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Learning about Culture: Young Children Exploring Heritage in a Museum

Kit Mei Betty Wong
The Education University of Hong Kong
bwong@eduhk.hk

Barbara Piscitelli
Independent Researcher
barbarap@bigpond.net.au

Abstract

Few studies of young children's learning have been undertaken in Asian museum contexts.

Museums are neither popular as part of social life for Hong Kong families nor as a social

learning venue for preschool aged children. Though the Hong Kong early childhood curriculum claims to value the importance of cultural education, there is little emphasis on young children's learning in museums. This paper presents case study data generated through explorations of a group of young children's (aged 4-5 years) multiple visit experiences in the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, and provides an argument for the inclusion of museum excursions in early childhood education.

Key words

young children, museum learning

Learning in Museums: How are Young Children Enculturated?

There is growing research interest in young children's participation and learning in museum settings (e.g. Akamc, Yildirim & Ellez, 2017; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2000; Kindler & Darras, 1997; Piscitelli & Penfold, 2015). Only very few of these studies draw on young children's voices (e.g. Dockett, Main & Kelly, 2011), examining their conceptions about museums (Kindler & Darras, 1997). Studies of children's learning in museums are mainly undertaken in western English speaking countries where cultural institutions play a role in shaping social ideas about heritage, art, science and history.

Due to limited systematic studies about young children's visits to Hong Kong museums, a survey was undertaken to understand the use of museums in Hong Kong kindergartens (Piscitelli, Chak, Wong, Yuen & Ngan, 2008). Among the responses from 400 Hong Kong kindergartens, it was found that there is extensive use of museums by the early childhood education sector, especially for 5-6 year old children, and that these visits are mainly curriculum-related. More than two-thirds of the early childhood groups used the services of the tour guides (docents) at museums, but pointed out several limitations in the quality, availability and affordability of the touring service. While preschools and kindergartens in Hong Kong appear to have a significantly high rate of visitation to museums, little is known about the quality, impact and content of these visits.

In a series of observation based studies in various Hong Kong museums, we set out to examine the nature and quality of preschool children's experiences¹. Our research was broad in its scope and included observations of young children's visits to all types of museums, including the Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMA) (Wong & Piscitelli, 2017). At the HKMA, we examined the differences in dialogue with children when either a teacher or a docent led groups on their visit. Teachers used understanding about children's prior knowledge and interests to converse with children while docents used content-rich information about objects (p. 23).

Young children's museum learning may be facilitated in various ways, and each approach reveals inherent values about the relationship between children, the museum and adult guides. Museums may play a vital role in conveying information about culture, nature, science and art, but few of these sites are readily accessible to young children. Consequently, museums have developed programs to introduce children and their adult guides to their objects and experiences, often with the goal of attracting and retaining young visitors over a lifetime. Various models of practice have evolved over the past two decades to accommodate young children and their often inexperienced adult guides to gain skills and knowledge in using museums as places of learning, influenced by the social interaction theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978).

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Bowers (2012) conducted an online survey of American museums to investigate what museums are doing to accommodate very young audiences and found that there was little research and evaluation relating to very young audiences in traditional object-focused museums and very few staff with expertise in guiding very young visitors. Two common staffing patterns were found for leaders of early childhood groups visiting museums – either a museum teacher/docent led a group or a classroom teacher led the visiting children supported by an assistant teacher or a school recruited volunteer. Bowers (2012) found that museum staff were limited in their understanding of young visitors and suggested that “early childhood educators could share their expertise and provide insight on how to balance planning, preparation and implementation that results in effective learning experiences. In return, museum educators can provide their academic partners with opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to study early childhood learning in museums.” (p. 42).

In reviewing the program model in the Newark Museum, Bowers noted that when supplying “pre-K teachers with pre-museum activity materials in advance, children are better prepared to make meaningful connections to museum experiences once they arrive” (p. 44).

Three main models of practice have been described including experiences led by: (1) teachers or parents who have a familiar understanding of children’s prior knowledge and interests; (2) tours led by docents who have a content rich understanding of the collection; and (3) collaborative experiences whereby teachers/parents, docents and children explore

ideas together. Key to all of these models is social interaction. Piscitelli, Weier and Everett (2003) provide detailed examples on how adults support children's learning in museums through conversational strategies whereby children and adult guides take different roles in leading and responding to objects and experiences in museum settings. Yenawine (2018) suggested using dialogic methods such as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to engage young children in meaningful conversation when discussing works of art or objects in museum setting. The strategies for dialogue include asking four key questions: (1) What do you see? What is going on? (2) What makes you say that? (3) What more can you find? (p. 61).

