Museums For Children

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Abstract

Children’s museums as an important institute should take up the opportunity to develop its children by understanding their needs and to propose the exhibitions and activities. Also, they are unique places that bring children, families and communities together for quality interaction. These museums encourage children to think for themselves, expand their problem-solving creative exploration and exercise. Indoor and outdoor exhibits, programs and workshops are designed to engage children in simple and complex forms of play that result in foundational learning. In recent years, children’s museums have been increasing rapidly. This article is describes definition and goals of them. Also, Some issues around the establishment and continuation of children’s museums such as exhibit design criteria is discussed.

1. Introduction

Museums for children are institutions that document and exhibit cultural values like other traditional museums and that include educational activities. These museums give priority to children development and to learning by action and experience. In these museums, children learn about their environment by searching for and examining information and material. These museums are based on the fact that children can learn through plays. They are centres that direct children towards active learning and encourage them for asking questions, looking for answers and solving problems. These museums incorporate many activities and contribute to the mental, physical, affective and social development of children. Within this framework, children museums are important educational venues that aim to ensure interest of children in art, science and technology and that increase the learning motivation by preparing exhibitions and learning programs (Cleaver, 1988; Karadeniz, 2009).


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According to Kolb, children are in the centre of museum trip in these museums through their own effort. Besides, collections are arranged according to concepts where children can focus to. Exhibitions, programs and activities are prepared in a manner to draw the attention of children (Zilcioglu, 2008). Children museums are venues including activities of fun and discovery as well as areas where toys and dresses of childhood period are exhibited. By this way, the intelligence and personal development of children are ensured through plays. Play is used as a tool in the museum education and considered together with the activities within the museum to create effective learning laboratories for children. In this case, museum collection is a tool of play for children and the psycho-social development of children are enhanced by experiences (Zilcioglu, 2008).

As stated by Hooper-Greenhill, today’s education approach emphasizes on the development in the learning process and focuses on the skills and activities leading to result not on the result itself. These museums provide learning possibilities by seeing, touching and talking and they provide children with lifelong learning (Karadeniz, 2009). These venues provide children with new information and experiences, develop their imagination and senses, allow them to move freely and learn by experimenting, playing and living with the applied education activities and workshop works. When children make contact with an idea an object or an experience in a museum, the learning process begins (Piscitelli, B., Everett, M., Weier, K., 2003).

Children museums are also visited by adults (teachers, parents etc) as well as children. They are institutions of education, culture and art where social life is active and which provide important contribution to the process of socialization. These museums are distinct from other museum through their unique concepts. Today children museum designs are applied where visuals, images and spatial dialogues are in harmony and where life is perceived and interpreted through the eyes of children. This understanding of design involves the arrangement of spaces convenient for activities. Exhibition areas and objects are designed in these venues in accordance for the museum concept for children who are active participants. Interdisciplinary work should be ensured starting from the first stages of design and exhibition contents for children should be selected from all spheres of life to create effective venues.

According to Chilton (1991), instinctive elements should be provided as well in addition to the development of physical skills of children. These are discovering, climbing, crawling, and trying different heights and platforms, experimenting with material like soil, water and sand, developing social relations among each other by creating possibilities of solidarity and cooperation. All these needs should be considered in museum venues designed for children. There should also be arrangements for heating, cooling, air conditioning and enlightening according to the basic functional differentiations of the areas allocated for activities in the venue. Children should be able to experience different venues for stimulating perception and motor development and for the establishment of spatial awareness. Repetition of shapes, tissues, colours, designs and voices is important to ensure learning by children. While designing play areas in museum locations, help should provided to children to develop concepts like shape, dimension, number, relation between pieces (Yılmaz, S., Bulut, Z., 2003). When designing museum venue, the venues allocated for exhibition are constructed to ensure visibility of the object and the object information. All spatial construction and design inputs of museum are created to ensure visibility of objects. Design and creativity should be supported by the facilities created by modern technology.

As examples of children museum where children live their childhood fully and move freely, selected Free Kidzz Children Museum and Private Ankara Children Museum in Ankara (Turkey). This museum considers children not only as visitors but also individuals who participate in activities and who improve the facilities provided by the exhibition as much as possible. This museum was opened in fall 2012. It aims to ensure interest of children in not only as visitors but also individuals who participate in activities and who improve the facilities provided by the museum to create effective learning laboratories for children. In this case, museum collection is a tool of play for children and the psycho-social development of children are enhanced by experiences (Zilcioglu, 2008).

Activity 1: H2OHH-Water Games. It ensures that children become aware of the fact that water is a fluid material and develop coordination of hand, eye and body.

Activity 2: My feelings: to make children to perceive the feelings by different touches in the body, to make them know their bodies. Different touches by walking in a tunnel (Figure 1).

Activity 3: Construction Site: To teach group works, to ensure communication, to make cooperation (Figure 2).

The visual of the selected activities:

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Activity 2: My feelings: to make children to perceive the feelings by different touches in the body, to make them know their bodies. Different touches by walking in a tunnel (Figure 1).

Activity 3: Construction Site: To teach group works, to ensure communication, to make cooperation (Figure 2).
Activity 4: I find my direction: To ensure that children are sensitive to the relation between the body and the venue. To develop the feeling of direction in a labyrinth and to ensure reaching a target by overcoming simple obstacles (Figure 3).

Activity 5: Insects: To make children know insects at early ages, to remind their vital roles in protecting our ecosystem and to teach how to conquer their fear of insects (Figure 4).

Activity 6: TV studio (8 years) To take role in various scenes, to create live scenes, to support their learning of TV techniques (Figure 5).

Activity 7: Talking world: to ensure that children communicate in major languages and to find the location of these languages in the world, to create curiosity in other cultures and languages (Figure 6).

Activity 8: Free Play Areas: Depending on the toy selected by the children, to ensure harmony of brain and body, to help them to make selections, to decide targets and to create personal areas (Figure 7).
In the interior space construction, various purpose-specific play areas are created for children in the museum where vivid colours are used. These constructed spaces have integral design from illumination design to furniture. Various illumination and voice conditions create a rich sensory experience for children. In addition, the users are mostly children in this venue where special importance is paid to hygiene, use of natural material and ergonomic size. Especially the dimensions of the interior elements with individual functions like sink, toilet, chair, cafe etc are designed with consideration to different age groups.

**Conclusion**

The number of children museums in the world increases rapidly. And in Turkey, it is necessary to increase the number of the children museums needed to grow health and strong generations to the future. Children museums play important roles in growing responsible and successful individuals with self confidence, at peace with themselves and with their environment. Starting from the age of primary school, museum education should be provided like selective courses. Within the framework of museum education, support should be received from the museum trainers and museum visits should be supported by museum variety. Teachers should spread museum visits to their annual program to increase activities. Children museums are less in number in Turkey and they started with the toys museums. This development is accepted as huge steps for adults to remember past and for children to learn past in the museum exhibition areas. But, the children museum concept should not be satisfied with this and it should address unlimited and huge imagination of children. If colours, textures, architectural structures and unlimited interior spaces are made widespread and active, we will have a chance to improve in this field.

**References**


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