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Museums as Visual Laboratories in the Learning-Teaching Process

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Abstract

Both the numbers and the kinds of museums has been considerably flourished in recent years. At the same time, “traditional approach” to the museums which conceives museums as places old objects are preserved and kept, is being slightly changed. Being aware of the fact that museums have positive effects on culture, economy, tourism and promotion, it is tended to design and to plan museums in that way. But on the other hand, the relation of the museums to the education is not being noticed neither by educators nor museum managers. Both for educators and museum managers, museums are still not more than “visiting places” at same special times. In fact, the objects embodied in museums are highly proper for educational purposes. In this presentation, the importance of the using museums in the effective learning-teaching process will be discussed. It is going to be argued that as a “concrete learning places” museums are the interactive learning laboratories in the process of learning-teaching proses. It will be concluded with some remarks on how to use and manage effectively museums for educational purpose

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1. Introduction

We see that today museums are remarkably on display in terms of diversity and multiplication. This makes museums important for education in terms of the materials they contain. I will try to exhibit the place and importance of museums in terms of education. First, the meaning of words and a brief history of the museum will be covered. Later, the traditional museum concept will be discussed and its and limitations will be specified. Accordingly, in the present-day understanding of museum innovation and its importance in terms of education will be discussed. A critical approach to the traditional understanding of schooling, which prevents the use of school facilities for training in contemporary museum approach, will be put forward. Finally, the importance of teaching-learning areas, which would be created by the coalition of museums and schools, will be offered some suggestions in this regard.

2. The Idea of Traditional Museology

The roots of “museum” concept date back to Classical Greek Period. It means the house of mouseion in Antic Greek understanding and represents an institution or a temple. This word which had been converted to Latin as museum, in terms of meaning, was limited to places where philosophical discussions took place. In the 3rd century BC great Alexandria Museum which was built by I. Ptolemy Soter, with its library and school, had the function of being primarily a university rather than preserving old materials.

In the XV Century Europa, Florence, museum word springs to revive to complement the collection of Lorenza de Medici and this word was used to express an approach rather than a building. Museum word was primarily used to define the collection of exceptional objects. The collection of Ole Worm in Kopenhagen, in this sense, was called museum. The collection of John Tradescant in Lambeth (now in London) was also titled “museum”. The title of this collection, which was published in 1956, is “Musaeum Tradescantium”. In 1675 this collection was owned by Elias Ashmole and moved to Oxford University. In 1683 there was constructed a building and named “Ashmolean Museum” which was opened to public with this name. Even though there are still ambiguous impressions about the usage of the museum under the designed laws in 1753 concerning its foundation, in the XVIII century there came up an idea of an institution which is called museum exhibiting and preserving the collection and therefore British Museum was founded.

Denis Diderot, whose encyclopaedia was published in 1765, on his 9th volume of encyclopedia he outlined a detailed scheme of a national museum. Museum word was used for the name of the places where public accessible materials preserved during the 19th and especially 20th centuries. Later on, the more people’s interest grew for the museum, the less became the importance of the museum building. Open air museums which hosts a series of collection and Eco museums which surround outer environment has grown popular. Besides, there are virtual museums which are founded by means of internet. Even though virtual museums have some advantages in respect to real museums, basically those virtual museums lean on the materials which are preserved and exhibited by real museums. (<http://www.britannica.com/topic/history-398827>)

3. Redefining the Museum

The museums we learned from Hesiodos are the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne and there are nine chief muse out of Zeus. Clio, Euterpe, Thalia, Melpomene, Terpsikhome, Erato Polymnia, Urania and Kalliope are the names of the nine Moses. Hesiod, mentions about Kalliopi as the chief Moses. (Hesiodos, 1991). Every museum which are introduced as a source of inspiration are fields related to creativity such as; music, poetry, dance, philosophy, history, mathematics. Those museums have been in charge of instructing in these fields. Museions have a natural creative teaching-educating potential which is originated from their creators. From the past, to the present day, the struggle for instructive

and educational role of museums are aimed to be continued and in this regard councils and agencies have been founded. ICOM is the first official organization overseeing and controlling with great care activities in the field of museology studies in this area and in the field of museology ICOM has been putting method developments into practice. Initially, thanks to this method, the idea of museology which is based on storage and protection becomes open to change.

