Literature Review

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Research Methodology

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In America, the peak for museum’s housing great collections in order to provide a public service started in the 1960’s and 1970’s. It was not until 1997 that the American Association of Museums (AAM) came out with their publication about the ideal roles of museums that shifted museum leader’s interests towards an emphasis of educational opportunities. This shift was towards museums involving audiences by developing public programs and researching engagement opportunities of all types of audiences. (Weil, 2002). It is even quoted by AAM “[museums] effectively identif[y] and know the characteristics of its existing and potential audiences and whether it effectively evaluates its programs and exhibitions in terms of their audience impact.” (Weil, pp.33).

Educational Programs and their functions in museums are not limited to just providing information. Both offer formal and informal learning opportunities to individuals with assorted experiences at all ages and from all parts of society. The research of museum education is growing and links participation to ever-widening audiences. However, there appears to be fewer resources available that explain the ways in which museums can contribute to cognitive, social, and emotional progress in children with development disabilities. The following series of literature reviews aims to address the combining of informal and formal learning to increase cognitive, social, and emotional progress for children with and without these development disabilities.

**95% Learning Theory**

Free learning, also known as informal learning, was the focus of Dierking and Falk’s work showing that 95% of cognitive learning happens outside of a classroom. (Dierking, 2010). Dierking and Falk went to extensive research by using studies showcasing museums as active learning centers for children.

Dierking and Falk believe that non-school resources are the vast majority of science learning in America. They describe in-depth one case study from the California Science Center in Los Angeles. In the study, it showed that out-of-school institutions support the public's science learning by enhancing the audience’s curiosity. The results from California Science Center in Los Angeles’ surveys resulted that more than 60 percent of residents that had visited the Science Center since it was renovated in 1998, including residents of all races/ethnicities, neighborhoods, incomes and education levels. It also showed that a large number, 95 percent, of these visitors felt that after visiting the museum they had a better understanding of science and technology. The experience also drawn their interest in science and encouraged further inquiries after the visit. Other case studies had similar results.

The project’s main method was collecting data from different sources. The data ranged from onsite surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Case studies were done over decades while others were less than a year. Demographics ranged by the author’s categorizing visitors by the experience participates were seeking. Falk describes these categories as a Facilitator, Explorer, Recharger, and Experience Seeker. The Facilitator wants to socialize, Explorer wants to learn, Recharger wants to reduce stress, and the Experience Seeker wants to look for once in a lifetime opportunity. (Dierking, 2010).

The study was examining all of these examples and reflecting on the impact of free learning. It was also to help prove the roles of non-school institutions, like museums, to acquire a higher interest on engagement rather than preserving collections as a social responsibility. Impact on the different learning experiences for children can have from free learning environments. (Dierking, 2010).

**Observation of Object Preference**

The study conducted by Fatma Unal in her work called “Observation of object preference of interest by children aged between 4 and 8 in museums: Antalya museum examples” was research on how children relate to certain objects. In the study, children were observed by their interaction with each object in an exhibit. In order to collect the data, the children’s reactions were categorized as liking, fear and laughter. The children were then asked questions about objects they liked and feared, which both categories consisted of statues and tombs. Children described these types of artifacts as beautiful, and they clearly expressed their liking. Two of the children in the study group were seen to be scared and feared some of the objects in the museum and expressed this fear with their body language. The objects that made the children uncomfortable because it reminded them of death. Regardless of the object, the observations resulted that children expressed their own experiences. Meaning they were reflecting own personal experiences to all the objects in the Antalya Museum.

The children were also asked questions as what the objects were, what the functions of the item were, and who it was used by. In the conclusion, children needed information that they can relate to with their own lives. It was necessary to support them to express themselves verbally, listen to their questions and provide the right support at the right time for them to learn more.

The findings of this study related to the children’s interest and perceptions regarding the objects in the Antalya museum. Children have spontaneous experiences in museums as the study represented. Most importantly, the research came to the conclusion that the experience depended highly on the behavior of the child in the museum environment. Children should be helped to self-construct knowledge and to take responsibility of their own learning. In this way, children effectively create meaning by establishing relationships between the new information and experiences that they obtain through questioning and what they already knew.

**Curriculum Theory and Museum Education**

The main question for the work called, “Shared Journeys; Curriculum Theory and Museum Education” is how the museum field can expand as a tool for all people. He stated that “[museums need] to consider some desperately needed expansion. They propose using curriculum theory to help museum educators address museums’ revitalized commitments to advance equity, ethics, and accountability in museum education practice.”(CITATION)

Curriculum theory (CT) does have many interpretations but is represented in this study as being as narrow as the dynamics of the learning process of one child in a classroom to the lifelong learning path an individual takes. The author defines an issue for museum educators. Museum educators face a challenge of educating a broad and unpredictable audience. Informal and formal educators more often are scrutinizing particular representations of the world and asking whose voices are being heard and which interpretations concur or challenge learners’ life worlds.

