A STUDY ON THE HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND ROLE OF CHILDREN MUSEUMS IN INDIA WITH FOCUS ON THE NATIONAL CHILDREN’S MUSEUM, NEW DELHI

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Children’s Museums are a unique museum type that appeared at the end of the 20th century as an effort to provide a museum environment that caters more effectively about the educational and developmental needs of the child. Children's museum use artifacts, both authentic and replicas as a tool for the visualization of concepts and the provision of meaningful learning experiences that build on the child's interest and inner motives and empower them to understand their place in the World. Experimenting with progressive teaching strategies and innovative learning environment for hundred years. The children's museum has functioned as an educational laboratory for child centered methods and techniques that were later incorporated in general public museum as well.

“A Children’s museum is a place that encourages curiosity and stimulates learning while bringing families and children jointly in a new kind of town square where play inspires lifelong learning.” (Association of Children Museum, 2008a).

Children museum is typically identified as, “User friendly, interactive, hands on good-looking, non frightening and inspiring places where imaginations can run wild” (Mayfield, 2005,181).

Children museum is found to be fundamentally different from traditional museums in four key ways:

1. Education justifies and is the purpose behind every object, activity and event, workshop, field trip and exhibition.
2. Bright colors and special lighting effects imprison child's attention. Also, exhibit labels are written in easy to understand language.
3. Exhibits are placed so that everyone together with the youngest (i.e. shortest) may look at them, exhibits are in a rational particular order.
4. Contact with the exhibit is the very important resource of learning, no matter how difficult the exhibit.

Children museum challenge the typical stereotype of a museum by proving interactive exhibits for children instead of a traditional museum exhibits that are often displayed in a way that does not allow personal relations with the subjects. Traditional museums expect learning to take place without any tactile commotion, this makes learning out-of-the-way to very young children who learn through touch and play.
Children’s museums focus on “the empowerment of the guests through contact and direct experience with objects as important as subjects or content focus.”

Children Museums generally focus on four general themes to improve learning and the hands on experience.

1. Foster makes up play through the supply of dress up, clothes, ritual dress and settings such as houses, grocery stores and fire engine.
2. Provide regional or country precise exhibits examples.
3. Offer exhibits with an international or multicultural center of thought to foster learning of other cultures.
4. Introduce the arts, culture by given that studio space, theaters or assortments of instruments

This thesis contains nine chapters. The first chapter is ‘Introduction’ that gives a synoptic view of the entire thesis.

Chapter two is the ‘Literature Review’. It presents the literature in the form of books, journals, magazines, research reports and articles both domestic and foreign related to children museum and museum learning.

Chapter three is ‘Research Methodology’. It describes all methods which was used by the researcher for their thesis. It includes the research design, field study, screening and filtration, methods of data collection, limitation and significance of the research topic.

The Purpose of Chapter four “Learning in Museum”. This chapter discusses learning theories proposed by experts like Dewey, Montessori, Piaget and Heins et. al. and also defines the educational potentials of children museum.

Chapter five deals with the Concept of Children Museum and has been described, the history of the children museum about the world view as well as the Indian contexts.

Chapter Six deals with ‘Children Museums in India’. This chapter covered the selected children museums in India like the National Children Museum (New Delhi), Shankar’s International Dolls Museum (New Delhi), Motilal Nehru Children Museum (Lucknow), Children’s Museum (Kerala), Children’s Museum (Kolkata) and Children’s Museum (Chennai) are personally visited by the researcher and described their objective as well as their educational potentials.

Chapter Seven discusses the Role of National Children Museum (Bal-Bhawan) in non-formal education: A Case Study’ and has described the Role and
Objective of National Children Museums, its galleries, displays and all the activities and workshops which them Museum organized time to time for their children.

Chapter Eight deals with the Data Analysis and Interpretation. It reveals the data analysis and interpretation and presents various statistical techniques used for data analysis to examine the hypothesis of the study. All the variable study has been done with the help of various statistical tools like mean, standard deviation, t-test, multiple regressions, using SPSS and demographic information in the form of tables, charts and graphs.

Chapter Nine devoted to the conclusions and recommendations which are based on the results of analysis done in previous chapter.

The growth of children museum in India is of very recent date, although in the second half of the 19th century, some of the biggest museums had their foundation stone laid in our country, it was the archaeological excavations that mainly supplied the impetus for housing the antiquities of historical importance. Inscriptions, coins, pottery and other objects displayed in a manner unsystematic and haphazard.

In India, museums have never lost sight of the basic needs of children. Instructional year of the child’s serious attention of museum experts has been focused towards requirements of children. Numerous plans and policies were drawn for the development of children’s museum in India.

In India the great consideration has been given by the first Prime Minister of India Jawahar lal Nehru whose affection for children was fathomless and who was lovingly called ‘Chacha Nehru and the another great visionary was Shankar Pillai who opened the Doll’s museum for the children.

The overall purpose of the study is to trace the history, development and the role of National Children’s Museum, New Delhi. This study also documents and analyze the activities, workshops and social events of Children’s Museum, New Delhi.

The National Children’s Museum is an integral part of the National Bal Bhavan, It is a unique institution for enhancing creativity among children. The concept of the National Children’s Museum and National Bal Bhavan was developed on the idea of pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru in year 1957.

The National Children's Museum, there are two types of exhibition galleries—
(i) Permanent galleries and (ii) Galleries where theme based exhibitions are mounted
from time to time. The following galleries have permanent exhibitions, put up on a regular basis and represent the major attractions of the Children’s Museum.

Hamara Bharat Gallery presents a scene of Indian life, its throbbing culture, rich art and craft, diversity of rituals and religion, glimpses of our rich culture and advancements in the fields of Science and Technology.

