



Assessing & measuring the impact of using cultural venues as an educational resource for disadvantaged adults.

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What are the long term benefits of using ‘cultural venues’ as an educational resource?

Background

For the last three years the Yorkshire and Humber Region have been running two initiatives that encourage tutors and students to engage more with their local ‘culture’ and ‘heritage’. ‘Digability’ is a three year Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded project that has engaged over 300 students across more than 20 centres in archaeology and local heritage. ‘Out of the Box’ has engaged more than 20 groups and more than 200 students through a small funding pot targeted at disadvantaged groups to encourage them to visit a ‘cultural’ venue to enhance learning.

Although on the day everyone usually declares they have had a ‘lovely’ time this research set out to see if there were longer term impacts of visiting heritage and cultural sites and how we, as practitioners could measure this effectively.

As our research progressed however it has also led us to develop better planning tools for field visits and to develop cross-curricular ideas for tutors to use not only within the humanities, but also for subject areas such as ICT, art, fitness and maths. The research has enabled us to also improve our own practice in recording student expectations before visits and following up impact afterwards.

What is a ‘Cultural venue’?

Arnold believed in his seminal study ‘Culture and Anarchy’ that ‘culture’ was the ‘study of perfection’, ‘the best thought in the known world’. Christopher Frayling defines culture as ‘everything that isn’t nature’ and makes reference to Keynes and a ‘poverty of aspiration’ who thought of culture as a way of ‘stimulating and broadening horizons’ and as a way of thinking about things ‘other’ than everyday concerns.¹

For the purposes of this study we are largely talking about the cultural architectures and landscapes of our historic past, buildings and ‘sites’ that reflect our history. These may be important, well known sites such as Roche Abbey, Brodsworth Hall or Creswell Crags. Equally it could be regional or local collections such as those held at local museums in Doncaster, the Toulson in Huddersfield or Weston Park in Sheffield. We have also introduced students to lesser known sites such as Rockley Furnace, Ewden Beck stone circle and the landscape around it as well as discovering the historic remains of local high streets for example in Wombwell, Huddersfield, Skipton and Maltby. The focus for the Digability Groups has been archaeology and/or local history, whereas ‘Out of the Box’ has focused on ‘cultural venues’ to inspire art, develop language or improve ‘cultural awareness’. Returning

¹The value of Culture BBC4 Radio, Melvin Bragg (Culture of Anarchy – Matthew Arnold 1869. Christopher Frayling chair of the Art Council 2005-2009)

to Frayling these venues, for the students we take, really do offer a chance to ‘think about other things than ‘everyday’ concerns’ and what is ‘learnt’ is evidentially more than an ‘learning objective’. The question, for us is how do we capture this?

Matarasso quoted in Burnell 2012 says, “culture shapes everything we try and do...if we use it as a resource and understand how it affects us all; we are able to create a really sustainable approach to human development.”² This research project has been about trying to understand how using the cultural resource can affect us and how we can better facilitate students’ access to meet their expectations and ‘needs’.

Using Cultural Venues in Education

The Prince’s Foundation for Children and Arts thought that there was too many one off activities connected to culture in schools and that there was too much emphasis on participation rather than nurturing critical appreciation. "Worse still there is too much in the classroom and not enough use made of cultural venues"

www.childrenandarts.co.uk/in-focus/2011/09/acultural-entitlement

Indeed much recent research into impact has been focused on the under 18s. The recent “Value of Arts and culture to People and Society” published by the Art Council in March 2014 under the theme of ‘education’ focused specifically on the benefits to ‘young’ people rather than the population as whole citing higher marks, better cognitive abilities and better employability skills in those young people who experience arts and culture than those who don’t engage with culture. The report fails to address the ‘impact’ on the education of adults. Even though the report does consider other factors that are influenced by engaging in cultural activity, it also recognizes there is still much work to do.

