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Assessing Heritage Learning Outcomes

How do we do it – and why?

Heritage, Regional Development and Social Cohesion

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Introduction

When 60-year-old Barbro was asked about her engagement in a local art association she said that she perceived life differently today. She mentioned how her engagement added to her self-esteem and how it made her feel happier and more content. Another woman, 58-year-old Berit, claimed that her engagement in genealogy had both equipped her with new digital skills and developed her knowledge of historical societies. The experiences of these women are not unique. On the contrary, the fact that cultural heritage institutions both promote well-being and encourage learning has been long known among educators at museums and archives. Furthermore, it has been claimed that museums and archives might be particularly effective in promoting specific skills or attitudes.¹ A matter of increasing interest for the cultural heritage institutions is therefore how heritage learning activities can be assessed and better utilised by local stakeholders. Would it be purposeful, maybe, to broaden the objectives of cultural heritage institutions in order to better meet the learning need of the local society? In a time of changing demands from governments and labour markets, does the cultural heritage sector have anything to offer? I would say yes to this question.

With the labour market being far from as stable as it once was, it has been increasingly emphasised by politicians that we have to keep learning new things, throughout our lives, in order to develop both new skills and an ability to adapt to new circumstances. This process of lifelong learning is however not, by any necessity, restricted to the traditional educational institutions. If learning is defined not as it traditionally was, as the one-sided acquisition of knowledge, but as a multi-dimensional process which develops throughout life and can occur in many different places – sometimes unintentionally, sometimes as a by-product of just having fun – then museums and archives are by definition places where learning may take place. The potential use of heritage institutions for policy-makers at regional and national levels is therefore considerable. A recently started project at the Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning, for which I am the coordinator, aims at analysing learning activities within cultural heritage institutions in order to find out what visitors and participants learn, how they learn, and whether or not there is a possible socioeconomic gain here. In other words, can we describe these activities using a terminology which both focuses on learning outcomes and allows for comparability? If so, can these descriptions be used – as evidence – in order to demonstrate that there are social gains to be made if cultural heritage learning were used more systematically?

Obviously, to be comparable and to be valued as “evidence”, heritage learning activities must be analysed within a common theoretical framework. The above mentioned project uses both the European reference framework of key competences and the concept of Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO) as analytical tools.² Both of these frameworks, which will be further described below, were developed within the context of socioeconomic change. The European reference framework of key competences were explicitly presented in the context

¹ Henrik Zipsane, “Lifelong learning through heritage and art” in Peter Jarvis (ed), *The Routledge International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Routledge, London & New York 2008. p.178.

² Read more about European key competences here: *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework*. Education and Culture DG, Lifelong Learning Programme, European Communities 2007; Also see: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm

Read more about Generic Learning Outcomes here: <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/>

of lifelong learning, employability, social cohesion and economic growth. The key competences do not speak to the heritage institutions specifically but more broadly, to policy makers, education providers, employers, and learners.

The GLOs, on the other hand, were developed within the cultural heritage sector but following directives from the British government. Since the end of the 90's there have been consistent calls for museums and archives in Britain to develop their provision for learning and these calls have been followed by policy documents. This process has been driven by the ideological conviction that culture must be socially inclusive, accountable and used more by schools.³ The Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), established by the British government in 2000, took on the responsibility of building professional structures to enable the development of educational capacity, and this included the development of a method that would provide evidence of learning from culture. And so the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) were developed, by the cultural sector but as the result of governmental directives. Similar to the European key competences, the GLOs correspond to political goals within an economy based on knowledge and adaptability.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the potential uses of museums and archives in relation to regional development and lifelong learning. How can we conceptualize the different forms of learning that take place in cultural heritage institutions? Are the European reference framework of key competences and the Generic Learning Outcomes effective as analytical tools? Are these learning activities of such scope as to be of use for society as a whole? If so, is this also a gain for museums and archives or, on the contrary, are there risks to consider?

Key Competences and the Cultural Heritage Sector

What is a competence?

The document *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. A European Reference Framework* defines competences as “a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context”.⁴ This is a fairly simple definition. A similar but more refined one is offered by Bryony Hoskins and Ruth Deakin Crick. They define competence as “a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world in a particular domain.”⁵ They also claim that competences are “broader than knowledge or skills and are acquired in an ongoing, lifelong learning process across the whole range of personal, social and political contexts”.