Gaurav Gatha gallery consists of a series of dioramas depicting India's brilliant past, its culture, its battles and victories, its legends and customs, its fight for freedom, its social reforms, its great leaders and above all its all-pervading spirit of unity in

Surya gallery depicts the 'Sun' not only in the background of the Indian Culture but also taking up the concept of the 'Sun' in other countries, where it has been overvalued, namely, Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, Greece etc. This exhibition also highlights the origin of the Sun, Earth and the Solar System.

Temporary Exhibition one gallery dedicated totally to the creativity of children. The creative works of children are displayed in this gallery.

The national children's museum provides opportunities for children to enjoy their visit in their surroundings. The analysis carried out in the present work is absolutely based on the data/information compiled primary as well as secondary sources. Further a case study of NCM, New Delhi has been made on the basis of the information provided by these organizations in order to make the study more concrete and valuable.

The present study is about the origin and development of children’s museums in India and detailed documentation is an analysis of the data related to the National Children’s Museum (NCM), New Delhi as a case study.

Case study of the research work included the study and the analysis of the museum functioning of the National Children’s Museum, New Delhi.

The research was designed to collect baseline data about the children’s experiences and activities which is offered by these children museums. ‘Children’ in this research included school children, children from slums or those who are physically handicapped. I examined the role of the National Children’s Museum and recognized broad definition of education, including cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning.

The following methods were adopted in order to collect data on different aspects of the topic of the research “A Study on the History, Development and Role of
children museum in India with Focus on National Children’s Museum, New Delhi,”
considering the time constraint for the study:
1. Through Questionnaire
2. Through Interview
3. Through Personal Observation
4. Through Photography

The methodological tool that was chosen for the NCM, New Delhi is the
questionnaire. In the present study researcher was designed two questionnaires. One is
for the visitor of the National Children Museum, New Delhi and other for the curator
and museum staff of the various visited children’s museums in India.

The information collected by means of the questionnaire from the respondents
has been handled and analyzed for testing the hypothesis. The collected data were
analyzed and presented with the help of the SPSS 16.0 Version.

Secondly, the children were interviewed at the NCM, New Delhi, to know the
understanding of the children and what they learn from their visit to museums? And
how do they learn? Also, how the experience of the children was after their visit was
observed. The study provided a glimpse into the lives of young visitors.

Along with the National Children Museum, New Delhi, the researcher also
surveyed other children museums like Motilal Nehru Children Museum (Lucknow),
Chacha Nehru Children Museum (Thuruvananthapuram-Kerala), Children Museum
(Chennai), Nehru Children Museum (Kolkata). All the information and photographs
collected from, these children museums are incorporated in the thesis.

Additionally, the questionnaire was used for the staff of the above mentioned
children museums in India was analyzed and gave a comparative study of the
Museums.

I also analyzed the data using the visitors’ record of the past ten years at the
NCM. This data has been provided in the thesis.

Gallery layout of different children’s museums visited by the researcher has
been prepared and provided in the thesis.

I was collected Most of the data about the children museum in India and the
NCM through personal visits and interaction with staff , officials of the concerned
museum and the researcher also consulted the publications including reports and
brochures published by the museum.
The museum galleries of different children museums and their educational activities was digitally documented by the researcher.

And in the last basis of my study I have given some recommendation for the National Children Museum for their

There is no central coordination today to guide and help in the development of Children Museums. The National Museum or State Museum does not have any link or relation to the existing Children Museum. They have not been able to project themselves as active centers for supplementing school education. They should be a part of the education department, or Ministries rather than the child welfare departments.

They are not part and parcel of a school education policy of the central government or state governments. The NCM, which is a part of the National Bal Bhawan, though having a very appropriate building and campus, has not yet established itself as an independent institution, there is overlapping of activities and objectives in these two sister organizations, National Children Museum and National Bal Bhawan.

The component of discovery learning should be enhanced and made more comprehensive in the Children Museum.

More modern, multimedia, audio visual techniques of communication should be used in the exhibitions at the Children Museum in India. More participatory exhibits should be introduced in the display galleries of the NCM. Interpretive texts or labels should be given rapid attention to be made more attractive and informative.

More trained Museologists should be involved in the proper development of Children Museum in the country.

More research should be carried out in the field of non-formal learning, especially through the children’s museums in the educational field and museology departments of India.

The display design of the gallery should be attractive, appealing, inviting, and offer a wow feeling for children. Illumination, color, creation of cognitive spaces, agronomic structures, incorporation of research data inputs should be enhanced to make them visitor friendly.

With the advent of digital media, the children museum is not only confined to the four walls of the space but it is increasingly becoming a global concept. Technology adaptation for children museums can be for two different purposes; one
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for conducting the museum business, management, children’s experiences, digitization marketing, communication with audiences, outreach, etc. The present technology savvy society, especially the younger generation needs these interventions to make children museums popular. Therefore, there is a need for using technology in all functions of the children museums. Digital technology has opened many new vistas for the children museum.

There is a continuing improvements and innovations, continual process in the present study I have tried-

- To study the infrastructure organization map and exhibit galleries of the Museum
- To study the educational role of the Museum
- To document and analyze the activities of Museum especially educational activities
- To know the child’s response to museums, exhibits and activities.

I have tried to take this aspect humbly and I advice, scholars and scientist for future research of the Museology to see further and search the other aspects of the branch of study so that the it is not studied as theoretical, but also as a scientific endeavor which is also a part of this wide discipline.

**Key words**

Educational activities, workshops, Exhibitions and infra structure of children museum in India with focus on NCM, New Delhi.