“The general value of the arts and culture to society has long been assumed, while the specifics have just as long been debated...While we do not cherish arts and culture because of the impact on our social well-being and cohesion, over physical and mental health, our education system, our national status and our economy, they do confer these benefits and we need to show how important this is”. (Arts Council 2014;4)

The surveys conducted by the Art Council for the report show those attending a cultural venue reported 60% better health than those who had not and other studies show a positive effect on dementia, depression and Parkinson’s disease and those in social care “most studies do not establish a causality with arts, culture and social impacts. We need larger samples, longitudinal studies and experimental methodologies” (Arts Council 2014;8).

² Burnell, J 2012 *The Art of Development: Understanding Cultural Heritage a creative agent for change*. P19.

A similar study by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, also published this year tried to quantify the social impact of culture and sport on wellbeing³. Regarding the 'Arts' they estimated the following perceived income benefits per person: with 'Libraries (inc. museums)' £113 (broken down this amounts to about £47 per activity) and with sport £94 (Fujiware 2014; 30).

Despite the more general studies though there remains very little literature on the impact of visiting cultural sites on adults and in particular adults with disabilities or mental health problems.

There is also a general feeling that much research on impact still remains "vague concerning how and to what extent" (Simpson and Williams 2008;70). The same is true when assessing projects such as community archaeology and outreach and their ability to change people's perception of the past.

Perhaps one of the few reports to attempt to quantify impact has been the report for the Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium⁴ although they recognized that 'it is impossible to fully understand how art (& culture) works on people, because the 'received impact' is inherently idiosyncratic and impossibly complex.' Of those accessing the museums & arts venues surveys 86-99% of audiences or visitors completing the survey were white, 70%+ educated to higher education standards and 40-70% were in employment (p11). This report focuses on 'self' directed engagement rather than organised visits for an educational purpose but people completing the survey reported intellectual stimulation, aesthetic growth, a better insight into human relations and a sense of connectedness.

Does visiting the cultural venue have more impact than a classroom based course?

Evidence from the WEA's 'Impact of WEA Adult Education' (2013) reported that of the 21% of respondents who were employed, 82% said they felt more confident about progressing their careers in the future, of those who were unemployed 75% felt that after the course they were more confident about finding work in the future. 98% of respondents reported a positive social or health impact and 69% said it made them feel better about themselves in general. 93% said it helped them make new friends and that they had enjoyed meeting people that they did not normally mix with. Unfortunately the survey does not mention which courses the respondents were from or the backgrounds of those surveyed, although the preamble does note that those

³ Fujiwara et al 2014 *Quantifying and Valuing the Wellbeing Impacts of Culture and Sport* Dept of Culture Media and Sport

⁴ Baker Richards & Wolf Brown 2011 *Intrinsic Impact: How audiences and visitors are transformed by Cultural Experiences in Liverpool*. Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium.
(<http://www.larc.uk.com/2011/06/innovative-intrinsic-impacts-study-released/>)

with learning difficulties or those with low levels of English were not contacted as this was a telephone survey.

In 'Learning for Life: Adult learning mental health and well being' published by the Mental Health Foundation 2011 reported that, 'community-based adult learning can help people manage mild and moderate mental health problems in a non-stigmatizing way'. The report showed (2011;30) that the well being of learners improved after completing a 'Learn2b' course in all three domains of well-being, anxiety and depression.

Results from our survey are broadly similar with 50% reporting an increased feeling of well-being, 80% said it had helped with their studies (35% suggesting it had led them to continue to study) and 45% said it had helped them in other ways (examples given included increased confidence, new friendships and how to use public transport).

These results therefore suggest that perhaps it is education itself that is important: learning the ability to critically interact with people around you, your environment and be given a feeling of worth. Feedback from the students on the Digability project still shows however that the experience of visiting a site is still an important part of the 'education/learning' experience. A student group asked why visits were important to them summed it up:

'It is the creating of the visual experience that leads to a better understanding than classroom learning. The hands-on approach leads to the formation of memories that gives a better feeling of life in the past and connects you to your heritage.'⁵

What prompts people to take part in the courses?