The rest of the writing is about the parallels of Curriculum Theory and Museum Education. It first introduces the history of curriculum theory and how it was developed through the years. Museum education is introduced also with the history and how it fulfill a wide-ranging audience. The challenge of designing public curricula in museums arises for museum educators in the processes of choosing from a multiple ways of viewing the world.

How people learn in museums. What are people exposed to in museums, and why are particular artifacts interpreted and used to represent select knowledge. A primary responsibility for museum educators is to provide equal access to visitors in designing interpretations for exhibits and programs. Then he uses the Enola Gay Controversy as a showcase of how Curriculum Theory could have been a solution to education a broader audience.

**Parent and Child Conversation**

Another study that was from Harriet R. Tenenbaum’s collaborative piece called, “Supporting parent-child conversations in a history museum.” This work examined different ways parent and child could interact with each other in the museum. Before the study, Tenenbaum realized that parent-child discussions were brief, they involved more explanation than conversations between other groups of museum visitors. Even though children hear more explanations than other visitor, the explanations were also brief and most of the time incomplete because the child attention span was not long enough or the parent themselves did not know the full answer.

Tenenbaum decided to test an involvement designed exhibit to increase the amount of time families spend at on a certain exhibit. This helped them see if it would have a connected relationship with their talk. This particular study was conducted at the British Museum in an exhibition focused on culture and history. In this example, they used a back pack of activities, the same as the activity provided by the MNCH. Moreover, the exhibition at the study was also not hands-on, possibly making it difficult for groups with families to engage with the exhibit and creating the need for a family activity greater than at other types of exhibitions. The back pack study did increase time but most recent studies have found it was difficult for families to want to participate in the activity.

Further of the study showed that the back pack had to be compiled with ever changing material. Otherwise, families that would visit multiple times got “bored” with the subject matter. (Tenenbaum, 2010). As one can see there are many opportunities for museums to engage youth visitors.

## **Group Therapy for Children**

There is a lack of literature on social skills therapy for children with autism, revealing an urgent need for additional research. (Marie, 2008). Past research has focused on the use of small groups or single-case study designs. This study examines the effectiveness of a social skills therapy program for school-age children ages 11 through 18. The program uses art therapy and cognitive-behavioral techniques in a group therapy format to broaden and deepen the state-of-the-art techniques used in helping children with social developmental disorders to improve their social skills. The measure of social improvement were Pre- and post-test tools distributed to parents and teachers during a school year in 2004. The scores revealed a significant improvement in assertion scores, coupled with decreased internalizing behaviors, hyperactivity scores, and problem behavior scores in the students. Implications for social work and policy are discussed. (Marie, 2008).

There were many key terms used in this work. For example, the "autism spectrum" is a phrase that presently includes several specific diagnoses, each with its own particular characteristics and symptoms. The autistic spectrum comprises a broad range of disorders characterized by interference with communication and social interactions and circular patterns of interest, activities, and behavior. The autistic spectrum refers to are autism disorder that include; Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, Asperger s syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorder that have not been specified. (Marie, 2008).

In the study, they theory of mind, is the branch of cognitive science that investigates how we ascribe mental states to other persons and how we use the states to explain and predict the actions of those other persons. (Marie, pp. 25). The theory of mind has been particularly helpful in identifying the neurological component, rather than relying on family dynamic theory, in the assessment of PDD.

One challenge that the study underwent is that is the observational studies integrating groups of children suffering from PDD with whom to work. To complicate matters, many social skills deficits are due to emotional or behavioral causes, not neurological conditions. Therefore it is contraindicated to group children with emotional disturbances with children with ASD. Although the issue being addressed for both groups may be social skills, the origins of the deficits are different. Children with ASD have a neurological condition that makes it difficult for them to read and intuit social cues, whereas children with ED have a psychological impairment but are able to read social cues. Grouping these children together can result in a situation in which social "aggressors." Because of these reasons there were challenges with getting participants for the study.

**Conclusion**

This shows the impact on museum education by examining recent research and the case studies of engagements in museums. It also shows a range of how museum education could involve many aspects of child therapy and ways children, with all experiences, can learn in museum settings. After reviewing literature regarding museum education, it has develop a question of how these educational programs could experiment putting children with development disabilities together with children without disabilities. The entire group can develop such traits as seeing; grasping, analyzing, questioning, extracting clues related to life from these educational programs.

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