

Spaced Out: The Impact of Museum Spaces on Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: *In this paper, the role of the museum and gallery as an educational space is considered with an emphasis on social and emotional engagement in learning. Three separate case studies are considered; all instances of using museums with either Higher Education students or children and these are discussed with reference to impact of the museum/gallery as an educational space. Despite the three instances having different purposes, disparate groups of participants and varied overall objectives, similarities are seen when considering the impact of the museum or gallery space on the dynamic of the group and the individual experiences of the learners. Social engagement and open discussion is stimulated both by the space and the collections and is facilitated through the entrances, spaces and journeys through the buildings. All of these, in turn, impact on pedagogy and on the propensity for reflective responses to tasks and experiences. It is shown that in these instances, the intensity of the teaching and learning sessions in these spaces and contexts is fundamentally different to classroom activities and affords a different kind of learning opportunity for participants, often enriching or invigorating their learning and, in many cases, encouraging a more positive approach to learning in general.*

[Please note that 'museums' and 'galleries' are generally used interchangeably. Where a specific location is the focus, this is made clear].

Riassunto: *L'articolo affronta il ruolo del museo/galleria quale spazio educativo, ponendo particolare enfasi sul significato dell'impegno sociale ed emotivo nell'apprendimento, a partire dall'analisi di tre specifici casi di studio; e ribadendo come, nel complesso, musei e gallerie sono in grado di offrire "con-testi" unici ed emozionanti, tali da avere un impatto eccezionale sulle esperienze di apprendimento dei loro visitatori, arricchendone i processi di istruzione, e, in molti casi, incoraggiando un approccio positivo verso l'apprendimento in generale.*

Keywords: *Museums, Galleries, Teaching, Learning, Higher Education.*

In this paper, the impact of gallery and museum spaces on learning is examined. Three separate repeated instances of using museums with adult

students and children are discussed with reference to the concept of museums as educational spaces. Teaching and learning sessions in these spaces and contexts is different to the classroom and can illuminate learning for some. The paper opens with an explanation of the three groups, followed by a section on the impact of the space on the general interaction and behaviour. The brief final section looks at the impact on the learning experiences of the groups and also considers the concept of (in)formal learning.

What is interesting and ultimately the point of this paper is that despite different aims, objectives, methods and different structures and content of the visits, a significant style of social interaction and personal reflection and contemplation characterised the experiences of all the students on the visit and that this differed from their usual learning contexts. Museums as learning spaces are considered in a broad sense; not simply considering the cognitive dimension which is usually the focus for educators working on formal courses. Even for the informal courses noted here, there is an expectation from students that cognitive challenge will be provided and that some kinds of cognitive dissonance will result. The pupils and students here tend to define and evaluate their learning experience through these cognitive experiences and although they discuss the other dimensions of their learning, these are not always seen as relevant. I argue here that social and emotional engagement is the aspect that marks out the museum learning experience as particularly significant.

(This paper is confined to discussing interior spaces and focuses exclusively on museums and galleries. Other visits to outdoor settings also have an impact on how groups interact and the ethos and atmosphere of the learning experience (Rickinson *et al.*, 2004) but are beyond the scope of this paper).

1. The groups

The work presented here is a discussion of the patterns that have emerged through drawing comparisons between groups and from synthesising the experiences of disparate groups in environments that constitute atypical places for their learning. Over the years, notes have been kept of students' thoughts and ideas based on their formal and informal evaluations in which they were asked to review their experiences, considering any distinction between visits and more typical learning in their university or

school classroom¹. Many of the students were very keen to feedback since they were excited about their work; compared to traditional classes, many more wanted to talk about what they found interesting, tricky or useful.

The three groups differ from one another and also from the groups usually encountered in formal education or in informal museum education (as explained below. Each different group comprises learners working with the author, at galleries and museums in London, but in differing capacities. Even though different, some similarities exist in that all have chosen to pursue a taught course, so in a sense are self-selecting. However, the range of reasons for these choices and personal circumstances are too diverse to claim many other similarities².