The effectiveness of having a pre-visit activity in a classroom (e.g. Anderson, Piscitelli, Weier, Everett & Taylor, 2002; McNaughton, 2010) and post-visit at school (e.g. Anderson et al, 2002; Carr, 2012) was highlighted as key to a beneficial and deep learning experience for young children. To deepen and strengthen children's museum-based learning, many have concluded that learning dispositions and lifelong learning habits in children are best fostered through multiple museum visits with intervening classroom lessons (Bell, 2011; Claxton & Carr, 2004; McNaughton, 2010; Piscitelli, Weier & Everett, 2003; Savva & Trimis, 2005; Terreni, 2015).

Andre, Durkson and Volman (2016) critically review theoretical and empirical studies about children's learning in various museums types from 1999 to 2012. They identified a framework with three main interaction styles for facilitating young children's learning in

museums: (1) Child – adults/peers (adults and children collaborate in discovery based tours with dialogue and conversation as the main learning tool); (2) Child – technology (children using technology applications [video, audio, computer] to make sense of objects in the museum); and (3) Child – environment (children using context clues to make sense of objects, including worksheets and labels). In all cases, scaffolding (interactively linking children’s ideas with objects in personally meaningful ways) was highlighted as the most essential component within various forms of interaction in the museum.

In “museum-based learning experiences, children’s agenda is often overlooked” (Anderson, Piscitelli & Everett, 2008: p.253). Too often, teachers and docents make decisions about what children will encounter, but it is recognized that children can, and should, make choices about their own learning agenda in the museum context, particularly around the content of their excursion, the time spent looking at various objects and exhibits and the mission of their visits. Weier (2004) recommends that children should take the lead in touring through museums, claiming that when children are given control during a visit, they make decisions about what they see and interrogate objects to gain knowledge through “self-directed inquiry” (p. 106).

Young children’s learning in the Hong Kong Heritage Museum

To examine the situation for young children’s learning and experiences in Hong Kong

museums, a series of studies were developed. The overall study included a survey on the use of Hong Kong museums by kindergartens (Piscitelli et. al., 2008), and two case studies on Hong Kong Museum of Art (Wong & Piscitelli, 2017) and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. This paper focuses on the case study at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. This case study aimed to establish practices which strengthen the potential for young children's learning in museums by:

- (a) Documenting the characteristics of young children as learners in museums.
- (b) Identifying social interactions which promote young children's learning in museums.

Methods

To examine young children's learning about heritage and culture, we developed a small-scale trial program for young children to visit museums, using a qualitative design including observations (video recorded, photos and field notes), in-museum audio and video recordings of children's conversations, document analysis (children's written and graphic work) and semi-structured interviews (children and teachers). A variety of tools were used to capture children's behaviors, including verbal and non-verbal languages, and their interactions with others (adults and peers). Over the course of the study, children's written works were collected and analyzed, including worksheets and drawings. Through the semi-structured interviews, both children and teachers reflected on their museum visits experiences. One

kindergarten volunteered to be involved in a special program of multiple visits to the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (HKHM). Ten children, aged 4-5 years, visited the Hong Kong Heritage Museum three times during a period of six months. Each of the visits was designed to gather rich information about the ways in which children experienced the museum and an interpretive approach was employed to understand children's knowledge and ideas about their museum visits. In this study, the research team acted as participant observers with children, teachers and docents.

Procedures

The first visit followed the usual practice of kindergarten groups visiting a museum, whereby the teacher paid a number of pre-visits to a targeted exhibition by joining public guided tours. Following this experience, the teacher prepared and led the children to the museum. This provided a baseline for observing standard practice for young children's museum visits. Based on the findings from the first visit, the research team and the teacher provided an intervention for the second visit to provoke possibilities for child-centered and docent-led approaches for children to experience the museum. Before launching the third visit, the research team hosted a meeting with museum staff and kindergarten teachers. The third visit arrangement was developed collaboratively whereby teachers and docents planned to work collaboratively with children to set the content and direction of the children's final visit to the

museum.

