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Offer of Educational Programs and Museum Attendance for School Children in the Municipality of Ouidah (Benin)

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Abstract

This article discusses the issue of museum attendance of schoolchildren in the commune of Ouidah and looks at the provision of educational programs as one of the explanatory factors of the phenomenon. In total, two hundred and forty-five (245) subjects participated in the surveys, forty-one (41) teachers and 204 school children selected according to the technique of reasoned choice and quota in the six colleges included in the surveys. A strategic analysis was carried out (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977) of the speeches of these different players in the education sector on the youth museum attendance. The results reveal that the virtual absence of museum visits to secondary education programs is a major determinant of museum attendance among the young people concerned.

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Introduction

Beninese society, like many other African societies, appears to be facing major transformations, both cultural and technological, and a growing need for its citizens to acquire increasingly complex and diverse knowledge. Museums, by virtue of their role in preserving memory, opening up to the world, and transmitting knowledge, are therefore a subject of great concern (Evans, 2003). For Merleau-Ponty (2010), transmission is one of the primary missions of heritage institutions. Their creation was motivated by the desire to offer a legacy to future

generations. In its most fundamental sense, it consists of passing on cultural elements to the next generation. One of the most interesting functions linked to the changing role of collections is the creation of social bonds, as described by Taborsky (1982). It follows, therefore, that the transmission of heritage is one of the levers that must be used to promote the preservation of local specificities in order to break free from the ever-increasing homogenization toward which humanity is tending. However, this cannot be possible without taking youth into account.

While youth embody all symbolic virtues, represents the ideal image at all ages, and creates new forms of social interaction, their socialization nevertheless seems to pose a problem in a society that is losing momentum (Dubet and Martucelli, 1998). In several sociological theories (Durkheim, 1895; Bourdieu, 1980), socialization refers to the processes by which individuals integrate the values and norms of life in society in order to adapt to it and participate in maintaining cohesion among its members. But it also represents a dynamic that contributes to the construction of individual and collective identities. Heritage represents a privileged material support for inscription in space and time, for the construction of memory and identity, and for visibility and legitimacy for the social groups associated with it. It constitutes the primary medium for constructing collective memory, allowing identity markers to be inscribed over time, beyond ruptures, crises, and transformations. It appears as a powerful marker of identity: "People need the testimony of other people, and each era draws from those that preceded it the emotions that will allow it to create and produce" (Greffé, 1999, p. 28). Heritage, through the feeling of appropriation of the asset (the common heritage), which generates passion and shared ambition, is a tool that fosters solidarity among inhabitants; it serves as a foundation for a development project. For Basilico (2010), cultural heritage is a set of knowledge, values, achievements, and traditions—resources that are constantly enriched and re-evaluated, serving both to develop and strengthen social and political bonds. But how can these contribute to socialization and integration through the transmission of cultural heritage in an

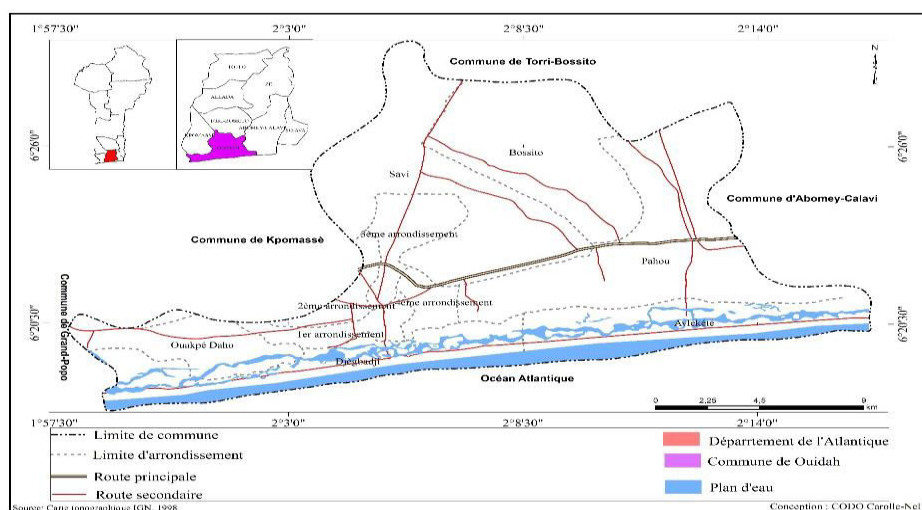
environment characterized by low museum attendance among young people?