1.1. Group A - Work undertaken at Tate Britain (2009 to 2013)

Calling this collection of learners a 'group' is rather a misnomer, since the loosely described group is made up of many different children and teenagers, usually aged between 7 and 18 years of age, spread out over six years of weekend workshops. They are generally grouped by rough ages: 7-11 years old, 11-14 and 14-18, or sometimes 11-18, depending on numbers of pupils. The pupils have all been identified by teachers, parents or self-reported as 'gifted' or 'more able', usually in terms of language and/or art. The workshops they attend run all day (for around six hours) on Saturdays and Sundays at Tate Britain. There tends to be a slightly higher ratio of girls to boys. The attendees are of mixed backgrounds in terms of socio-economic status, race and ethnicity. As many pupils on bursaries attend as self-payers. Tutors have no knowledge of who is supported by a charity, local authority or school and who is paid for by family or friends.

Generally the groups are of 12-15 children with one lead tutor and one helper, or two groups working simultaneously either cooperatively or in parallel with a maximum of 24-30 children on any day. They are unusual for school-aged children because they have usually elected to come along to the course, they often do not know one another and they have chosen to spend a full day in a gallery – a free-choice activity; it would be reasonable to assume that they are actively seeking challenge in the context of a gallery setting and are more than usually motivated to learn and explore ideas. The activities undertaken in the gallery generally include: writing; drawing; interpreting art works (orally and in other ways); mark making with different materials; use of sculpture, photography, installations and film as well as paintings and sketches.

For this group, it is not possible to discuss their preparatory activities as these are largely unknown, however, the tutors consciously make use of specific entrances and exits and varied spaces with contrasting atmospheres and that is the focus here.

1.2. Group B: University Undergraduates at Various Museums and Galleries (2001-2013)

This 'Informal Learning' module is taught to groups of undergraduate students, sometimes twice annually and other times once annually (staffing permitting). Generally the group comprises a mixture of ages and backgrounds. The university has a widening participation agenda and the group reflects the typical range of minority ethnicities, mature students (up to around 45 years old) and first generation students in such post-1992 urban institutions. Generally, in each group of 25 students there will be one or two who have never visited a museum or gallery before in their lives; the majority will have been museum-users as schoolchildren, and rarely there a few students who are regular visitors. On this course, the students have eleven taught sessions, two of which are devoted to assessment (tutorials and the like) and four of which are visits; an interactive science museum, a traditional museum, a gallery and an outdoor setting (usually a park, city farm or when funds allow, a zoo). As with many education degrees, the group is predominantly made up of female students.

The intention of the module is to help students understand how to make good use of museums and galleries with other learners of all ages, but predominantly primary-school aged children. They constitute an unusual group as they are in higher education, but they are not interested in the *subject* of the museum or gallery, but in *how* it could be harnessed to facilitate and enhance learning for others. They are focused predominantly on pedagogy which also encompasses the practical aspects of a gallery or museum visit. They are also interested in the more esoteric issues and we spend a considerable time discussing the emotional and social impact of working in these different spaces.

1.3. Group C: University Undergraduates Undertaking a Single Gallery Visit (2008-2013)

In this third context, a gallery visit is embedded in a module concerning education, children and the media for final year students of the same make-up as Group B, namely a mixed demographic of undergraduates.

This time, however, the subject matter of the single gallery visit is of particular importance as it relates directly to a compulsory follow-up assessed task (a minor component of the overall assessment) and to the course aims more generally.

The students are interested in images of children and childhood and the visit is to the National Gallery in London. This systematic gallery allows us to trace the development of depictions of children and childhood in art, chronologically, affording opportunities to see iconic paintings by Hogarth, Gainsborough and Renoir, among others. In this instance, the artefacts themselves impact on the students, especially after the preparation session in which postcards and projected images are used where the quality is far inferior to the actual artworks in the context of the gallery setting.

This constitutes a more typical visitor group in that they are interested in the subject matter of the collection, as it links to their course material and assessment task. Students present a wide range of backgrounds in terms of museum literacy and of background subject knowledge in art. We undertake a tour, led by the tutor and as a self-guided group we are required to 'give way' to National Gallery employed guides and to school groups. The images we can study are therefore dictated by the number of visitors in the gallery (which can be very high) and by the timing of the other groups (which is unpredictable).

1.4. Similarities in the Groups

In the evaluations of the visits (oral and written) the following points have repeatedly been made over the years (here summarised thematically using a few illustrative quotations and the Group and year in parentheses, usually 2007 and 2012/13). They are selected as they show a distinctly different type of interaction or experience than that of the usual formal environment. In the discussion that follows, theory is harnessed to explain how the gallery setting allows for this type of interaction and also that it is beneficial to the learners.