A study in 2002-3 by Anne Lines et al for the National Foundation for Educational Research⁶ found that engagement with the activities in museums etc. showed that "personal gains in skills, knowledge, confidence and social opportunities" (Lines 2014,iii) were more significant than the desire to commit to further learning. They also discovered that time and cost were significant reason for people choosing not to attend activities (2013;vi).

Evidence from Digability and Out of the Box supports these findings. Students report that courses focusing on heritage give them ' a reason to get out of bed in the morning', 'it makes me feel more cheerful,' 'I get to meet like minded people.'

⁵ Students in Deaf Digability Class 12/6/14

⁶ Lines et al 2003 Bigger Pictures, Broader Horizons: Widening access to adult learning in the arts and cultural sectors Dept for Education and Skills.

Methodology

In our proposal we set out the following research objectives.

1. Build a body of evidence, quantitative and qualitative, that demonstrates the positive impact of visiting 'cultural venues'.
2. Look at the impact across time of taking students to 'cultural venues' in relationship to the four key themes of the WEA (employability, health and well-being, community engagement and culture).
3. Improve the quality of the impact data so that tutors across the curriculum can be encouraged to use 'cultural venues'.
4. See if it is possible to generate cost/benefit analysis that can be used in future funding bids.

The time scope of this study was four months.

To build the body of evidence we collected data from students from Digability and from those who had taken part in field visits to historic sites from other curriculum areas. We also decided to collect data from museum staff to see what we could do as tutors to make group visits to their facilities better. We questioned tutors themselves to find out their approach to taking groups out, especially about prior planning and follow up. This was to identify training needs.

The questions asked reflected the desire to see the longer term impact on students where possible in terms of employment, health and wellbeing, community engagement and culture.

We designed and trialed the student questionnaire with students who have mild to moderate learning difficulties. Some of the questions needed rewording so they were more explicit. Others we dropped as they appeared unnecessary. We ended up with ten questions that asked students to reflect on why they wanted to visit a place, what they remembered and what they think (a year on) they had gained from the visit.

The surveys were entered onto SurveyMonkey which allowed us to break the survey down into clear sections of before, immediately after and long term impacts. It also meant the surveys could be printed off to take to student groups. Links were added to our Digability webpage, discussion forum and the WEA regional website. We also sent copies of the surveys to student groups and carried out face-to-face surveys with students ourselves.

Once the links were advertised on our website and online forum we were approached by the Association for Heritage Interpreters and asked to share our findings with them so they could reflect on their practice and experience of delivering educational sessions to groups of different needs.

In total we had 20 students, 13 staff and 8 heritage interpreters respond to our surveys. The results are discussed below. Full results of the surveys are shown in Appendix 1 & 2.

1 Building a body of evidence

What were the expectations of the visit?

50% wanted to find out about somewhere new

100% wanted to find out more about their local heritage

10% hoped the visits would give them more time to find out about the other students on the course

15% wanted to find out how they could use public transport to get to places.

These responses were offered as multiple choice answers but students could also offer their own reasons. The ESOL group for example had wanted to use the visit as a way of improving and trying out their English as well as being really clear that they had wanted to find out more about British Culture. Other students indicated specific questions they had about the places they went to.

For tutors 61% were using the chosen venue to meet a specific learning objective and 38% as something 'nice to do.' This last figure corresponded exactly with the response that they had visited because of 'Out of the Box' funding and suggests that they saw the visit as a reward for the hard work of their students and to celebrate that learning. All had learning objectives for the day which were shared with students.

Our surveys show that tutors had spent some time preparing the students for the visit either in the format of a Q&A session to allay fears and sort out practicalities (92%). Thirty percent had delivered a whole session on it. However, only 38% of tutors had captured the expectations of the students.

Recording impact on the day.

Students all recorded positive emotions about the day 90% said they were happy, 35% felt excited and 55% were inspired. Fifty-five percent also recorded that they had felt tired an indication perhaps that learning in a new environment can be exhausting or that more information is absorbed and processed when visiting a stimulating environment. The physical act of being out of doors and active is also tiring.

All the tutors had captured the learning in some way 7% on film, 92% through pictures, 61% recorded learner comments and 15% got the students to sketch the venue.