As in all areas of our day in the last quarter century, there has been a significant change in the traditional museum concept. In the General Assembly held in Vienna, Austria in 2007, The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has shaped the definition of museum as follows: "Museum is a permanent establishment in the service of non-profit social development open to the public which appeals mankind and its environment for the sake of the tangible and intangible heritage, education, work and attracting human appreciation, protecting, researching, transmitting and displaying the society." (<http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>)

As can be understood from this definition, ICOM puts forward the idea of museum relationship with other areas of society which implies drifting away from the "protecting and hiding" idea of the traditional approach of the museum definition of ICOM expresses that museums can take part effectively in the educational process.

4. Traditionalism in Education

However, it is not enough to be set apart from the traditional understanding of museums. If we need to effectively and efficiently use museums in education, the idea of education must be separated from the traditional approach. According to the traditional education approach especially belonging to the modern era, education is a teaching activity where learning is carried out according to a curriculum in a particular place called "school". The school sells an item which has the same structure as the same process adapted to other commodities: Curriculum. (Ilich, 2013) From time to time governments, ministry of education talks about the contemporary education and change in education by abandoning the traditional educational approach and adjusting to modern education, as an evidence for this change, they put forward the development of teaching-learning environment based on the Internet, renewal of school buildings and the promotion of training in computer use. The use of modern technology in education, of course, is important and necessary. However, the picture of innovation and change in education technology is misleading to suggest the change of the traditional educational approach. Assuming the change in educational technology is not possible to think that education will lead to a change in by itself. The use of modern technical means of education still depends to the basis of a traditional approach to education. It is true that the era of the technical possibilities of education leads to a hard change in financial instruments but it's hard to talk about a change in the idea of education.

In the traditional sense school, which is based on the understanding of the modern era, is separated by physical boundaries from other areas as structural space having a specific domain (territory). "Border", politically, is a characteristic concept reflecting the spirit of the Modern Era in terms of economic and cultural sense. In the process of nation-building which emerged with Modernism, "border" has become the vehicle of separation as a particular nation by its all-inclusive. Getting separated as a single nation at the same time has brought about cross-border relationship (by a more modern concept in international relations). "Border" concept of modernism, has committed to almost all institutions of modern society. We can say that traditional schools are still significantly under the influence of so to speak "border".

5. Traditional School Concept: Classical Structural Space

School is still strictly related to the concept of "border". Even though "border" concept is significantly noticed, especially in the area of structural space, the difference is not limited to this field; in the whole processes of education it prevails in this or in that manner. School distinguishes itself

from all other institutions and organizations by its "boundaries". School, has always implemented its relations with non-school areas in its own "boundary". This approach school has introduced an isolated case in their relations with other institutions and organizations. This isolation has led to, not only in terms of institutional relations but also in terms of isolated state of the thing called "information" at schools. The relationship of Knowledge with the real world has become questionable.

Today, although otherwise is occasionally claimed by the authorities, the implementation of education in predetermined spatial domain shows that traditional educational approach is still in progress. Concept of school which is designated as structural places shows that education is still strongly under the influence of the traditional educational approach. According to this understanding, education occurs mainly in these structural places that is in schools.

In other words, school, designated by the government, is the place is where "curriculum" is applied. Although it is often overstated that it is important to utilize areas outside the school and those places are visited for educational purposes from time to time, traditional educational approach assumes those places under its own "boundaries". Traditional educational approach sees outside areas of the school as a tool to make traditional training more effective. Therefore, when the time comes, these areas don't mean anything but places to be "visited". According to ICOFOM (2010) museum education, is a culturization process developed using pedagogical methods starting from concepts and information and a variety of value in order to ensure the improvement of the audience. (Onur, 2014). This process of culturization is also an example of non-formal effective education. The idea, traditional educational approach often visited areas for training purposes outside the schools has changed the traditional educational approach, is a misleading assumption. But boundaries have not been removed but exceeded. In the context of international relations, schools set up a similar relationship to their relationship with other nations in other areas.

Today, despite the increasing and developing possibilities in education, education is held in spatial limits of school education which proves the idea of traditional approach is still firmly tied to education.

6. School as United Space

Unless traditional educational approach is abandoned, no matter how much is traditional training techniques improved, there won't be any change other than level difference. By leaving traditional educational approach behind, a paradigm shift is needed to include outer fields of education into the educational process. According to museum definition of ICOM, the obvious change in paradigm shift in the concept of the museum refers to the conditions of paradigm shift in education field. In the museum definition of ICOM, rather than seeing museum as a tool for the education, it is suggested that the training can be done in museums and schools can be a part of this. The paradigm shift we mentioned means education needs to be saved from the structural place boundaries and compartmented in different places. Beyond being places to be visited for assisting specific courses, in this regard, Museums are spatial areas that are integral part of the school where specific courses are performed. From this aspect, museum is not a place to be visited for education outside the school, rather than that it is actually a part of the school itself and should be seen as constituting department of the school.