Group Identity: "It's more even than in school – none of us really have done this before" [A, 2007]; Directed to the tutor after a wrong turn: "You're on our side now – you're as lost as we are!" [C, 2013]; "I am glad we aren't in that group – look at their uniform, ugh!" [B, 2012].

Peer Relationships: "Normally I wouldn't hang out with them [younger children], but since they like the sculpture too we have a lot to talk about" [A, 2007]; "I have talked to a few people I never speak to at uni. I usually sit

with other people in lectures, you know, those who are already my friends” [B, 2012]; Back at university: “I was looking forward to this session so I could see everyone again” [B, 2012].

Aesthetics of the Collection and Space: “I would have walked straight past that sort of painting if we weren’t doing this for a task. I am more interested in the pictures around it now that I ‘get it’ a bit more. It’s actually really lovely in here” [B, 2012]; “I’m not like an arty person, but this is amazing” [C, 2007]; “Have you actually see the ceiling in here? It’s unbelievable. How high is that? I love it” [B, 2012]; “I am just going back to that room to get close look at the painting we saw earlier” [A, 2007].

Engagement and Reflection: “It’s easier to think here than at uni. We look at one thing and when we walk to the next one there’s some breathing space to think about it” [C, 2013]; “I can’t believe I have been working on this for so long. I find it much better than the art room [at school] because there is really good art all around. It’s inspiring me to keep going” [A, 2007]; “You learn about yourself in a gallery. You think about what you like and what your life is like” [B, 2013].

Arrival and Leaving: “Last time I came I went in the entrance with all the stairs and it was a bit off-putting to be honest. This is better” [C, 2013]; To the tutor: “I just saw you in the [museum] shop. What were you getting? Look at these postcards I got to remind me. I really enjoyed this session” [B, 2013].

2. Falling between stools in literature?

Interestingly, a survey of potentially relevant literature for this paper exploring the impact of space on learning is quite revealing, showing up some gaps in discussion and other points where professionals and researchers usefully refer to one another’s work in different fields. Research on the following areas all has something to say about space and learning: age phases in education; museum design and architecture; pedagogies; teachers and learners; museum education, among others.

The three groups in this paper fall outside of typical parameters however, since they are not regular, repeat visitors, the individuals in the groups are usually only loosely connected to one another and each group represents the cross over between formal and non-formal learning. Certain aspects of their interests are well represented in literature and worthy of note

in order to demonstrate the complexity of the area being explored, whilst other aspects are rarely mentioned. Relevant literature is integrated into the discussion below.

The least researched group seems to be that of Higher Education students (Falk, Dierking, 2000; Black, 2005; Harland, Kinder, 2007; Boddington *et al.*, 2013). Where they are discussed, this is normally directly related to the subjects they are studying and so due to the nature of collections and disciplines, these tend to be anthropology, geology, the visual arts and sometimes fashion and technology (Hein, 2000). In these instances, they are treated more as professional researchers, with assumptions made about them already being convinced of the value of the museum and feeling confident in using the resources. For the Higher Education students in this paper, the issue is not the subject on display, but the museum itself and resulting learning. Similarly, in terms of user information on websites, HE students are less thoroughly catered for than other groups, falling between the definitions of school and community groups³.

Understandably, myriad journal articles can be found concerning the curricular needs of school groups for example and this research into children learning in museums is often linked to formal curriculum outcomes or to the attitudes and pedagogies of teachers making use of the interactive and other galleries (Hooper-Greenhill, 2004). The inclusion of minority gallery users is also often discussed since these groups have been a particular focus for museums (Hein, 2000; Falk, Dierking, 2000; Harland, Kinder, 2007). Other literature examines the family context for learning and encouragement of repeat visits, or community groups and participation, sometimes from the perspective of the museum educator (Simon, 2010). Recent studies have also focused on the internet and digital spheres of learning, considering how they impact upon the experience of visiting the museum, as shown in the DREAM conference where around a quarter of the 40 papers dealt directly with digital issues (Denmark, 2012). Whilst all of these angles have some relevance to the three groups here, all are somewhat at odds with their needs.

3. Learning in gallery spaces

In reviewing the groups' experiences, Falk and Dierking's "Contextual Model of Learning" (2000, 135-148) has been helpful to refine the factors

that differ significantly from the ordinary classroom⁴. Although the factors are all interrelated, for this discussion, the uniting factor is the 'Physical Context: Design'. It is apparent that the impact of the space is what unites the groups in affecting their interactions, their emotional state and consequently their learning.