The European reference framework of key competences

The European reference framework of key competences was developed within EU's Lifelong Learning Programme and launched in 2006. The framework identifies and defines “the key competences that citizens require for their personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employability in our knowledge-based society”.⁶ Thus, key competences are competences which are indispensable “for the good life”, as expressed by Deakin & Crick.

³ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and Education. Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance*. Routledge, London and New York 2007, p.6.

⁴ *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework*, p.3.

⁵ Bryony Hoskins & Ruth Deakin Crick, “Competences for Learning to Learn and Active Citizenship: different currencies or two sides of the same coin?”, *European Journal of Education* 45(2010):1, p.122.

⁶ *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework*, p.1.

The adequacy of such a statement is obviously dependent on how “the good life” is defined, a discussion I will not enter upon in this paper. It is however important to keep in mind the ideological base on which the key competences are grounded.

The aim of the reference framework is fourfold:

- 1) to identify and define the key competences necessary for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability in a knowledge society;
- 2) to support EU member states’ work in ensuring that by the end of initial education and training young people have developed the key competences to a level that equips them for adult life and which form a basis for further learning and working life, and that adults are able to develop and update their key competences throughout their life;
- 3) to provide a European-level reference tool for policy-makers, education providers, employers, and learners themselves to facilitate national- and European-level efforts towards commonly agreed objectives;
- 4) to provide a framework for further action at Community level both within the Education and Training 2010 work programme and within the Community Education and Training Programmes.

Four things are important to emphasize. Firstly, the framework identify *desired* outcomes of learning and not actual outcomes. Secondly, the framework is mainly directed to governments and policy-makers, only in passing is education providers mentioned and non-formal education providers such as the cultural heritage institutions are not included at all. Thirdly, the framework is useful mainly from the perspective of national or European governments and not from the perspective of the individual learner. Even a desired consequence such as personal fulfilment must be seen from this perspective. A content person is a person more likely to be both healthy and employed and thus less likely to be supported by society. And fourthly, the framework is a reference tool, a guideline, and was not constructed to function as an analytical instrument or evaluation tool. This does not mean that the key competences cannot be used as an analytical tool in evaluation processes but compared to the Generic Learning Outcomes, where evaluation processes is the main area of use, they might function less smoothly. This being said, it is time to introduce the eight key competences.⁷ These are:

1. Communication in mother tongue
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning to learn
6. Social and civic competences
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression

⁷ For more detailed definitions, please see *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework* or visit the website: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm

The competences overlap and interlock; they are deeply inter-related and it is clear that aspects essential to one competence will support other competences. A well developed first language is, for example, a great help when learning another. It might thus be difficult to distinguish a competence, and the learning process leading to this competence, from other competences. If you are a competent learner you are, more or less, bound to have communicative and digital competences as well.

It is clearly stated in the reference framework that the competences are considered equally important because each of them “can contribute to a successful life”.⁸ This aspect is also emphasised by Hoskins & Crick who claim that the dualism between the cognitive, on the one side, and the personal, affective and experiential on the other, is no longer tenable for the education system. A major advantage with the concept of “competence”, they argue, is that it integrates both the cognitive and the affective in a way which is consistent with the demands of the knowledge society.⁹ However much I sympathize with the ambition to equalize between competences towards economic outcomes and employability, and competences towards social and affective outcomes, I do not find this view consistent with neither the priorities of the EU nor the knowledge society as such. It is, for example, difficult to envision the key competences listed in the opposite order – that is, with Cultural awareness and expression as number one. Of course this competence can contribute to “a successful life” but, again, this depends on how “a successful life” is defined. If “a successful life” is defined from the perspective of the European Union and/or the national governments to encompass values mainly concerned with employability and adaptability, then a competence like Cultural awareness and expression will not be key to its realisation. Cultural awareness and expression relates to a more limited area of the labour market than do competences directed towards economic outcomes and it can be argued that Cultural awareness and expression remains a less valued competence, within this framework, because it does not connote growth in any straight-forward manner.¹⁰ A union (or nation) with growth as its main priority will probably never see culture as the road to success.¹¹

Yet Cultural awareness and expression is the competence which most explicitly corresponds to the cultural heritage sector. This is the one competence primarily related to museums and archives, but as the case of Great Britain has shown, not a competence important enough to justify substantial funding from national and local governments.¹² An urgent question for the heritage sector is therefore what other competences activities in museums and archives might support.¹³

⁸ *Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. Communication from the Commission, EC 2010, p.3.