Nearly all tutors recorded that they thought the confidence of their students had increased as a result of the visit, it had highlighted to them that heritage was accessible and affordable locally, it had given some students time just for themselves to engage with something they enjoyed. Some tutors noted their students had been inspired to discuss ideas and had shown improved social skills besides having a positive impact on mental health and well being.

Our own experience of working with groups has shown that groups are more animated and willing to engage in discussion when exploring somewhere new and afterwards wanted to share their experiences with others including their family, peers, friends and support workers.

2. Longitudinal Impact

This research set out to show the impact on the students. We have collected further qualitative evidence that visits really do impact on the lives of those that take part and these impacts are still valid and measurable up to a year after the event (NB: the students we surveyed were from 2012-13). Whilst the surveys indicate that in relationship to our four key WEA themes it is possible to show how visits help with health and well-being, community engagement and a better understanding of culture, there has been no direct links with employability, although some students have gone on to volunteer for local projects. For the disadvantaged groups we have been working with the social skills learnt and the confidence gained are just as important as finding paid employment. The Arts Council report "Measuring the economic benefits of arts and culture" (2012)⁷ stated that the social return for every £10 spent was £15.50 worth of benefits generated.

At the ESOL group we interviewed the students reported that they had been back to Skipton to show their families and that it had helped with their confidence in using English. Several had also been inspired to learn to drive so they can visit more places with their families. Other students reported that it had given them a reason to continue to study a range of different courses from ESOL, to healthy lifestyle courses, languages or further courses on history and archaeology. Some have become volunteers at local venues or with local projects.

Feedback from the centres where Digability has taken place also reported longer term benefits when surveyed 2-6 months after the course finished.

"The whole experience has been marvellous. It has been a delight to see the Service Users so enthusiastic and eager for more..Users and staff have discovered things

⁷ http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Final_economic_benefits_of_arts.pdf

they previously didn't know and have visited places they may never have normally had the opportunity to visit" (Wombwell Unit).

"These sessions generate ongoing communication skillsAll users benefited from the group in different ways, everyone enjoyed taking part and undertaking the varied studies and tasks from just the social interaction to learning new skills and gaining more knowledge and understanding about the past" (Dearne Locality Unit).

"Trips away always help social interaction" (Foresight Grimsby).

"Due to the interest in the course two of the service users now want to visit museums and archaeological digs. These are activities they may never would have done without the course and the supportive environment created...Service users do not easily interact with others. But camaraderie of group provided a supportive and friendly social environment" (Forest Lodge, Sheffield).

"Very much inspired, most of the class went on to be involved with a local archaeology project through the summer break" (Stonham Group).

The reports of the 'Out of the Box' visits show that 'learning' occurs in broadest sense of word and achievement is far more than the stated learning outcomes. This reflects Freire's philosophy that tutor and student should embark on a learning journey together and although planning the visit needs care in terms of assessing safety etc, learning objectives should be seen as the starting points which enable the students to engage with culture and heritage in a way that is meaningful to them today.

3. Encouraging others to use the Cultural environment or cultural venues

This research has helped us to cement the idea that using our cultural environment has many positive impacts, although we must remain mindful that we cannot make generalised statements in terms of percentages as our sample size is too small. Hearing of the impact of a cultural visit on the ESOL group was so inspiring that it prompted us to devise a table showing three simple ways other curriculum areas could use their local cultural and/or historic environment to inspire their learners. We have also used our organisation's annual Humanities Curriculum Day to deliver some training, to tutors on using the built environment to develop communication, numeracy and language skills. This training was well received by those who attended (see Appendix 5 for examples of the training resources developed). During this event the discussion centered around how encouraging students to become more aware of their historic/cultural environment can help to develop the skills needed to defend it when it is under threat. Ways we could encourage this might include students writing to the local council regarding planning applications, joining in projects such as the Buildings at Risk register or sharing their knowledge to help others appreciate our heritage/culture.