Gallery spaces require groups and tutors to work in different ways from their habitual classroom-based habits. In reviewing student learning in groups in any setting, the tutor establishes the tone of the session and responds to learners verbally and non-verbally, affecting learning. Data suggest that teacher behaviors, especially teacher immediacy and teacher clarity, play complimentary roles in enhancing student learning' (Comadena *et al.*, 2007, 241). Being in the museum setting requires teachers to alter how they create and build an appropriate learning atmosphere with their groups and how they interact. An increase in many of the more behaviours associated with positive learning is shown in museums, due in some part to the nature of the space in which all are guests, as well as the removal of the traditional physical barriers between teacher and learner such as desks and screens.

Useful definitions of 'immediacy behaviours' and their influence on learning, is provided in work by both Comadena *et al* (2007), and by Christophel who also supplies an inventory of the behaviours under scrutiny (1990). Their research demonstrates that teacher behaviours cast a significant influence on pupils' motivation and learning. Christophel had also noted that «immediacy appears to modify motivation which leads to increased learning» (1990, 323). He defines immediacy as "the degree of perceived physical and/or physiological closeness between people" (325) and identifies "immediacy expressiveness as a potentially significant factor in improving instructional effectiveness" (*Ibidem*). Comadena *et al* consider teachers with high levels of non-verbal immediacy to move frequently about the class, be very animated with facial expressions, gestures, and voice, smiling and making eye contact while speaking (Ivi, 243).

Out of the classroom, by being on the student's eye-line and freed from the requirement of using some kind of screen or display, these behaviours become more likely, particularly where a tutor is relaxed about being a co-learner in the museum space and so is not reliant on extensive notes, but is, instead, exploring together with the group. Of Christophel's 20 verbal and 13 non-verbal immediacy behaviours (*op. cit.*), the following selection seem the most typical of those that are commonly facilitated by the museum,

gallery or other public non-school or university setting, listed with reasons for their selection in square brackets:

Verbal Items:

3 / 19. Gets into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn't seem to be part of his/her lecture / Will have discussion about things unrelated to class with individuals or class as a whole [unusual additional issues tend to arise due to the collection and/or public setting].

4. Uses humour in class [more opportunities arise for spontaneity which tend to lead to humour, plus there are often deliberately humorous aspects to displays if the subject matter is not excessively grave].

7 / 8. Gets into conversation with individual students before or after class / Has initiated conversations with me outside of class [facilitated by the waiting time before and after the session, plus possible shared travel].

10. Refers to the class as 'our' class or what 'we' are doing [teacher is sharing an experience with the students rather than delivering one to them].

Non-Verbal Items refer to movement, gesture, eye contact, body position, smiling, vocal expressions [the museum visit requires movement and changing of position, vantage points, volume and tone of speech, physical grouping and walking around, affording opportunities to break out of a traditional 'from the front' delivery position].

(ivi: 328, with added information in parentheses)

One basic shift is that all participants are largely standing and walking rather than students being seated and the teacher standing. The dynamic and opportunities for discussion have been altered. With adult groups, a kind of democratic feeling emerges where the tutor is not automatically physically placed above the learners; they no longer need to look up in order to address him/her. In my own case, I have to look up to talk to some of my students when we are all standing, as they are frequently taller than me and this certainly changes the dynamic of the interaction. Authority is maintained but this is done through the students' recognition and respect of the tutor's familiarity with the gallery space and perceived knowledge and understanding of the collection.

Kenkmann (2011) considers how using the museum as a learning space with adults changes the nature of the group relationships. Citing Praechter (2004), she shows how «power relations [...] pecking orders and group dy-

namics are played out spatially through seating arrangements» (282). Using a Foucauldian analysis of the architecture of museum spaces she identifies four interrelated elements showing «how space influences teacher-student relations and thus affects teaching and learning» (283).

1. *Taking ownership of space* is altered in the museum. Teachers and students tend to enter classrooms in distinct and different ways; Kenkmann likens the students to 'guests', noting that «The teacher being the host probably welcomes them with genuine respect, but a hierarchical power structure has been established» (283). In the classroom both pupils and teachers have possessions and paraphernalia that mark their territory. Teachers control issues such the opening and closing of windows and doors and use of lights. None of this holds true in the museum setting and whilst the teacher may be in control of the group, s/he is not in control of the environment and has to give way to security staff and other higher priority groups.