⁹ Deakin & Crick, p.124-5.

¹⁰ Cf. Alexandra Dehmel, “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality? Some Critical Reflections on the European Union’s Lifelong Learning Policies”, *Comparative Education* 42(2006):1, p.56-7.

¹¹ *Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. Communication from the Commission, EC 2010; Luce Pépin, “The History of EU Cooperation in the Field of Education and Training: how lifelong learning became a strategic objective”, *European Journal of Education* 42(2007):1, p.129.

¹² Hooper-Greenhill, p.

¹³ Henrik Zipsane, “Lifelong learning through heritage and art” in Peter Jarvis (ed), *The Routledge International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Routledge, London & New York 2008. p.178.

Key competences and heritage learning

In a previous project at The Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning learning activities at heritage institutions were analysed in relation to the European framework of key competences. The result, presented in 2009, showed that heritage learning promotes Digital competence, the Learning to learn competence, Social and civic competence and Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship as well as the more taken-for-granted competence Cultural awareness and expression.¹⁴ The report is however of a rather limited scope; it does not say much about who well developed these competences were and nothing about how these results compare to other institutions and organisations where learning is taking place. In order to deepen and develop the analysis the present project, for which I am the co-ordinator, started at the end of 2009.

Since the start of this project a large number of heritage learning activities have been collected from museums and archives in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Lithuania and these have been analysed from the perspective of the key competences. For this paper I will use a specific material, consisting of interviews, as example. The interviews were conducted within a project investigating the learning potential among members of a number of non-profit organisations that all worked in close relation to museums and archives. The organisations included one association of genealogy, one association of museum volunteers, one art association, and one local history association. They all used the buildings, competence and collections of museums and archives, yet they were economically independent. Among the many heritage learning activities collected by the project, this is what makes this group stand out. They were not part of any programme organized by the institutions even though, obviously, they depended fully on the institutions for their activities. I have chosen this material for this paper because the interviews are unusually rich on information. In many respects, the activities they engaged in are representative for learning activities commonly organized by the heritage institutions themselves.

The first obstacle, when I first started to analyse the material, was the concept of competences. As mentioned above, the EU defines competences as “a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context”. The fact that competences, by definition, include a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes makes it acutely difficult to know whether a certain learning activity leads to competence or not. I may spend ten minutes in front of a computer, I may learn how to use a specific data base, how to log on to the Internet, or how to scan a photo and manipulate it – but does it mean that I have digital competence? At what stage am I a competent user of digital media? Another problem is that the competences are situation-dependent. A competence is only a competence if there is a context where this exact combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes is needed. So, the fact that I have learnt how to use a scanner during a course in genealogy is only relevant to the Digital competence if I end up in a situation (i.e. is offered a job) where this competence is needed. It is thus not possible to say whether the learning activities analysed within this project will lead to competence or not. What is possible, however, is to state that a certain learning activity relates to a certain competence. My exercises in front of the computer are clearly related to the Digital competence although there is no guarantee that I will ever become fully competent, as this is defined by the reference framework. This result is still interesting, since it says something about how the cultural heritage institutions promote the key

¹⁴ *Kulturarvens muligheder i almen kompetenceudvikling*. Project report, Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning, Östersund 2009, p.107.

competences. It is important to keep in mind that museums and archives, in opposition to the traditional educational institutions, are institutions where non-formal learning is taking place. Museums and archives are therefore not accountable for the outcome of their learning activities in the same way as the formal education system is. Learning at cultural heritage institutions is not part of the regular curricula, which means that the learning which takes place at museums and archives must be seen as a bonus to the more formalised education. Being able to state that the cultural heritage institutions promote one, or several, of the key competences would therefore be an interesting and useful result.

So, what did the respondents say about their engagement in heritage related non-profit associations? A few themes are recurring again and again. Activities related to Social and civic competences – such as attending monthly meetings, being a member of the board, being part of discussions, meeting new people, giving advice, organize excursions etc. – are frequently mentioned by the respondents. Activities promoting the Digital competence are also mentioned frequently, especially by respondents engaged in genealogy. ITC is used in a number of ways by this particular group: they make use of digitalised material such as parish registers, they e-mail genealogists in other countries, they search data bases, and they learn how to use a scanner. Considering that most of the respondents are retired and thus not of a generation generally familiar with information technology, this must be seen as very positive. Several of the respondents also admit that they have certain problems with the technological aspects of their hobby, indicating that a learning process is indeed taking place. It is probably not far-fetched to claim that this adds to their present quality of life: in today's society where so many things are done over the Internet (bank errands, the renewal of prescriptions, keeping in touch with family and friends etc.) having or not having digital competence is a matter of being included or excluded to a public arena of increasing importance. Sharing this arena with grandchildren may be particularly rewarding. Taken together, developing digital competences at this stage in life is likely to support both self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and an overall feeling of “staying young”. This obviously adds to the well-being of this group.