Our surveys also highlighted that 25% of tutors would welcome further training on preparing risk assessments to ensure trips are safe and that easier paperwork would help them think about using the cultural environment or other venues more. To this end we produced a “5 minute” session plan that helps tutors focus on the logistics, i.e. risk assessments and who to share them with, transport, what to do if it rains as well as how to prepare students for the visit and how ‘learning’ might be followed up afterwards and recorded (see Appendix 3).

4. Cost Benefit analysis

What our research has not enabled us to do, as our sample size is too small, is to make definitive statements or conduct a cost benefit analysis although it was interesting to see that tutors on the Digability courses were able to deliver sessions at a much lower cost than 'Out of the Box' (£6 per head compared to £21 on average). This could be due to tutors on Digability making more use of free educational visits offered by English Heritage, being better trained and/ or supported by dedicated project staff in using their local environment such as high streets or that 'Out of the Box' visits involved more expensive trips such as theatre visits.

Outcomes of Research

Improving Practice.

This report has highlighted how difficult it is to capture the before, during, and after data that can demonstrate long term impact. In trying to implement 'best' practice to garner expectations of visits at the beginning of the course when a group with learning difficulties was asked what did they expect to find out or learn one student replied "we haven't been yet so we don't know" . However all recorded they were excited by visiting new places and thought they would discover something new, they just weren't sure what. On reflection this may come with experience of visiting more places and knowing what to expect at certain venue types. It may also be that students with learning difficulties can find it hard to conceptualise the future and/or any new experiences.

Another group who are deaf when asked the same question had a lot more specific questions about the site to be visited and a greater desire to know the background of the site before they went. They were more easily able to conceptualise what they wanted to know even if many had not visited a site just five miles from where the class is held. To this end the tutor was able to prepare material specifically to answer the students' questions and deliver activities that enabled them to further their understanding of the place visited.

Responses from the survey of Heritage Interpreters (appendix 1c) stressed the best way to improve provision is to liaise with the site staff beforehand so they are adequately brief and prepared to meet different student needs and expectations. Of those that responded to the Heritage Interpreters survey it was encouraging to see cultural venues are taking CPD seriously and training staff to meet different needs, although this tends to be focused on the 5-18 age bracket.

In addition to the training delivered to humanities staff, and the development of the revised lesson plan, specific to field activity, we intend to develop a further training and support package for WEA staff and tutors. This will enable us as an organisation to not only grow in confidence when using cultural venues as teaching resources, but also equip us to work in partnership with organisations in the cultural sector to deliver the best possible learning experiences for our students.

Conclusions

As educationalists we set out to try and establish whether visiting a 'cultural venue' has had a long term impact on our students. Our research has shown that there is an impact but this is very individualised and as such can be qualified rather than quantified. What is evident is that:

- Visits create lasting memories
- Visits 'fill the well' of experience that students can draw and reflect upon in future learning
- Visits are inspirational in individual ways
- 'Learning' on visits is broader than the course objectives

Upon recognizing this it has been important for us to develop our practice to take this into consideration when planning and carrying out cultural visits.

There is potential from this research to trial, in the next 12 months, the changes we have made to our practice and to share the best practice with our colleagues. This would be a more forward looking process where we can anticipate and measure the impact on individuals from the outset, rather than the reflective practice used in the current research.

Dissemination of research

In addition to the research being submitted and distributed via the emCETT network we will:

- Circulate the report to Educational Managers in WEA

- Make the report accessible through 'Digability' and 'Regional' WEA website
- Deliver training including the WEA regional Humanities Day.

Bibliography

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<http://www.larc.uk.com/2011/06/innovative-intrinsic-impacts-study-released/>

Other sources

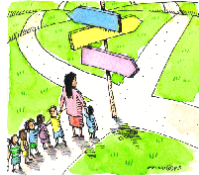
The value of Culture BBC4 Radio, Melvin Bragg (Culture of Anarchy)

WEA – FIELD TRIP PLAN

Destination:

Session Learning Outcomes

-
-
-
-



Key Take-Away Message



Resources Needed

- ☐ Handouts
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Clipboards
- ☐ Pens / Pencils
- ☐
- ☐



Completed Risk Assessment ☐Yes ☐No
Risk Ass. emailed to Organiser ☐Yes ☐No

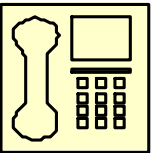
Organiser:

WEA Health & Safety Officer:

Transport Provider:

Centre:

Venue:

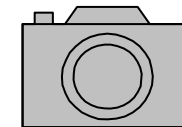


Pre-visit Lesson Planning



Post-Visit Lesson Ideas

How will I capture learning / impact?