2. *Division of space* is usually achieved in the classroom through furniture and teachers are often able to move things around or at least move around the space. Galleries and museums have restrictions for the public commonly needing to be observed by both staff and students alike.

3. The *implicit rules of space* are also disrupted. The teacher no longer has an automatic right to more space than the students. Whereas in the classroom, there are restrictions on movement for students, but not staff (who can for example, stand up, write on the board, leave the room), in the museum, both groups are more equal and expected standards of behaviour of visitors apply to all (284).

4. *Spatial markers* in the museum are more complex than in the classroom since they are less familiar to the teacher and students who will be conversant with architecture such as the projectors and charts in their regular teaching spaces. Similarly, classroom seating cliques are also disrupted by the lack of familiar seating.

A physical closeness is also required in the museum and gallery setting that differs from the traditional classroom set-up. In order to hear what is being said in a noisy public setting the group needs to gather closely both to one another and to the tutor in a way that is not required in the classroom. This closeness has been shown to be positive by Comadena et al who note that «Teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, [...] that

signal a reduced physical and psychological distance between student and instructor, are positively related to student affective and cognitive learning» (2007, 241-42).

4. Is it enough simply to be elsewhere?

One of the reasons that museums have such an impact on teachers and pupils is that many school and university classroom spaces are traditional in design and lack flexibility. Despite the redesign of modern learning spaces to house new developments in technology, «educational spaces continue to be a collection of classrooms lining a common hallway [...] they are not designed or organized in ways needed to meaningfully engage learners» (Chandler, 2009, 261).

Burgess and Addison found that the use of external spaces as sites for learning helps «to encourage pupils and teachers to reconsider and reconceptualise the process of learning» (2007, 196). More than the sessions in the spaces, they note that the 'in-between spaces' are also valuable for learning as the «rhythm of the project disrupted the usual pattern of the school day» providing increased motivation and a sense of liberation (Ivi, 192). Moving around the gallery definitely provides opportunities for valuable informal chats with learners in all groups particularly allowing tutors to strike up conversations with less forthcoming participant as well as facilitating discussion between those who have not had a chance to meet one another. Walking along and chatting can be less intimidating than in-class conversations, since body language is less intense, with no need for constant eye-contact. Walking side by side, rather than conversing face-to-face can be quite freeing and is useful with shyer people and often effective with more self-conscious teenagers. To some extent the teacher can also control the rate of movement of the group between exhibits and activities and this can be adjusted to encourage, prolong or curtail conversation.

Burgess and Addison do sound a note of caution however, against overplaying the novelty of the space to stimulate learning. They suggest that the activities being pursued need to be substantial and purposeful. «However, if [these] motivational factors are isolated from critical discourses and deployed merely as strategies to gain attention, then they are not enough, indeed they may even be counterproductive» (*Ibidem*).

This is echoed by Peacock and Pratt who note that «exciting buildings and structures can often distract from a focus on the explicit learning objectives» (2011, 13). However, they identify that museums can help foster the development of positive Communities of Practice based on valuable «inter-relationships between people and the way in which these are structured by goals and expectations» (14). Shared understanding of the aims of learning should be ensured by the 'Learning Professional' being careful to avoid conflict with goals from other contexts. Hannan et al have similar worries for HE students, emphasising that visits should be embedded within a course, rather than a distracting curiosity (2013). Certainly for Groups B and C it has been easy to make the visits relevant by linking them to assessment tasks, even if these are short and formative rather than more high-stakes work. Over the years of teaching the courses, it has become clear that students are more focused during the visits if they have a clear purpose. Having the tutor to steer the group through the space makes it possible to minimise the possible distractions within the 'micro-contexts' of the museum (Peacock, Pratt, 2011).

Research on museum and gallery spaces often focuses on functionality rather than aesthetics (e.g. Knudsen *et al.*; Mortenson *et al.*), however increasingly, museum buildings are destination venues in themselves. In some instances, concerns have been raised that the architecture is distracting from the art; the recommendation is for «exciting but non-intrusive spaces for art» (Shiner, 2007). None of the museums visited by the students here are generally considered to upstage the collections they house, but some are iconic buildings that have a significant role in the overall experience of the visit. Students (Group B) have variously described the buildings as 'incredible', 'stunning', 'impressive' and as 'the biggest indoor space I have ever been in' and in all of the groups, students have found something surprising and interesting about the learning space.