On each visit, the following information was collected: (1) Videotapes and field notes of the ways that the kindergarten teachers prepared the children in their classrooms for their museum visits and subsequent follow-up activities; (2) Videotapes and field notes of the entire visit process; (3) Videotapes, field notes, photographs and children's work samples relating to their learning about the museum and its collections; and (4) Interviews (audiotaped) with children, teachers and teacher aides.

Special permission was obtained from the museum to take photographs and videotapes for purposes of this study and ethical clearances were collected for the children's participation in the research.

The site of study: Hong Kong Heritage Museum

The Hong Kong Heritage Museum (HKHM) opened in 2000 and is currently the largest museum in Hong Kong. The museum was designed to provide comprehensive exhibitions on Hong Kong's history, art and culture. The HKHM's vision is to enrich and inspire by exploring the diverse cultures of Hong Kong and the world, and by promoting and preserving the vibrant cultures of Hong Kong. HKHM provides a diverse range of dynamic and interactive exhibitions and programs to engage visitors in enjoyable and educational experiences. There were 787,000 visitors in the financial year 2016/17 (Leisure and Cultural

Services Department, 2018).

This museum was selected by the kindergarten to match with their curriculum. The dates of visits were scheduled to accommodate the school calendar of the kindergarten.

Case Study: Young children's experiences at the HKHM

Visit 1: Learning about HKHM – preparation, excursion and follow up

This visit was arranged as an extension activity from the school curriculum under the learning theme of familiar household items, in this case – “Bowls”. The T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art within HKHM was selected for the visit. This gallery contains works of art and antiquities ranging from ceramics and pottery sculptures to bronzes focusing on four aspects of life: food and drink, entertainment, belief, and animals. To prepare for the visit, the teacher attended several public guided tours where she learned more about the content of the exhibition and the history and cultural significance of the objects. The teacher then prepared an excursion plan for the children.

For the children, this was their first visit to HKHM. In preparation for the visit to the museum, the teacher talked about the name and location of the museum as well as the rules that go with visiting such places, such as “do not touch”, “do not run”, “do not eat or drink”, and “do not shout”.

As the first visit was closely related to the learning theme in the school curriculum, the

teacher had a specific pre-visit briefing session for the children. At the beginning, the teacher showed the children some bowls (those for daily use) with different colors, patterns and materials. The teacher invited the children to observe and discuss what they could see and describe about these bowls. For homework, the teacher asked the children to bring or draw a bowl from home as a learning task.

Upon their arrival at the HKHM, the teacher reminded the children of the name of the museum and the focus of the trip by asking questions. The teacher asked the children to try to read the Chinese characters of the T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art. Then she told the children that they were going to find the “do not touch” signage.

Teacher: We are now in the museum. This is the Hong Kong ...

Children: Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

Teacher: There are lots of things in the museum. We have only one hour, we cannot see everything. So, what are we going see today?

Children: Bowls.



Figures 1 and 2 *Children were encouraged to read the written and graphic images on the signs in the HKHM*

When the group reached certain exhibit items, the teacher asked the children if this was their targeted object for the visit; if not, they were encouraged to continue searching. As the tour was led by the teacher, the children were very responsive. The children showed curiosity throughout the visit. The questions asked by the teacher were focused on appearance and kinds of objects.



Figure 3 *The teacher led the children by the sculpture at the entrance of T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art*



Figure 4 *The teacher managing “object centered learning” and “discipline” simultaneously*

As the teacher knew the children well, she could ask questions according to the

children's prior knowledge and experiences. The teacher led the children to observe and associate exhibits with the learning theme in the kindergarten. The children had limited options to discover their own interests in the exhibition. Instead, the teacher led the children to describe the exhibits and discuss their ideas about how they were made.



Figure 5 *The teacher and children examine a bowl together in the Hong Kong Heritage Museum*

Teacher: How about that bowl? How do you think how the pattern was made?

Patten: Paint on it.

Teacher: Any other ideas?

Owen: Stamp on it.

Some exhibition objects in the HKHM were set in low cabinets at the eye-level of

children; they were thus more accessible and welcoming. The teacher asked the children to consult labels so they could discover information about the objects on their own.

On their return to school, the teacher further discussed with children about the exhibits in the gallery. Then the children were asked to make their own bowl with clay or playdough.



