the first idea, the common feature is the shoe-polishing machines equipped with turning brushes supplied in hotels. The second idea was generated by the common feature 'bridging the distance'. Cleaning is easier if you do not have to bend down. Just think of long-handled dustpans. The wheel rim is of an ideal diameter to do the same. The third idea is an associative extension of the second idea. Thus, bisociations are the core of creativity. By integrating associations and provocations into lessons, we are eliciting bisociations. This gives students the opportunity to make discoveries themselves.

### Consequences for the construction of activities for the museum for PWID

Based on this concise theoretical model, it is possible to prepare a guided tour through the museum for PWID. The basic principle is that you create a field of experience for the participants through associative steps. In that field of experience, a number of students will develop bisociations, just like the above mentioned chain association. You then start with a second field of experience, which you also build up through associations. The next step involves devising an assignment in which you combine the method of provocation in both fields of experience. This last step could be very difficult for children and youngsters with a moderate and severe intellectual disability, but for children with mild intellectual disability it is feasible if the activities are well structured.

## **B. Direct instruction education versus socio-constructivism or learning by experience**

The example with the pigeon and the monkey:

1. Process where a teacher learns a pigeon to tik to the green colored lamp in order to get food.

Step 1: The pigeon gets food if its goes in the direction of the lamp → if the teachers decides that the pigeon has trained enough and has automated this step, the teacher goes further with the second step

Step 2: The pigeon gets food if it tiks to the lamp → if automated → step 3

Step 3: The pigeon gets food if it tiks to the lamp that lights up → if automated → step 4

Step 4: The pigeon gets food if it tiks to the lamp when it lights up green → automatisisation

Conclusion:

- the step are predominantly defined
- the steps are chosen by the teacher
- the order of the steps and the timing for going to another step is determined by the teacher
- very predictable and controlable
- the pigeion only learns what the teacher had put as a goal to achieve

2. Process where a teacher sets up a situation in which a monkey can learn what instrument fits the best to enter the banana into the cage.

The teacher creates the following situation: a monkey is locked in a cage with a number of instruments (toys) of different form, color, size,... There is a banana at a certain distance of the cage and the banana can only be taken by means of one or two instruments.

The monkey tries to reach the bananas, uses the instruments and finally finds out what instrument can serve. This is a process by trial and error.

Conclusion:

- this is a holistic learning process: the monkey gets all the possibilities at once
- the steps that will be set are not predictable or defined, they depend on the choice of the monkey. This choice is not necessarily made at random. It depends on the pre-knowledge by previous experiences, of its intelligence,...
- the monkey learns also other things while experiencing except from the goal itself: what he learns will differ from monkey to monkey and is not predictable

The last example of the monkey is a representation of what is called constructivism. If it's done in group, then it is called socio-constructivism.

Socio-constructivism is a process that creates new knowledge that is based on the previous knowledge and experiences of the learner and it counts therefore on associative and bisociative processes.

Building knowledge = a creative process
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Note:

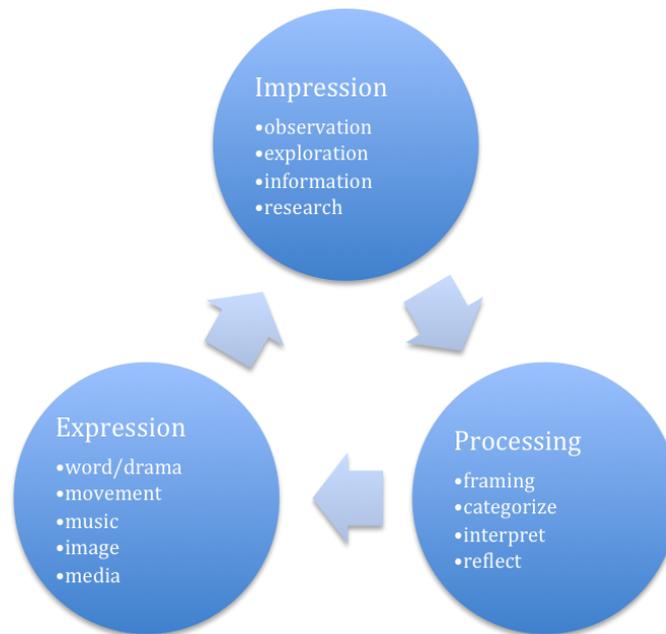
Creativity is not the same as originality. Originality refers to something new for everyone, creativity refers to something new for myself.

