Body Worlds Exhibition and Healthy Lifestyles Promotion: an Educational Research on Neapolitan Visitors

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Abstract: Body Worlds is an informative scientific exhibition which displays human anatomical specimens that have been conserved using plastination, an innovative technique invented by Gunter Von Hagens. The Body Worlds allows visitors not only to observe the exposed bodies as mere aesthetic phenomena but also to think about the quality of the relationship that can be established with their own body. The exhibition can be considered an opportunity to effectively participate in the creation of new meanings about body; in this sense Body Worlds is a valid example of performative pedagogy, a democratic teaching practice that can help the individuals to choose more responsible behaviours about different area of life. This paper aims to explore the impact that the Body Worlds exhibition in Naples had on visitors, paying particular attention to its educational implications. The research has taken into account the use of two questionnaires, one created from scratch to obtaining socio-demographic information and the other to revealing habits and lifestyles in order to identify the target visitors. The results show that after the visit a good part of the visitors wants to change his lifestyle; self-change passes through a deepening of self-knowledge and in order to do this it is useful to involve other people to take part in this process. The awareness of healthy lifestyles becomes effective when the information is supported by an educational approach, intending education as a process that aims to emancipate the individual by sparking the development of critical-reflexive capacities.

Keywords: Agentivity, Body Worlds Exhibition, Health Education, reflexivity