Figure 6 *Follow up lesson at kindergarten, where children made bowls from clay*

Visit 2: Docent-led excursion with a treasure hunt

The research team met with the teacher and museum staff to plan a different type of excursion whereby docents would guide children's learning at the HKHM. On the second visit, the children returned to the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art with a docent to guide them. The focus was twofold: (1) a docent led tour to deepen children's understanding of objects held in the collection, and (2) children's personal self-exploration of the museum

objects. The docents were notified about the theme of the visit in advance. To accommodate a more personalized visit, the group of 10 children was split into smaller groups of 5 children each, and given a chance to experience two activities during the visit: a self-guided tour with a worksheet and a docent led tour.

To stimulate children to look for meaning in the exhibits, a worksheet was designed to seek children's interpretation of the symbols seen in the exhibition objects. Children were asked to make personal judgments about "the most gracious animal", the fiercest animal" and the "most special animal", and to draw these on their worksheet while they were in the exhibition area.

To start the second visit, the teacher led the children to the directory of the museum to introduce the various exhibition halls inside the museum, as a way of refreshing children's knowledge about the museum and its contents, and as a way of demonstrating way-finding in the museum.



Figure 7 Visit 2 - Teacher looking at the directory with children

The docent greeted the children at the door of T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art, then briefly introduced the rules inside museum (e.g. no running, no touching) and told the children to raise their hands if they had questions. The docent prompted the children about the theme of the visit, as seen in this conversation:

Docent: Exhibits inside the T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art were things made hundred years ago, thousand years ago ... Today we are going to look for something that cannot speak, but they can walk ... What's that? They crawl with their four legs ... what's that?

Nancy: Turtle.

Docent: Turtles only? Any other?

Sam: Tiger.

Docent: Any others? What do we call these overall?

Sam: With two legs?

Youde: How many legs? Dog?

Docent: What are they called? With four legs ... Dogs? We have a name for them all ...

Ballie: Tiger.

Patten: Dog.

Docent: Put up your hand to answer ... What do you think?

Youde: Animals.

Docent: Yes. We are going to look for animals.

Looking at the first exhibit, the docent encouraged the children to observe.



Figure 8 *The docent works with a group of children in front of a cabinet*

Figure 9 *Lion with dark brown glaze: Song to Yuan Dynasties (960-1368)*

Docent: Look at the one in the middle. What does it look like?

Sam: Why don't they make rabbit?

Patten: Lion. Mother lion.

Docent: That's right. It's a lion. It is a male lion. Look at its mane, it's like very long hair. How does it look from the side? What is in its open mouth?

Ballie: Teeth.

Nancy: Teeth.

Docent: Do you think it is friendly or fierce?

Children (Ballie, Nancy, Patten and Youde): Fierce.

Next, the docent asked the children to read the label and explained details.

Docent: The first two words are about the color. It should be green but it turned dark now. Can you read the other two characters?

Youde: Lion (獅子).

Docent: Yes, it is lion. Why did people in the olden days make these things? Do you

know what a burial object is?

Patten and Youde: I don't know.

Docent: Some of the stuff (burial objects) was used by people when they were alive. What is alive? We are alive, right? After many years, what happens to animals and people? Getting old and die. When people died, their families and friends, will bury all the things that the one who died liked with him.

Ballie: What is bury?

Docent: So, this lion was buried in the soil. This lion would protect the tomb, so that bad guys would not disturb the dead body. They were buried together, they are the burial objects.

The docent went through fifteen pieces of exhibits with the children, and asked the children to name the animals they had seen, e.g. lion, tiger, cat, camel, horse, rooster and ox.

The teacher then introduced the treasure hunt to children. The docent stayed with the group and invited the children to approach her if they had any questions.

While children were exploring the exhibits to complete the worksheet, adults observed from a distance and offered support when children showed confusion, curiosity or desire for communication. Children were seriously looking for objects on their treasure hunt and identified animals both printed on objects and in three dimensional sculptural form.



Figures 10 & 11 *Children drawing on their treasure hunt*



Figure 12 *During the treasure hunt, Sam asked the teacher to lift him so that he could look more clearly at the exhibit*



Figure 13 One of a “Pair of Animal Mask Handles”, Tang Dynasty (618-907)

Figure 14 “Pair of animal mask handles” drawn by Cherry as a fierce animal on her treasure hunt worksheet

After seven minutes of walking around looking at objects, Sam eventually stopped in front of “Jar with applique dragon in qinghai glaze with brown splashes” and selected it as the most special animal. He drew and talked to himself:

Sam: Big eyes ... BOM ... many feet ... pattern ...