Another competence promoted by the heritage learning activities was Learning to learn. Respondents spoke about knowledge as such; they had, for example, gained knowledge of the history of their local community. But they also spoke of cognitive skills such as the ability to make intellectual connections, analyse relationships between actions and events, make conclusions and apply a critical approach to source materials. Albeit these skills are not key to the Learning to learn competence, which is more focused on the ability to pursue and persist in learning, they are nevertheless fundamental to all learning activities.

The material also offers evidence of the Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship competence. Several of the respondents referred to the fact that their engagement allowed them to realise ideas, organise excursions (again), and take initiatives. This is particularly interesting considering the fact that a major part of the respondents are women. As one woman said, engagement in cultural heritage activities might strengthen the confidence of women who have not been used to taking initiatives or handling this kind of responsibilities. Thus, engagement in heritage learning might have an important emancipatory effect.

Interestingly, the respondents spoke only little of how their commitment might deepen their cultural awareness or promote creativity. A few mentioned their long interest in for example art as the reason why they first engaged in the association, but they did not speak much about how this interest was deepened or developed by their engagement. Possibly, since the cultural aspect was both the fundament of their commitment and the aim of the association, this was something that they took much for granted. Alternately, they perceived

the content as subordinate to other aspects of their engagement, such as for example the social aspects. (A group very committed to the activities as such – as opposed to the social aspects of the activity – were those engaged in genealogy. This activity is however not linked to Cultural awareness and creativity.) Other competences that the respondents did not mention were Communication in mother tongue, Communication in foreign languages (although note that the genealogy association both e-mailed with genealogists abroad and entertained foreign contacts), Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology.

On the other hand, the respondents spoke quite a lot about aspects not covered by the key competences. Softer values connected to personal development or, to use a term from the reference framework, personal fulfilment were frequently mentioned by the respondents but is only partly covered by the key competences. Respondents spoke about the ways in which the activity had spurred their curiosity, of how learning one thing triggered them into wanting to know more, of being inspired. Others spoke of the fact that the activities had strengthened their self-esteem or made them more aware of their own person: “Getting to know my background, discover myself... In what ways have the history of my family affected me?” said a woman engaged in genealogy. Since these specific interviews were conducted with mainly elderly people engaging in non-profit organizations after their retirement, a recurrent theme was that of remaining active, living a purposeful life, get an outlet for one’s energy, etc. Another woman, engaged in a local art association, explained that her engagement not only was developing for herself and made her happy, but also that it gave her and her husband something to talk about; it had, in other words, a positive effect on their forty-year-old marriage. These “soft” values might be defined as part of the Learning to learn competence but, as this competence is defined (see Appendix 1), it is far from a perfect fit.¹⁵ It is striking that aspects related to personal development or well-being are so difficult to locate within the framework given that personal fulfilment is mentioned specifically as one aim of the framework. This adds to my previous analysis that the key competences are concerned mainly with the socioeconomic outcomes of learning.

To summarize, three of the competences were not mentioned by the respondents, one additional competence was mentioned only briefly, whilst much of what the respondents actually spoke of is covered but briefly by the reference framework. Does this make the reference framework inappropriate for analyses of learning activities within the cultural heritage sector? Or, on the other hand, is it useful for the cultural heritage institutions to know that their learning activities have other outcomes than those stipulated by the European reference framework of key competences? If so, does this mean that the heritage institutions should change their activities to better suit the reference framework? Or, would it be more fruitful for the heritage institutions to actively lobby for the positive effects of heritage learning on for example the well-being of elderly people, at the same time as the economical implications of this is emphasized? These issues will be further discussed later in this paper. Now, it is time to get better acquainted with the Generic Learning Outcomes: is this a more appropriate analytical tool?