While there is unanimous agreement on the need to transmit cultural heritage to the younger generation, its implementation poses a problem, particularly in the Beninese context and more specifically in the municipality of Ouidah, which nevertheless boasts a diversity of museums and educational infrastructure. Studying the influence of educational programs on young people's museum attendance means examining the school's role in this attendance within the Beninese context, using the municipality of Ouidah as a case study. The question, therefore, is: what is the role of schools in the museum attendance of schoolchildren? To explore this further, this work is based on the premise that the educational programs offered, teachers' perceptions of museums, and their interests, needs, and expectations regarding museums are all determinants of schoolchildren's museum attendance.

Ouidah: a municipality with numerous cultural assets and educational infrastructure

The municipality of Ouidah is located in the Atlantique department in southern Benin. It covers an area of 364 km² with a population of approximately 162,034 inhabitants (INSAE, 2014). It is bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the east by the municipality of Abomey-Calavi, to the west by the municipality of Grand-Popo, and to the north by the municipalities of Kpomassé and Tori-Bossito. The figure below provides a better understanding of the municipality.

Figure.1 Map showing the location of the commune of Ouidah in the department of Atlantique in Benin



Ouidah boasts several heritage sites: the Ouidah History Museum, the Casa do Brasil Museum (House of Brazil), now the House of Memory, and the Museum of the Gate of Return (PDCO, 2005-2009). These are complemented by the Avimandjessi Museum, the Museum of the Sun, and the Zinsou Foundation Museum (exploratory work, 2014).

The city offers all three levels of formal education, primarily general and technical education at the secondary level, provided by both private and public institutions. General secondary education is offered by approximately 54 colleges, including eleven (11) public colleges and 43 private colleges. Of the eleven public colleges, seven offer both academic and vocational tracks. Of the 43 private colleges, 19 offer both academic and vocational tracks. (Departmental Directorate of Secondary Education, 2014). Technical education is provided by three (3) institutions: two (2) in the private sector and one (1) in the public sector. All of these institutions contribute to development.

Museums: Institutions Serving Development

Various institutions are tasked with ensuring the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next, including the family, schools, and cultural institutions such as museums. Museums, through their functions of education, play, socialization, and integration, constitute potential channels for the transmission of cultural heritage (Sande, 1992). A museum is defined as a permanent, non-profit institution serving society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, preserves, studies, exhibits, and transmits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of study, education, and enjoyment (ICOM, 2007). It is an institution whose main objectives are therefore study, education, and leisure (Sande, 1992). It fosters both individual development and the social integration of young people (Lemerise, 1995, 1999). It complements school, fostering individual development and social integration. Benin has about fifteen public and private museums that showcase cultural heritage to the public. These include, among others, the Historical Museum of Abomey, the History Museum of Ouidah, the Honmè Museum in Porto-Novo, the Alexandre Sènou Adandé Ethnographic Museum in Porto-Novo, the Open-Air Museum of Parakou, and the Regional Museum of Natitingou. The municipality of Ouidah, for its part, has approximately six museums (Ouidah Municipal Development Plan (PDCO), 2005-2009). Despite this

available offering, young people are visiting museums less and less. Attendance statistics available for the period from 2009 to 2012 at the Alexandre Sènou Adandé Ethnographic Museum in Porto-Novo reveal that 8.32% of visitors were secondary school students in 2008; 7.65% in 2009; 8.72% in 2010; 5.40% in 2011 and 0.68% in 2012 (MEASA, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012). From 2012 to 2016, the figures did not show a significant increase, remaining between 1 and 2% (fieldwork, 2014-2016). These declining figures clearly demonstrate the lack of interest among young people in museums. This disaffection is also evident among young people in the municipality of Ouidah where, over the same period, a decrease in school visits was observed. Indeed, school visits were 53.14% in 2008; 47.90% in 2009; 35.59% in 2010; 34.96% in 2011; and 31.10% in 2012 (field surveys) at the Ouidah History Museum (MHO). From 2012 to 2016, these figures dropped from 31.12% to less than 20% (field surveys, 2014-2016).

However, as a central educational institution, the school is expected to be the bridge between the various resources and learning contexts available in a community (Higher Council of Education, 1986). Fantini and Sinclair (1985), the Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation (1986), and Gardner (1991) believe that establishing partnerships between museums and schools is desirable in order to promote, among other things, more access to knowledge, the contextualization of learning, and the facilitation of knowledge transfer from one learning environment to another. School involvement in young people's museum visits requires the provision of educational programs that allow schools to engage with museums. This analytical perspective refers to the educational function of museums, which could serve the needs of schools.