Adult: Why you think the dragon is the most special animal?

Sam: Because ... Other animals are not as long as it.

Adult: What else?

Sam: It can fly... it is as long as the pencil ... longer than me ... I like this dragon; it is colorful.



Figure 15 Sam stops to draw a dragon in front of a cabinet of ceramic pieces



Figure 16 Jar with applique dragon in qinghai glaze with brown splashes, Song Dynasty

(960-1279)

Sam joined the group late after he finished his drawing, and told the teacher “because I drew a dragon with many patterns - it took me sooo long to draw.”

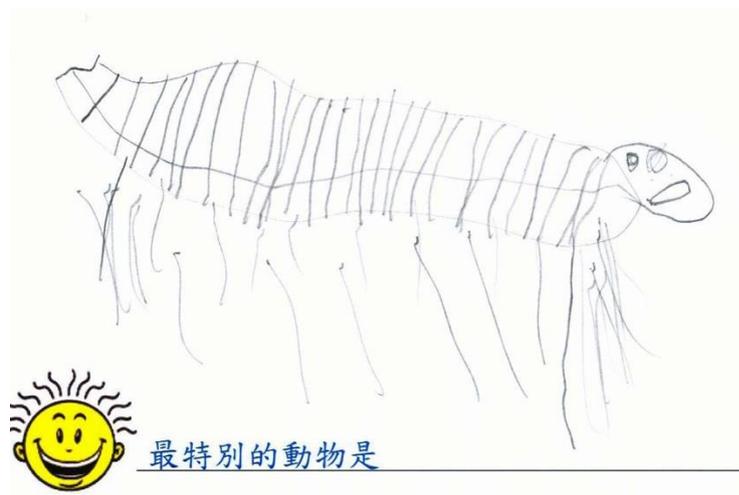


Figure 17 Sam's most special animal – a dragon

In concluding the visit, the teacher asked the children if they had further questions for the docent. Sam kept asking questions about the dragon, and stopped only when he had an satisfactory answer.

Sam: Why does the dragon have to be so long?

Docent: To fly.

Sam: I am asking why it has to be so long ... and why does it have to fly?

Docent: Dragons fly in the sky ... In legends, the dragon is in the sky and is a huge and scary animal.

Visit 3: Children's choice of exhibition hall

As the children were now familiar with HKHM, its code of conduct and some of its

collections, the final visit was structured to take advantage of the children's ideas and knowledge about the museum. To further balance the relationship between children's choices and the contribution from adult guides, children were consulted about the content and mission of the final visit and made three choices about where they could go and what they could see. The choices they made included 1) an exhibition of children's comic books, *The Children's Paradise*, 2) the Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall and 3) the T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art. In this paper, we provide an example of children's encounters with culture in the Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall.

Knowing that the children had some experience of reading the labels of the objects, the research team designed an activity book for each exhibition hall. The activity book was designed to lead the children to look at the exhibits in more detail and learn from the label description of the objects. Through this exercise, children could practise ways to gather information from museums and extend their observational learning skills. The activity booklet was seen as an inquiry-based learning tool. The last task in the booklet was an open ended enquiry based activity designed to encourage children to communicate their own thoughts towards objects in the museum.



Figures 18 & 19 *Children gathering information in the Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall exhibit with peers or supported by adult leader*

After twenty minutes of self guided exploration where the children explored the content of the Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall (see Figures 18 and 19), a docent conducted a more detailed guided tour with the children. The flow of the visit aimed to leave children space to raise their queries with the docent. At the entrance of the Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall, the children saw a reconstructed theatre in a bamboo shed inside and made some interesting observations and expressed their theories about the space.

Cindy: Is it now under renovation?

Docent: What makes you think that it is under renovation?

Cindy: Because there are many wooden sticks surrounding the stage ...

Sam: No ... it is for people ... because they don't want the people fight, so they set up the fence. Then the people can queue here to go in to play.

Patten: Very noisy. Why so noisy?

Youde: I can still hear the noise.

Docent: Yes, very noisy indeed. It is because that there must be noises in the Cantonese Opera. In Cantonese Opera, people speak and sing with music. So there are lots of noises ... In the olden days, people build the stage at an open space. They had to make very loud noise to let people know that there will be Cantonese Opera performance tonight.