Visit Learning Activities

How will I cater for individual needs?

What will we do if it rains?



ESOL	Vocab development - specific words relating to venue	Using existing language to describe what they see.	Adding cultural context and knowledge of their new home, travel - bus timetables
Modern foreign language	Vocab development	Guides for small local sites	Discussion about continental influences on British history
Maths	Use historic venue to identify shapes	Scale drawings	Timelines
ICT	Create advertising poster	Creating tour Pamphlet/ leaflet	Capturing data in access or excel re visitor type
Keep fit/ health Wellbeing	Plan route for interesting walk/ cycle to venue	Chance to reflect, peaceful place, place to escape	Encourage confidence in exploring new places
Working in schools	How to interpret sites for children	Promoting confidence in exploring local history	Exploring ways of capturing impact on parents and children
Art	Looking at things in a new way- drawing upside down	Collage of experience	Capturing detail
Creative writing	Inspire poetry or prose	Focus on decription	Play writing and life at venue

Ideas for using cultural venues 3 simple ideas. Give it a go.

Building Recording

Name:.....Date:

Building: 11, Castlegate, York

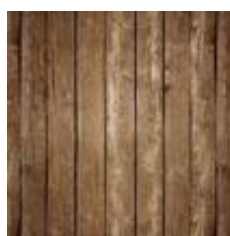
What is it made from?



Brick ☐



Stone ☐



Wood ☐



Concrete ☐

How many windows



How many doors?



What was it used for?



Hospital



TB



House



Tea

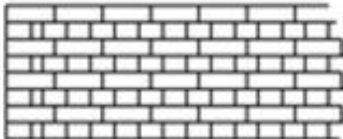
Building Recording

Building
name.....
Address.....

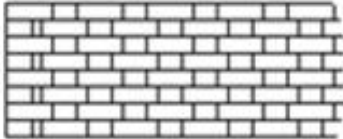
Construction (tick all that apply)
Brick ☐ Stone ☐ Wood ☐ Concrete ☐ Not discernible ☐

How is the building constructed?


☐ English bond



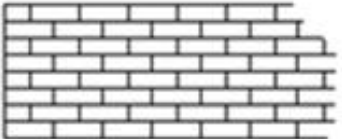
☐ Flemish bond



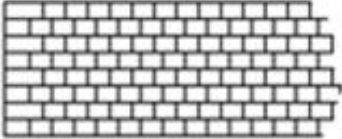
☐ Common Bond



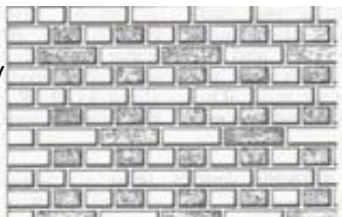
☐ Stretcher bond




☐ Header bond



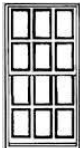
☐ English/Dutch Cross



Windows:

Number 

☐



☐

☐

Number of Entrances:

☐

Other notable details such as evidence of alterations, extensions, blocked doorways:

Photographed



Le toit	la porte	la fenêtre	brique	pierre	linteau
Dach	Tür	das Fenster	Ziegel	Stein	Sturz
Tejado	puerta	ventana	ladrillo	piedra	dintel

Combien de fenêtres? /¿Cuántas ventanas/wie viele Fenster?

Combien de portes? /¿Cuántas puerta/wie viele Tür?

Écrire une courte description de l'immeuble.
Schreiben Sie eine kurze Beschreibung des Gebäudes.
Escribir una breve descripción del edificio.