Museums have, among other functions, an educational role (Sande, 1992) and are therefore a complement to schools, since schools alone can no longer shoulder the heavy and delicate task of educating young people (Gardner, 1991; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994; and Lemerise, 1994). Through their educational function, museums allow for the promotion and dissemination of the content of their collections and artworks (Meunier, 2011), which can complement school curricula. By offering young people new avenues of access to knowledge that complement those already provided at school, they foster interactions between young people and experts in the field and facilitate the transfer and reuse of acquired knowledge in different contexts (Mathias and Lemerise, 2006). 3. Strategic

Analysis Model of Youth Museum Attendance in the Municipality of Ouidah.

In their collective work, "The Actor and the System," Crozier and Friedberg (1977) developed the theory of organizational analysis and distinguished three levels of analysis: the environment, the system, and the actor.

For these authors, a system is a whole whose parts are all interdependent, possessing a minimum of structure, which distinguishes it from a simple aggregate, and which also has mechanisms that maintain this structure, which we will call regulatory mechanisms. As for the actor, they are like an entity that, while adapting to the rules of operation, modifies them in turn through their actions. They therefore distinguish two types of actors: the individual actor and the collective actor. Each member of the organization is an actor, that is to say, an active and rational being acting in relation to their own interests. It follows, therefore, that individual actors use the opportunities available to them to achieve their own interests, while collective actors are a group with common interests and a coordinated, rational strategy. In Crozier and Friedberg's theory (1977), the environment encompasses the notion of "context of action," which includes socio-political aspects (legislation, regulations, etc.), economic trends, and cultural developments.

The strategic analysis in this context presents the interdependent relationships between the various actors involved in museum attendance by schoolchildren in the municipality of Ouidah. These actors include school administrators, teachers, and schoolchildren. These actors interact within a given environment, namely the school and museum environment described above. The system in question here is the Beninese educational system, specifically the secondary school curriculum. In this research, museum attendance is considered a concrete action system (CAS). This is indeed a set of structured interactions between interdependent actors whose interests may diverge or even contradictory. The choice of this model addresses the concerns of social actors regarding their own interests in encouraging schoolchildren to visit museums.

Research questions and methods

The overall objective of this research is to analyze museum attendance among schoolchildren in the

municipality of Ouidah through the lens of educational programs offered. This involves determining museum attendance among schoolchildren, presenting the educational programs offered through the discourse of educational stakeholders, and analyzing museum attendance among young people as a result of these programs. Museum attendance among young people encompasses the percentage of museum visits in general, the types of visits undertaken, the percentage of visits during school hours and outside of school hours, as well as the frequency of visits in both contexts. The "offering" refers to the content of the educational programs, including the proposed field trips. More specifically, this study aims to determine whether the inclusion or exclusion of museum visits in the curriculum influences museum attendance among students and to assess museum attendance based on educational outings offered by the school.

The research is qualitative in nature and relies on quantitative data, employing several complementary techniques and tools that address both qualitative and quantitative research requirements. Students and teachers are the primary focus of the research. They were selected using two techniques: purposive selection and quota sampling. Teachers were chosen purposively because they are the ones who impart knowledge to students and, at the same time, are responsible for their instruction/education. They are key players in student museum attendance. They were identified as being able, through their teaching, to organize museum visits to complement the theoretical knowledge of young learners. Being more or less at the end of their secondary education, the students are considered to be individuals who have had at least one opportunity during their schooling to visit a museum. They are pre-identified as likely to provide reliable information on the subject.

This involves a total of one hundred and ninety-eight (198) teachers (according to the compiled figures obtained in the field). For the quota sampling technique, the main criterion is being a teacher in the selected schools. Based on the total number of teachers obtained for the six schools participating in the surveys, the previously established rate of 20% was applied, as shown in Table I, which summarizes the distribution of teachers and students surveyed by school. The strategic analysis model serves as the basis for the various analyses.

Table.1 Distribution of Teachers Surveyed by School

Colleges	Total number of school children	Number of teachers (20%)	Total number of school children	Youth population (20%)
Monsignor De-Souza	21	4	83	17
Michel Dubois	23	5	96	19
The Circle of Geniuses	24	5	106	21
CEG 1	70	14	527	105
Ouidah Technical High School	37	7	145	29
Mgr Steinmetz	32	6	65	13
Total	207	41	1022	204

The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively to clarify what can be measured and to shed light on what is less quantifiable. Software such as Excel, EpiData, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14 were used to create tables for generating statistics, standard deviations, averages, etc. However, since the analysis of a social phenomenon cannot be limited to its quantifiable aspect alone, content analysis was conducted to examine the content of opinions related to teachers' discourse.

A near absence of museum visits among young schoolchildren in the municipality of Ouidah is linked to a near lack of museum programs in the curriculum.