Figure 20 *Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall Theatre entrance in a bamboo shed*

Post visit interviews – children and teachers

Multiple visits to the HKHM provided a rich and unexplored area for investigation with children and teachers working collaboratively to decode the content of the museum and its exhibits. Interviews with teachers and children revealed their growing understanding of the museum and its contents.

Children were interviewed several times during the project to provide their opinions about various aspects of the museum. Between the second and third visits, children were asked specifically to comment on the mission of their visits, and indicated that “the teacher wants us to come here to see different things”. In discussing the difference between teachers and docents as leaders of their museum visit, most children said they enjoyed both visits but acknowledged that the docent “introduced us to lots of things that the teacher cannot because she does not know”. All but one child indicated that they would enjoy returning to HKHM.

A post-project interview with 5 year old Youde illustrates the knowledge and attitudes he gained through his multiple visits to HKHM:

Researcher: We have been to HKHM three times, right?

Youde: Yes. I think it is quite fun. I want to bring my mommy here.

Researcher: Oh really? Why?

Youde: Because there is so much fun. And because if I come with my mommy, I am free to go everywhere.

Researcher: You are not free now, right? How?

Youde: Yes. Because only a few places to go.

Researcher: So you feel like you can come more often?

Youde: Yes.

Researcher: What is so fun here?

Youde: So many exhibition halls.

Researcher: What else?

Youde: Which one I like most? Cantonese Opera Exhibition Hall.

Researcher: Why?

Youde: Because I want to learn more about Cantonese Opera.

Researcher: What do you know about museums?

Youde: A museum has many exhibition halls showing different things ... like bowls, animals, man, clothes and shoes...there must be some things in a museum ... Not my stuff, because my clothes are ordinary, nothing special ... Heritage Museum is about things from the olden days.

Researcher: Is museum a place for children? Do you want to come again?

Youde: Yes. Children have to learn many things in the Heritage Museum. It is a very quiet place. You need to look carefully for something special.

The teacher's interview reveals a different set of issues relating to learning in the museum. The teacher revealed that the kindergarten only takes the children to a museum once within children's three years of study in kindergarten. From her experience, she did not use the services of a guided tour from museum docents on previous visits. She found that many

museums only offer school guided tours in the morning, whereas her kindergarten usually arranges museum visits in the afternoon as it was a full day program. The teacher claimed that she preferred to guide children on her own as docents focused more on objects instead of interacting with children. She claimed that docents often had difficulties in holding children's attention and discipline.

To prepare for the first visit, the teacher said she visited HKHM three times. She found that she did not have sufficient understanding of the exhibits just through the labels, and was concerned she would not be able to answer the questions raised by children. When the teacher reviewed the first visit, she thought it was very teacher-directed and followed the teacher's interest, not the children's. She explained her decision-making process and said it was the principal's decision to visit HKHM and that teachers decided which exhibition halls to go. As other children from the kindergarten (5-6 year-old group) chose the exhibition hall about toys, her class was left with exhibits of "fashion", "Chinese painting" and "bowls". The principal suggested Chinese painting, but the teacher felt the Chinese painting exhibition was too vague and abstract for children. The teacher selected bowls, which was about housewares and three-dimensional objects.

The teacher aide agreed that multiple visits to museums were important to children. But she had great concerns on workload, from logistical organization to learning content. She said:

Teacher: I feel positive towards this project. Children are still enthusiastic after their

third visit. Each time, the children had new discoveries. They were actively participating and asked more questions than before. Their cognitive learning improved. The docent (at the Cantonese Opera Exhibition Hall) used story to explain the exhibits so the children can learn a larger concept. I think this is better than last two visits which only introduced the exhibits. This fits children's abilities ... All the children asked questions. I am pretty surprised that the three boys stayed still to listen ... I am now more aware of the continuity in children's learning. Children might have seen the grandparents singing Cantonese Opera. After the guided tour, the children know more about the stage and characters. Docents are more professional; as teachers, we would not be able to introduce this information. I found myself learning through the process. When the docent introduces exhibits to children, I learn as well.

Researcher: Who should lead children's visits?

Teacher: It depends on the exhibits and how much children know about it ... We need to follow children's interest. If the docent is capable, the teacher could be the assistant.

Researcher: How could other teachers make the most of visiting museums with young children?