¹⁵ My conclusions may however be compared to Henrik Zipsane’s. See Henrik Zipsane, “Cultural Heritage, Lifelong Learning and Social Economy of Senior Citizens” in Hadwig Kraeutler (ed.), *Heritage Learning Matters – Museums and Universal Heritage*. ICOM/CECA 2007 proceedings, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien 2008, pp. 89-95

Generic Learning Outcomes and the Cultural Heritage Sector

What is a learning outcome?

Compared to the concept of competences, learning outcomes are focused more on the learning process and its actual outcome, and less on expected or desired outcomes.¹⁶ While “competences” conceptualize the result of, maybe, several years of training within different disciplines and areas, “learning outcomes” describe the result of specific and maybe isolated learning events.¹⁷ This means that learning outcomes not necessarily are long-lasting. Learning outcomes are routinely used by schools and universities in Sweden (and other nations); they are generally devised by the responsible teacher in relation to a baseline (what students are expected to know at the beginning of the study) and students are assessed at the end of the course/programme. The concept of General Learning Outcomes was however developed in relation to non-formal learning situations in cultural heritage settings and is therefore less concerned with baselines and assessment, and more focused on subjective learning outcome as experienced by the learner her-/himself.

The Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO)

Museums in Great Britain (and elsewhere) are increasingly challenged to justify their existence, and often to do this in hard economic terms. At the end of the 1990s the new interventionist Labour government charged the cultural heritage sector with addressing government issues, particularly those focusing on social inclusion and education.¹⁸ The GLOs, developed by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester, are a response to these challenge. Basically, the GLOs offer a way to evaluate the learning processes which take place in cultural heritage institutions. Carried out properly they will make an informative description of what impact the learning activities at museums and archives have on their visitors.

The GLOs were based on an understanding of learning as:

integral to everyday life, rather than limited to specific educational moments; as such it adopted a lifelong learning position. Learning was understood as constructivist and experiential/performative, involving active minds and bodies. Learning was perceived as one way in which individual identities were produced.¹⁹

This understanding of learning both emphasizes the non-formal character of many learning situations, for example in museums, and defines learning as something which takes place within the learner independent of what educators or policy-makers might describe as “desired” outcomes. In opposition to the reference framework of key competences, the GLOs describe actual learning outcomes rather than desired outcomes. To set standards for desired

¹⁶ Trevor Hussey & Patrick Smith, “The Trouble with Learning Outcomes”, *Active Learning in Higher Education* 3(2002), p.223.

¹⁷ Hooper-Greenhill, p.25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁹ Hooper-Greenhill, p.43.

learning outcomes would, according to Hooper-Greenhill, not be appropriate for cultural organisations.²⁰ The GLOs are presented in Figure 1 (also, see Appendix 2).²¹

Figure 1. The Generic Learning Outcomes.



Source: <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning/index.html>

The GLOs are not hierarchically presented and they all describe learning progress within different areas. They have been criticized for not measuring learning directly, but rather indirect factors associated with learning, and for being subjective measures, and not objective measures of performance.²² The GLOs are indeed subjective; it is the museum visitor him-/herself who claims that this or that learning process has occurred. There are obvious problems with this. We do not know how the visitor defines learning; neither do we know the quality of the learning process, whether it leaves a long-lasting print or not, nor the level of knowledge prior to the learning activity. Furthermore, there will inevitably be a large number of visitors not responding to the evaluation. How shall this hidden group be understood? There is a strong risk that the result will be biased towards those who actually perceive a learning process. However problematic, the GLOs have been widely adopted by British cultural heritage institutions: within two years after its launch around half of museums in UK were using evaluation frameworks based on the GLOs.²³

GLO and heritage learning

In the above mentioned project, *Kulturarvens muligheder i almen kompetenceudvikling*, which was carried out by The Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning and presented in 2009,

²⁰ Ibid., p.

²¹ For more detailed definitions, please see Appendix 2 or visit the website <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning/index.html>

²² Stephen Brown, "A Critique of Generic Learning Outcomes", *Journal of Learning Design* 2(2007):2, p.26.

²³ Ibid., p.24.

the GLOs were used to analyse learning activities at archives and museums in the Nordic countries. The result showed positive results for all outcomes at the analysed institutions.²⁴ The study was however rather limited and hence unapt to offer precise answers to many questions. Presumably the present project will reach deeper and wider.

