

Schola Didàctica Activa, un'impresa che valorizza il patrimonio culturale Schola Didàctica Activa, a company that puts in value the cultural heritage

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Abstract

Schola Didàctica Activa S.L, it's a company whose principal aim is to create and carry out resources and didactic activities in order to do research into History and Cultural Heritage. It's also important to socialize the past in order to understand the problems of the present. To do so, we develop workshops, guided visits, heritage's management and didactic materials.

Schola Didàctica Activa S.L. est une entreprise née pour créer ressources et activités didactiques et pour les développer. Le propos est investiguer l'Histoire et le patrimoine. C'est aussi très important de socializer le passé pour comprendre le présent. Nous faisons ça avec des ateliers, visites guidées, et avec la gestion du patrimoine.

Keywords: schola, didactic, heritage, socialize, workshops.

Schola didàctica activa is a company emerged from a project, started in 1990. This project was an answer to the growing demand of didactic activities and projects related to the spreading of History and Cultural Heritage.

The idea of starting this kind of company came from 2 archaeologists who thought the historical science had to be learnt in a way different from the one we were used to. The method used was the same scientific method applied to, for example, an archaeological digging. Basically, the scientific method starts from the approach of one question, the formulation of a hypothesis, the development of an investigation based on primary and secondary sources which can include, or not, a little work of reproduction and the statement of the conclusions.

Generally, the historic discipline has paid less attention to the didactic approach. From the last decades of the twentieth century, a lot of schools centres had a scientific laboratory where the pupils could experiment actively. On the other side, speaking about historic discipline, we have not found the same laboratory of social science.

We don't know any school centre that has a history's laboratory (fig. 1). This idea of social science's laboratory has been claimed for some specialists such as drs Francesc Xavier Hernandez and Joan Santacana. This social science's laboratory would be constituted by copies from archaeological items and different materials: it allows the manipulation, the experimentation and the formulation of hypothesis from the pupil.



Fig.1. Some reproductions of the laboratory of social science.

Thanks to these prior approaches Schola Didactica Activa S.L, was born. It's a company whose principal aim is to create and carry out resources and didactic activities in order to do research into History and Cultural Heritage. To carry it out, we use a method based on active pedagogy which tries to find the participant's involvement and sensitizing towards the past. All this process starts from active and attractive activities.

The general aims are:

- *To develop strategies that can generate interest towards History and Heritage.*

The activities developed in the museums or heritage's sites, both for school and familiar public, have an important aim: to make the visitor relive the time in which the heritage element existed. Through a didactic way, we manage to give value to the heritage and at the same time we improve the relationship between people and their native sites.

- *To create consistent speeches about themes of History and Heritage.*

Our aim is not knowing or explaining concepts in order to evocate all our knowledge. We are neither teachers nor guides. We pursue one aim: make people think. We have to give the public new points of view, new facts, updated information whenever possible.

- *To create activities and materials addressed both to cultural tourism and scholars.*

Our educational activities offer school groups and visitors the opportunity to relive the past. But the approach will be different: open-air workshops, cultural activities and guided tours. All this offer has been studied and created following last trends in didactic archaeology. The specialized guides will lead the visitors into the past.

- *To socialize the past in order to understand the problems of the present.*

It's difficult to think beforehand that the knowledge of the past is a mean to understand the present.

This is true and logic since for a great deal of investigators it was not important to spread their knowledge to the rest of society. It does not mean to disseminate a large amount of facts to our public but it's important to stimulate it, to give it emotions and new points of view always in order to understand the dynamism of history.

But we have also some specific aims that are:

- To create didactic activities and materials about themes of history, archaeology, art and heritage.
- To create didactic projects about themes of history, archaeology and heritage: we begin with an idea, we develop it with the help of the heritage team, we create the ideal materials and we give the didactic offer to the visitors.
- To manage hereditary sites: although is not our main aim, we have managed and we manage now some heritage sites, from the Palaeolithic till the Middle Ages.