Creativity is surrounded by a great deal of prejudice. Removing that is our constant concern. Please find our main points below: Creativity in the museum is often equated to chaos. These are not synonyms, however. A creative process can (and must at the outset) be very structured. One must therefore ensure that the lesson is well prepared and accompanied by a strict time schedule.

C. Natural circle of association and creation: to observe, to create order (processing), to express

Source: The Ferryman (De Veerman) is an arts educational organisation that wants to stimulate creativity, art experience, knowledge and insight into the arts. This in relation to the world around us.

The Ferryman always starts out with the person and their ability to observe, to order and to design. These are three abilities that are natural and always present and that make the notion of "culture".



Each of the stages can be achieved in different ways. The stages are not always well separated and they not always nicely follow up each other.

The first exercise is an exercise on the level of the participants of the workshop.

Exercise 1: For this exercise it is recommendable visiting a church or chapel. We can carry out the following steps on site. If this is not possible, a presentation of a church with photos presented on a beamer can do the job. Presentations of the global monument and detail photos are necessary. Or a package of photos can be given to each pair of two participants. They work as partners.

1. Impression: observe, explore, research, gather information

Observation exercise:

Association 1: walk through the church and look for elements that represent life/death

Draw/sketch 4 elements of each concept on a sheet.

Association 2: walk again through the church and search for elements that represent humility and subservience/grandeur and superiority.

Draw again 4 elements of each concept on a sheet.

Provocation:

Put a sketched element in each part of the following scheme.

	Life/happiness	Death/suffering
Humility/subservience		

Grandeur and superiority		

Exploration exercise:

Exploring means doing something and experience through the act. It improves the impression.

Exercise 1: imitate the pose of the statues that you chose in the previous exercise.

Exercise 2 : go and stand on a place in the church where you would sing a happy song and another place where you would sing a sad song.

The bigger idea is to make the church alive, to increase the participants empathy and give them a better understanding of what a church is all about. We want them to feel the church, using all senses, more than “know about” the history of the church. Experience is very important here.

Note: we could also ask the participants to listen to a guide providing “information” about the church or we could ask them to do some research on the church using the Internet, books,... Because this is a course for preparing guidance tours for PWID, we choose to skip these two pathways.

## 2. Expression: frame, categorize, interpret, reflect

The next step is to relate our findings to what we know (both in knowledge and in experience), frame and categorize and also interpret and reflect on these findings. Framing, categorizing and interpretation means to relate knowledge and impressions to each other and reflection is looking at them from a point of view related to ourselves, to the here and now.

To understand the architecture and decoration of the church we have to know about the hierarchy of the church and the interference of the church in the most essential moments of the daily life of the people. The way the church is built and the nature of the statues, decoration reflect these things.

Certain exercises can intensify this process:

Exercise 1: framing and categorizing

Search for buildings, monuments and statues erected by governing institutions in the same period of time.

Search for other churches built during that period of time and compare.

When interpreting, we could think of an explanation for the similarities and the differences.

When reflecting we could compare with the meaning of these buildings for the people here and now.

### 3. Expression: art disciplines

Word/drama: choose two statues or images of persons present in the church and develop a dialogue between them. (attributes, clothes, décor,...)

Movement/dance: choose a statue or image of a person present in the church and imitate its pose. What feeling does the statue or person express (e.g. pride, superiority,...)? Make a tableau vivant with three persons that express this feeling imitating all the pose of the statue.

Think now about the opposite feeling (e.g. inferiority, humility,...). Make again a tableau vivant that expresses this feeling with the 4 persons. Begin with the first tableau vivant and move fluently to the second one, repeat the actions.

Each person stand in a corner of the room, on a sign every “dancer” comes to the middle of the “dance floor”, the first tableau vivant is made, pause, fluent movement to the second tableau vivant, pause, the “dance act” ends in a apotheoses.

Assignment for this workshop:

Select a series of related objects in the museum that you work. Choose a group of pupils (age, degree of mental disability) and create a similar activity line-up using the model of impression – creating order and expression. Don't forget about association and provocation.

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