Because the schools which are structurally restricted to a particular area are limited in terms of educational technologies. They are constantly experiencing difficulties in finding sources of changing and updating technology. More importantly, the venues and the areas outside the school which already have these facilities are readily available. But those already available spaces and places, as I mentioned previously, school should not be considered as an integral part. The approach we mentioned means that those places and spaces at stake should be seen as an essential element of the school. Not only museums, but also the areas outside the museum similarly as part of the school, that is, it should be seen as a constituent part of the school.

If we open this approach more, we see that traditional education that is stuck into a specific structural area takes place with its own facilities in an isolated form. In contrast, the paradigm shift we have mentioned, is covered as an integrated phenomenon held together with school partners. By saying partners, we don't just imply parents, alumni associations, students and not those considered in the context of classical education approach. Rather than that, museums, art centres, sports centres, cultural centres, scientific research centres, institutes and even a large specific area, such as people considered as experts in the field it covers. Of course, such a relationship which will be established with a wide range of environment in terms of education should be carried out not with arbitrariness but with an effective plan. In this effective planning, the important concept is integration. Integration is the creation of phenomenon, so-called school, which necessarily requires planning of this wider environment with teaching and education in a certain level of education.

School should be saved from the idea of structural space and seen as a unified field of specific areas for education. Those different areas provide a lot of opportunities for education that provided in the school building. In this regard, the education value of a school will be a combination of other areas that constitute it. Relations which will be established with several museums and various fields will improve the quality of education in a school. The increase in the quality of education in schools will contribute to the promotion and development of society.

7. Museum as a school creating place

Even though museums kept the idea of "storage and protection" for a long time, today understanding of museum has changed and as its basic function featured the objective of cooperation with other areas of society. ICOM is struggling for its definition of museum to make it adopted in every country. It also works for enabling the museums to be socially beneficial rather than being a vicious organization. In museology, we can say that there is a more rapid change and development than other organizations. In particular, we see the development of museum education at academic levels and its beginning at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This is directly reflected in a positive way on topics such as exhibition techniques and management of the museum.

Museums, accommodates almost any material for teaching and learning. Moreover, these materials are very important for learning and teaching since they are concrete and real. However, schools cannot benefit from these materials sufficiently in the educational process. The relationship between museums and schools are still does not go beyond "visiting". Museums, when it is in the context of the topics covered in the school curriculum, are considered as a place to go and visit within a limited time. These visits don't mean more than a nice memory for teachers and students.

Museums, have a potential in terms of the possibilities they contain beyond those visits. Museums own quite favourable conditions for the students' research and investigation.

Courses which are necessarily taught in a theoretical way, thanks to the possibilities of museums, can be taught in a solid way. I can easily say certain courses can be done directly at the museum.

Due to lack of Concrete examples of realistic teaching in traditional schools "knowledge" gets suspicious state, but teaching of "knowledge" will return to a solid state in the possibilities of the museum. The isolated state of traditional school also isolates the "knowledge" taught in these schools. Students' question "Why do we learn, what is it for?" is manifestation of the suspicion in the minds of the students against the knowledge which belongs to isolated state of traditional school. Learning in the museum environment answers this problem. Museums can be seen as laboratories where theoretical knowledge is embodied. They are places which change the boring atmosphere of school education and motivate and encourage students.

The relationship of school with the museum in terms of "visits" must be transformed into a concrete learning experience with an understanding of education and training is actually carried out. These facilities are increasing especially with the growing number and variety of museums.

Considering the fact that the Museums are non-profit organizations and their objectives is to contribute to the education, it can be understood how valuable these facilities are.

8. Concluding remarks: Some suggestions for creating common space of school education with museums

Museums should provide material for research by producing reproductions that can be used in various study courses. Education technology experts should be employed for this.

Teachers should be employed to carry out specific courses in museums.

Museum should arrange classrooms.

Museums should operate in the schools.

Schools should be held as partners with the museum.

Schools should provide performance of various courses in various museums.

It should be possible for the museum and school administrators to do the planning together.

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