The products of our offer are:

Didactic workshops: the workshops can be carried out either in a school centre, a museum or a Heritage's site.

Visits to the Heritage: our visits are didactic, motivating and above all try to make people think.

Historical school camps

Didactic materials as models, exercise books or baggages

Didactic projects

Projects of Heritage's Management

The general features of these products are:

- the aim of our activities is to stimulate the participant's relation with the past in order to establish links with the heritage. That can only be reached thanks to the active participation. The visitor shouldn't be a passive recipient; the participant is the protagonist.
- To create new didactic strategies that allow us to work on history from another perspective in the field of formal and informal teaching. For this reason, at the hour of guided visits or workshops, we do avoid the transmission of knowledge.

When the workshop takes place, we use the scientific method and through it, the participant is the protagonist. The principal strategies are the observation, comparison, identification, experimentation, formulation of hypothesis, analysis, deduction, participation, reflection and statement of the conclusions.

Our projects are addressed to educational centres, public administration, public and private entities connected with history and heritage and especially to museums and cultural and Heritage sites.

Let's begin with the history's Workshops (fig. 2). For us, a workshop is "a didactic experience whose aim is the construction of

learning on the part of a student". The workshops are experimental activities that gather together different learning strategies and that need different materials as well. They supply materials that normally can't be found in schools or museums such as: models, copies and didactic materials. Thanks to them, students can carry out a "work of research" adapted to their possibilities.



Fig. 2. Some pupils at our Workshops, with a model of a Middle Age city.

When we work with the Heritage, we develop the visits to the sites. The aim of the guided tours is to approach actively the visitor to the heritage. Our guided visits, addressed to all kinds of public, do have one basic aim: to make the visitor relive a determined period of History. The monitor is not only a guide but through reflections and questions the monitor generates an interest for the Heritage site. That can only be reached thanks to the active participation and the identification between the visitor and the past, in order to establish links with the heritage. Our guided visits can be carried out with all kinds of public as long as the activity is adapted to their needs. We have guided visits for schools, specialized visits (these tours can be guided by a specialized guide or can be a particular visit) and also we have theatrical visits (the monitor then is disguised as the people in the past) and night visits.

Speaking about Heritage, one of our main clients are the museums. Schola Didàctica Activa S.L adjusts its work to the museum's necessities. Some of them only need punctually the company in order to make some Workshops during a short period of time. That would be the case, for example, of some of the local museums. They cannot afford to create a new offer and rent ours.

Other museums, like the Gaudi's Centre in Reus (Tarragona) wanted the creation of one activity with the didactic materials for each kind of public and the training of the museum's monitors. But there are museums needing all kind of activities: creation of projects, workshops for familiar public, cultural activities, urban guides, didactic dossiers, materials.

That would be the case of the History Museum of L'Hospitalet de Llobregat.

When we speak about heritage we tend to focus on archaeological sites or historical heritage. But there's another kind of heritage, not easy to see, that is the music. We have a special project in which we blend music and peace and that is the Pau Casals's Museum. At this museum we have created a complete offer, addressed to all kind of people: school ones, specialized, familiar or general public. The Villa Casals is situated on the Beach of Sant Salvador in El Vendrell. Today is a museum made to evoke the familiar atmosphere and the beauty of the house at its best. Inside the house, the visitor can discover the profound life of the famous cellist thanks to an accurate and modern museography.

But why do we have to explain who Pau Casals was? We should underline his figure not only for his music but for his integrity, his solidarity and the defence of the human Rights and his country. We must learn from his attitude in order to make a better world. We focus our attention on these matters: effort-artist-freedom-war-peace-exilec-ompromise-solidarity-dialogue-dignity...

As a general rule, Heritage and History have always been spread in a passive way. The cultural heritage has been traditionally displayed as if it was a treasure: it was just meant to be contemplated. This is the case of the Archaeological Museum of Catalunya.