When working with the GLOs it is striking how many aspects of learning the framework cover. My impression is that every aspect of learning is included. It is also striking that almost every possible outcome of museum or archive visits is defined as learning and thus covered by the framework. Hence experiences such as having fun and being surprised are covered by the Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity outcome, while all sorts of feelings, opinions and attitudes are covered by the Attitude and values outcome (see also Appendix 2). At first glance this is one of the strengths of the GLO framework. It is sympathetic, inclusive and open-minded; above all, it indicates an understanding of learning which I find it very easy to agree with. At second glance, however, this inclusiveness becomes problematic. What happens with the concept of learning if more or less everything is defined as learning? The fact that the above mentioned project (*Kulturarvens muligheder i almen kompetenceudvikling*) produced positive results for all GLOs is hardly impressive when considering that the GLOs were constructed to cover basically every thinkable experience emanating from an individual's meeting with cultural heritage institutions. Furthermore, the multitude of aspects covered by the GLOs makes it difficult to connect one specific experience with one specific outcome. As an example a female member of the art association may be quoted. When asked what she had learned from her engagement, the woman replied: "I see art differently today. Earlier I liked art that depicted something realistically, but now I enjoy graphics or abstract art just as much. It doesn't have to be realistic." This woman had learned to appreciate other forms of art than she did previously. This experience definitely promotes the key competence Cultural awareness and expression, but which of the GLOs would be the most appropriate? Does the woman *understand* abstract art better now? Has she become more *skilled* in interpreting abstract art? Or is she describing a process of changing *attitude* towards abstract art? A major problem with the GLOs is that they do not allow for categorization of this kind of rather general statements about cultural experiences. The GLOs are impressively rich in detail, but it is this exact richness which makes it difficult to identify the one outcome most associated with this woman's, rather generally described, art experience.

Applying the GLOs on a material is thus a matter of interpretation; still, when the empirical base is sufficiently big, the results might be interesting to a higher degree than is the case with the reference framework of key competences.²⁵ Above all, the GLOs are better suited to analyse "softer" values such as having fun, remaining active, getting to know your background, doing things you never did before (however small), meeting people, values related to self-esteem, et cetera. A majority of the statements expressed in the material relates to Attitudes and values. These are statements about the museum ("It is such a lovely place"), about the association they engaged in ("It is a very nice association"), or themselves ("It makes me feel important"). Another important category is Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity. The respondents repeatedly spoke of how "fun" they had, but also of being inspired, getting energy etc. The categories Activity, behaviour and progression and Skills are not that frequently represented in the material although, when they are, they often tell impressive stories. One woman had plans on writing a book! ("If anyone would be interested", she add-

²⁴ *Kulturarvens muligheder i almen kompetenceudvikling*. Project report, Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning, Östersund 2009, p.108.

²⁵ Brown, p.26.

ed.) Another woman had found relatives in the US, made contact with them and planned to visit! The last category, Knowledge and understanding, is well represented in the material. Still, it is a complicated category. The respondents were asked what they had learned from their engagement and they usually replied that they had learned a lot. It is however evident that the respondents associate learning with the acquisition of specific knowledge, with hard facts, historical knowledge. They mentioned that they had learned a lot about poverty in history, about the Black Death, about how food was prepared during previous centuries. Others simply stated that, yes, they had learned a lot. My impression is that the respondents generally were a bit startled by this question and that this affected the answers. If this question was not asked, they might not have spoken that much about knowledge at all.

I am a beginner at using these analytical tools. Working successfully with the GLOs, in particular, requires training. On the other hand, this is a well developed tool, tested on an impressively large number of museum visitors, and it comes with both instructions and tutorials.²⁶ My conclusion, after having worked with both the European reference framework of key competences and the GLOs, is that while the key competences are easier to work with the GLOs capture what actually goes on at cultural heritage institutions in a more adequate manner. It is telling that the most important generic learning outcomes were those hardly covered at all by the reference framework of key competences.

Heritage Learning, Regional Development and Lifelong Learning

Both the GLOs and the key competences were designed to promote lifelong learning. This is an ambiguous concept. As Peter Jarvis points out lifelong learning is “a process of transforming experience into knowledge and skills, etc., resulting in a changed person – one who has grown and developed as a result of learning” – at the same time as campaigns, aimed at promoting lifelong learning, seldom have been motivated by a concern to enrich the human person. Rather, Jarvis continues, the main motivator of these campaigns has been to ensure that society’s needs are met in the knowledge economy which is our society of today.²⁷ A significant difference between the reference framework of key competences and the GLOs lies in this ambiguity: while the GLOs are firmly situated in the first part, and thus focus on the human person, the key competences work within the second part, within the question of how people are best of use in our knowledge-based society.