Teacher: The workload would be a great concern for teachers. The museum is far away from the kindergarten and planning such a visit takes a lot of time. Teachers need extra support to do this kind of work. If I take them there and let them go around on their own, it is meaningless. The school will only let the teachers to carry out these kind of visits if the teacher can bring meaningful learning for children. Teachers need support. Kindergarten teachers need to get information about exhibits well in advance so we can plan to take advantage of them.

Both teachers and children shared common views of their museum experience: they gained new knowledge, understanding and value of museums through the multiple visit program. They all expressed a desire to continue visiting museums.

Discussion

The children's first visit to the HKHM followed the conventional practice of a teacher led school visit whereby the teacher visited the site before the implementation of visit, linked the

visit to the school curriculum, and supported children's learning with pre and post visit activities (Anderson et al, 2002; Bowers, 2012; Carr, 2012). This type of museum visit followed traditional practice and supported findings from the survey done by the research team (Piscitelli et al, 2008). In the first visit, the teacher set her own agenda for the session and worked to the best of her capacity to acquaint her kindergarten children to the museum and its collection. Though the teacher introduced the signage in the museum and motivated the children to read the title of the exhibition hall and labels of the exhibits, learning about the museum and exhibits (objects) was limited to a single gallery space. The teacher encouraged the children to observe the exhibits and made associations utilizing visual thinking strategies (Yenawine, 2018). Learning was focused on the school curriculum related content. The first visit provided a baseline of information about standard practice when kindergarten teachers go to museums with classes of young children in Hong Kong.

The main interaction style in the first visit included children in conversation with peers and adults about objects (Andre, Durkson & Volman, 2016). Due to the limitations of the teacher's knowledge about objects, the conversations focused on superficial descriptions of colour, size, shape, form, functionality, as well as children's understanding of similar objects in their everyday environment. This type of conversation could be held anywhere – in the kindergarten, in the home, in a shopping center or in a public space. Children were engaged in the conversation and responsive to their teacher.

During the second and third visits, several social and activity-based supports were added to the children's experiences in the exhibition galleries: docent led tours utilizing visual thinking strategies (Yenawine, 2018), worksheets and activity booklets (Andre, Durkson & Volman, 2016; Piscitelli, Weier & Everett, 2003). These additional supports provided children with access to greater knowledge (via docent storytelling) and greater options for observation and analysis (via written replies on worksheets and activity booklets). Children showed enthusiasm and competency in exploring the museum on their own. Docents demonstrated ability to use visual teaching strategies (Yenawine, 2018) to involve the children in looking more carefully at objects, yet they had trouble with relating objects directly to children's personal lives and prior knowledge (Piscitelli et al, 2008). Though children revealed docent as knowledgeable person, they preferred to visit the museums with their teacher. Children were provided with time to make choices on their own (Anderson et al, 2002) and this led to intense interest in self-selected objects and deeper peer-adult interactions (Andre, Durkson & Volman, 2016).

While worksheets and activity booklets encouraged children to take a closer look at the museum and the exhibits, children's observation and questioning skills were improved through multiple visits. Children developed a holistic understanding and personal relationship with the museum (Piscitelli, Weier & Everett, 2003).

Teachers participating in this study agreed that children learn through multiple visits to

museums and that there were various ways to lead museum visits for children. Both the teacher and her assistant recognized that they needed support to extend children's knowledge following this visit.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this case study, we learned that children enjoyed museum visits which provided active participation, time, story and choice. However, we noted also that teachers alone were unable to provide this type of visit experience due to their lack of training in museum-based learning. These experiences were value-add options that were provided not by the teacher, but in collaboration with docents and specially designed resources created by the research team.

Collaboration between schools and museums is an essential element of building successful programs for young visitors in several ways: collaborations between teachers and the museum in regard to planning, administration and resources; collaborations between docents and teachers in regard to the content of the curriculum and children's interests; and most importantly, collaborations between children and docents in relation to children's ideas, interests and knowledge. Such collaboration is readily achievable and highly desirable to maximize the benefits of young children learning about culture. Such collaboration meets also the notion of making good use of community resources in the new kindergarten curriculum guide (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). As Bowers (2012) indicates,

there is a real opportunity for early childhood educators to share their specialist knowledge of young children with museum personnel and to make meaningful connections between children and culture and, in the process, begin to build sustainable social capital.

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