The museum is located in the former Palace of Graphic Arts which was built for the 1929 World's Fair in Barcelona. The rooms were not made suitable for the visitors, the exhibition areas were obsoletes, and the display was not attractive. For these reasons, the guides not only had to be simple transmitters of knowledge but they also had to put in value the Heritage, made the visitors come close to it thanks to the copies of the items they're watching and with some scenographies the museum had. Fortunately, the situation is changing and the museum is renovating, with the inclusion of didactic material and a selection of items and audio-visuals. This renovation is helping the visitors to understand

what they're contemplating and wake up their curiosity for the past.

Actually, museums and heritage sites make an effort to give an answer to those themes related both with didactics and with the relation with all kinds of public. According to us, it's fundamental to have a changing, competitive and, above all, an attractive offer that can be suitable for all kinds of public. For this reason, whenever a museum or heritage site asks us for a visit or activity, our first aim is to personalize the offer bearing in mind both the existing heritage and the kind of public the activity is addressed to.

Thanks to our long experience, we have learnt that every activity related to heritage should raise awareness, educate, entertain, make people think and of course create a relation between the visitor and the heritage. Moreover we believe that there should be a deep reflection on the need of knowing the past and on the creation of new resources that allow an attractive approach to history and heritage.

Maybe you are familiar with Lloret de Mar, a city in the Costa Brava famous for its mix of sun, sex and "fiesta". The city council is worried about this so that they wanted to improve the kind of tourism visiting the city. So they asked us to make a new cultural offer, with some elements of their heritage. We began with the Santa Clotilde's gardens (fig. 3), located in a very beautiful place, with an awesome view above the sea.



Fig. 3. Theatrical visit at the Santa Clotilde's Gardens (Lloret de Mar).

Although some guided visits were carried out there, we made a special guide tour, combining the historical facts with some mythological

elements. After the summer, we created the scholastic offer, with theatrical visits for little children, and gymkhanas for the rest of the pupils. The first year we took charge of the visits but then we trained the new guides in order to take charge of the visits. The didactic project has showed a different way to put in value the Heritage and it has attracted a different kind of tourism. Although it is not our main aim, we have managed some heritage sites. The first of all was the Calafell's castle. This castle is located on top of a long shaped hill and was built 1000 years ago, at the beginning of the Middle Ages. As Lloret, the tourism of Calafell is based on a blending of sun, beach and parties. However, the city council wanted to improve the touristic offer.

Our aims of this management's project were:

- To increase the offer of cultural activities in order to invigorate the castle. We also created activities addressed to general public, touristic groups, scholar ones.
- To raise the number of visitors. At the end of our management, the number of visitors has increased, and now the castle is a reference point in that area, not only for general public but also for a scholastic one.
- To try to bind local entities and local companies with the project and the Heritage. That is one of the most important aims, because in order to preserve and spread the heritage you must learn to love it. So the implication of these local agents is essential.

Finally our recent experience with heritage's management is at Atapuerca's sites (fig. 4). Atapuerca is one of the most important site related to the Plistocene and it's Unesco's World Heritage centre.



Fig. 4. Guided visit to Atapuerca's sites.

Our aims are similar to those of Calafell:

- To offer some cultural activities of quality. That only can be achieved thanks to an active, innovate and changing offer.
- To raise the number of visitors. At the end of our management, the number of visitors has increased from 45.000 to 100.000.
- To introduce to the public the last investigations about human evolution. That is easier because the archaeologists of Atapuerca assist us.

But the significance of the site implies other aims. For instance, we tried to raise the economic development of the territory. That was achieved with the involvement of the city councils and the Junta of Castilla-Leon.

In addition to this, we have trained a team of local monitors with the purpose of creating a team of professional guides.

The result of all this is the management of the sites, the archaeological park and from this summer, we managed the scholar offer of the Human Evolution Museum of Burgos.

To sum it up, we think that the heritage has to be spread to all kinds of people. To reach this aim, we must create an attractive offer addressed to the visitors and the guides must be professionals.

As far as the management of the heritage sites is concerned, the involvement of all the agents of the vicinity is essential for the success of the project, whose aim is to promote and protect the heritage, because it's ours.

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