Through the GLOs almost every possible outcome of an individual’s encounter with museums and archives is mapped out. With learning defined as integral to everyday life, as constructivist and as a way in which individual identities are produced, the GLOs take an ideological stand which is not about economic growth or employability. Learning, according to this framework, is about who you are and not about what you do. This makes the GLOs capable of capturing experiences related to personal development and, as this paper has shown, these experiences appear to be plentiful among users of cultural heritage. On the other hand, is this something that we need to measure? Is there an interest, outside of the cultural heritage sector, of knowing that an unknown number of people perceive their life

²⁶ See <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/>

²⁷ Peter Jarvis, “Lifelong learning. A social ambiguity”, Peter Jarvis (ed), *The Routledge International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Routledge, London & New York 2008, p.11.

as more purposeful since they engaged in a non-profit organisation related to a museum or an archive? Is society interested in this? If the European reference framework of key competences is taken to represent what society is interested in, the answer must be no: experiences related to personal fulfilment are not asked for by society.

The reference framework of key competences is explicitly designed to promote lifelong learning. But the European Union's version of this concept is slightly different from that of the GLOs'. It is more society-related, more concerned with the labour market and the matter of employability and, consequently, less interested in personal development and well-being. This is somewhat surprising since healthy people are more likely to be employed and therefore are less likely to generate high benefit costs. The number of people who suffer from long-term illnesses is alarmingly high in Sweden. Not only does this mean high benefit costs but it also implies additional administrative work and, presumably, that work is not being done at all for a certain number of days. It is hardly controversial to claim that activities promoting mental well-being will have an effect on these costs.²⁸

In combining the European reference framework of key competences with the GLOs, the project presented in this paper addresses the perspectives of both the cultural heritage institutions themselves and society as such. The GLOs represent a useful tool for museums and archives that wish to describe the full spectra of outcomes resulting from heritage learning. The reference framework of key competences, on the other hand, offers a tool for museums and archives that wish to either describe or evaluate their activities in relation to the needs of the knowledge-based society. In this the two frameworks are complementary. It is however important to point out, that the competences described in the reference framework do not by any necessity reflect the exact needs of the local stakeholders. We evaluate heritage learning activities for two reasons: firstly, because we need to know how our efforts are received in order to improve them and, secondly, because we wish to inform stakeholders about the proficiency of our work. The second objective may be differently formulated: we need to reassure stakeholders that they get what they are paying for. And this is where an interesting question arises: what are stakeholders paying for? This obviously depends on the character of the stakeholders' interest (a variable bound to vary between, for example, the regular museum visitors, minority groups, schools taking part in educational programmes and local governments) but the question remains: Do cultural heritage institutions know for sure, when they account for their performance, that they report on those aspects of their performance that matter to their stakeholders? In an article from 2009, Jane Legget recommended museums to, first, identify their stakeholders and, second, "revisit their accountability reporting to include aspects that appear to matter to a broader range of stakeholders".²⁹ If, for example, it turns out that our stakeholders appreciate the values of well-being and personal development we might not choose the European reference framework of key competences as analytical tool or, alternately, we may choose to modify this framework.

Furthermore, educators at museums and archives might be convinced that there are benefits connected with heritage learning activities that are not easily perceived by neither visitors nor local governments. "Soft" values, such as developing a growing sense of self, feeling useful as a person or developing one's creativity, might be aspects that the cultural heritage

²⁸ Cf. the relatively new project where patients are prescribed culture by their doctors: <http://www.dagens-samhalle.se/zino.aspx?articleID=16712>

²⁹ Jane Legget, "Measuring what we treasure or treasuring what we measure? Investigating where community stakeholders locate the value in their museum", *Museum Management and Curatorship* 24(2009):3, p.213-232.