The results reveal that 204 subjects responded to the question about museum visits, representing a 100% response rate. Of this total sample, 189 subjects, or 93%, had never visited a museum, while only 15 subjects, or 7%, reported having visited museums. These data confirm the low museum attendance among young people observed in previous studies. Indeed, several authors O'Connell and Alexander (1979), Andrew and Asia (1979), Millar (1989), Biais (1991), Allard (1993), and Leblanc (1993) who addressed the issue of museum attendance among young people/adolescents in their studies, concluded that adolescents are rarely seen in museums. Furthermore, a study conducted by the African Heritage School (1995), which found that 95% of young people in cities with museums had never visited them, and that only 5% had visited them, corroborates these findings. Regarding visit frequency, of the 7% of

visitors, 4% had visited only once since starting secondary school, 1% had visited the museum at least twice, and another 1% had visited at least three times. Therefore, the average visit is once since secondary school. This frequency, compared to the minimum number of years of secondary schooling for the young participants (5 years), remains relatively low. The remaining 93% had never visited.

Several reasons explain these figures. Indeed, to justify their behaviour, young people give various answers depending on whether they visit museums with school or independently outside of school. Among the school-related reasons given by students to justify their near absence from museums, the most prominent are the lack of organized museum trips by the school (52%) and a lack of interest in museum activities (32%). The cost of admission is mentioned in only 7% of cases. It therefore follows that schools do not offer these students the opportunity to visit museums. However, according to the authors, while remaining the central educational institution, schools are called upon to become a point of connection between different resources and various learning contexts. More broadly, the school's "institutional program" (Dubet, 2003) values elements of legitimate culture, including cultural objects, temporalities, modes of appropriation, and modes of legitimation. The school's role is justified on two levels: to stimulate current and future demand for culture on the one hand, and indirectly to promote academic success on the other. For Caron (2009), the school is undeniably a place of encouragement and discovery, whether through

amateur practice or cultural outings (the high level of knowledge children and teenagers have of cultural facilities, libraries, museums, monuments, theatres, and performance venues owes much to the school's role). It follows, therefore, that young people's participation in museums depends on the school's ability to offer this opportunity. Other reasons are related to visits outside the school setting. These include a lack of information about museum activities (36%), a lack of encouragement from parents for museum activities (21%), a lack of interest in museum visits, and economic reasons, particularly the cost of transportation (13%).

Of the various subjects taught in secondary school (both technical and general), few allow for field trips, and even fewer allow for museum visits. The courses in the so-called "hard" sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry, technology, etc.) almost entirely exclude field trips, let alone museum visits. As a result, not only does the curriculum not allow teachers of these disciplines to organize museum visits, but teachers themselves are also completely unaware of the potential connection between their teaching and museum collections. Yet these collections (through their unique geometric forms or their history) could provide concrete elements to help students better understand mathematical formulas learned in class. Furthermore, in the era of competency-based learning, which requires teachers to use real-life examples and everyday situations to begin teaching, such visits could be used to better share knowledge. Similarly, our various investigations with teachers and school administrators reveal that subjects related to the so-called "soft sciences," particularly languages and literature, also do not offer such field trips. The subjects most affected are life and earth sciences, and history and geography, although the latter seems to be far more prevalent. Indeed, according to statements obtained from teachers, only these two subjects encourage the use of museums as educational tools.

In conclusion, the objective of this research is to analyse museum attendance among young people through the lens of educational programs. Specifically, the study first examined museum attendance among schoolchildren; then explored the range of educational programs available, teachers' perceptions of museums, their interests, needs, and expectations; and finally, analysed the influence of these elements on young people's museum attendance.

The methodology and measurement tools employed reveal that young people in the municipality of Ouidah

have a low rate of museum attendance (7%). Of the various subjects taught in secondary education (both technical and general), few allow for educational field trips, and even fewer include museum visits. Courses in the so-called "hard" sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry, technology, etc.) almost entirely exclude educational field trips, let alone museum visits. Similarly, various surveys of teachers and school administrators revealed that subjects related to the so-called "soft sciences," particularly languages and literature, also do not offer such field trips. The subjects most affected are life and earth sciences, history, and geography, although the latter seems to be the most prevalent. Indeed, according to feedback from teachers, only these two subjects encourage the use of museums as teaching tools. Thus, not only does the curriculum not allow teachers of these disciplines to organize museum visits, but the teachers themselves are also unaware of the potential connection between their teaching and museum collections. Many teachers believe that museums are primarily learning spaces that reinforce classroom learning. They can also serve an entertaining purpose. Indeed, of the 41 teachers almost all (38/41 or 93%) consider the museum to be an interesting learning environment even if they believe it is not in the same way as school but remains a great contribution to consolidate the lessons done in class..

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