sector should promote towards its stakeholders – if these aspects are not given adequate acknowledgement. This is important not only for marketing reasons but first and foremost because it helps defining what a museum or archive *is*. The process of assessing learning outcomes is most constructive when it informs us of discrepancies between expected outcomes, desired outcomes and actual outcomes. These discrepancies constitutes areas of analysis: If a GLO-based evaluation shows that a lot of creativity is being unleashed by heritage learning activities, but there are no straight-forward ways to conceptualize this result within the framework of desired key competences, then we have found a discrepancy. We may accept this result as corrective and transform our activities to better reach the desired outcomes, or we may conclude that the framework of desired outcomes, in this case the reference framework of key competences, is lacking in relation to what actually happens at museums and archives. This attitude is more democratic as well as more protective to the idea of what museums and archives are. It encourages us to promote certain aspects of heritage learning, essential for the existence of museums and archives but also, in many cases, essential for stakeholders at all levels. Last but not least, this approach will give credit to the experiences of Barbro and Berit, referred to in the Introduction, when they claim that engagement in heritage learning activities has had a positive effect on their self-esteem and general quality of life. These are experiences that we need to treasure because this, I believe, is where the cultural heritage institutions can distinguish themselves from other education providers.

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On-line sources

(available in May 2010)

About the European reference framework of key competences:

europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm

About the Generic Learning Outcomes:

www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/

www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning/index.html

The project where patients are prescribed culture by their doctors:

<http://www.dagenssamhalle.se/zino.aspx?articleID=16712>

Appendix 1.

Definition of the Learning to Learn Competence

definition:

Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organise one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experience in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.

essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to this competence:

Where learning is directed towards particular work or career goals, an individual should have knowledge of the competences, knowledge, skills and qualifications required. In all cases, learning to learn requires an individual to know and understand his/her preferred learning strategies, the strengths and weaknesses of his/her skills and qualifications, and to be able to search for the education and training opportunities and guidance and/or support available.

Learning to learn skills require firstly the acquisition of the fundamental basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT skills that are necessary for further learning. Building on these skills, an individual should be able to access, gain, process and assimilate new knowledge and skills. This requires effective management of one's learning, career and work patterns, and, in particular, the ability to persevere with learning, to concentrate for extended periods and to reflect critically on the purposes and aims of learning. Individuals should be able to dedicate time to learning autonomously and with self-discipline, but also to work collaboratively as part of the learning process, draw the benefits from a heterogeneous group, and to share what they have learnt. Individuals should be able to organise their own learning, evaluate their own work, and to seek advice, information and support when appropriate.

A positive attitude includes the motivation and confidence to pursue and succeed at learning throughout one's life. A problem-solving attitude supports both the learning process itself and an individual's ability to handle obstacles and change. The desire to apply prior learning and life experiences and the curiosity to look for opportunities to learn and apply learning in a variety of life contexts are essential elements of a positive attitude.

source:

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. A European Reference Framework. The European Communities 2007.

Appendix 2.

Detailed Definitions Of The Generic Learning Outcomes

knowledge and understanding

- Knowing about something
- Learning facts or information which can be:
 - Subject-specific
 - Interdisciplinary / thematic
 - About museums, archives, libraries
 - About myself, my family, my community, the wider world
- Making sense of something
- Deepening understanding
- Learning how museums, archives and libraries operate
- Giving specific information – naming things, people or places
- Making links and relationships between things
- Using prior knowledge in new ways

skills

- Knowing how to do something
- Intellectual skills – reading, thinking critically and analytically, making judgements...
- Key skills – numeracy, literacy, use of ICT, learning how to learn...
- Information management skills – locating and using information, evaluating information, using information management systems...
- Social skills – meeting people, sharing, team working, remembering names, introducing others, showing an interest in the concern of others...
- Emotional skills – recognising the feeling of others, managing (intense) feelings, channeling energy into productive outcomes...
- Communication skills – writing, speaking, listening...
- Physical skills – running, dancing, manipulation, making...

attitudes and values

- Feelings and perceptions
- Opinions about ourselves, e.g. self-esteem
- Opinions or attitudes towards other people
- Attitudes towards an organisation e.g. museums, archives and libraries
- Positive attitudes in relation to an experience
- Negative attitudes in relation to an experience
- Reasons for actions or personal viewpoints
- Empathy, capacity for tolerance (or lack of these)

enjoyment, inspiration and creativity

- Having fun
- Being surprised
- Innovative thoughts, actions or things

- Creativity
- Exploration, experimentation and making
- Being inspired

action, behaviour and progression

- What people do
- What people intend to do (intention to act)
- What people have done
- A change in the way that people manage their lives, including work, study, family and community contexts
- Actions (observed or reported)
- Change in behaviour
- Progression – towards further learning, registering as a library user, developing new skills
 - is the result of a purposive action which leads to change

source:

www.inspiringlearningforall.gov