5. Openings and endings

As well as the gallery space in which activities are undertaken, a key factor in setting the tone and establishing the tone of the group session is the ways in which the sessions open and close. Being in the right frame of mind helps visitors to be receptive to learning and through the visits

and range of different groups, I have become more aware of the impact of the transitional spaces such as doorways and lobbies on the mood of the groups and their consequent readiness to learn, as well as their propensity to socialise during their time in the museum. In the discursive space of the museum, the traditional lecture or seminar format is destabilised affording the tutor to establish a different kind of learning space (Winstanley, 2013). Particular care must then be taken to arrange an appropriate start to the session and a suitable finish.

With most groups, this begins before the trip, with webpages used for preliminary information-gathering. Mortenson *et al.* observe that the museum website «is often the first encounter between visitor and museum...» (2012, 2). Outside of class, the tutor has little control over what the group accesses and with Group A this is always completely unknown and so it cannot be usefully compared here. The meeting point can be manipulated however. Careful choices are made about which entrance to use in order to set the scene in ways that will facilitate learning and foster a useful group dynamic that will help each individual optimise their experience. Students (particularly in Groups B and C) often report feeling worried about entering very opulent or grand buildings and so re-routing the group to meet at a more familiar-feeling entrance is a useful tactic. Similarly, entering the building can be engineered to direct visitors to places they are more likely to perceive as welcoming and inclusive. Entrances are «information, social, commercial and practical spaces» and have their own atmosphere which means they are more than physical spaces alone (Ivi, 7). Knudsen *et al.* agree, suggesting that they are both symbolic and functional and have a role «communicating the difference between the sacred and the profane or the ordinary from the unique» (Ivi, 3). Research shows their importance:

A number of museums are currently restructuring their foyers to better suit current notions of inclusiveness in an effort to be non-elitist, welcoming the visitor as an equal, and promoting dialogue instead of imposing an authoritarian monologue on the visitors (Ivi, 7).

... the lobby is a special space as it, at the same time performs both as “museum” and “not-museum.” It is “museum” because it is part of the building that houses the exhibition and “not museum”, because it is not part of the exhibition. It is a transition zone which links the exhibition with the surrounding world, and as such it plays an important, but overlooked function (cfr. Carlsson & Ågren 1982) (Knudsen *et al.*, 2012, 1).

It is in the lobby that the groups start to build their own identity in which the tutor is a member in a more equal way than in the classroom. The tutor is identifiable as part of the group, not as museum staff. Similarly, the tutor is part of the group rather than another visitor or tourist. On almost all visits with Groups A-C there have been incidents with either security staff or people unknown to us where we have had cause to strengthen our group identity as 'us', such as strangers wanting to photograph the children working, for example, or standing rather rudely in the way of children trying to work unobtrusively from a painting, or tourists wanting to offer their opinion on the essay titles being discussed. In the foyer, there is always time for informal conversation about the journey and other practicalities such as cloakrooms and toilets, etc. These chats change the relationship with the group leader; university these things do not arise. They humanise the tutor who also has to remember to switch off their telephone and pay to store his/her bag and coat.

As the students see the rest of their group they visibly relax as they are among familiar faces. They are no longer alone in trying to decode what to do and how to behave, which can be problematic for some people as they try to discern how to uphold the script created by the museum (Knudsen, 2012, 15). With Group A, the transition into the museum is accompanied (for the younger pupils) by a separation from their parents into the role of an independent learner. For the others, the transition is more to do with the space they are entering. Falk and Dierking (2000) recognise this as entering a different 'behaviour setting' (54-57). Similar changes occur with outdoor learning environments (Rickinson *et al.*, 2004).

Dispersing the group at the close of a teaching and learning session in museums also requires some attention, specifically because lasting impressions are created and the participants have adapted to a very specific and particular context for the duration of the visit. Knudsen *et al* refer to a «transformation step of resolution» and also some consideration of «how visitors are equipped to leave the museum when a visit is about to end» (2012: 21).

6. Learning lessons from experiences in museum and gallery spaces

The positive aspects of learning in different spaces can be interrogated to see if they can inform practice in other settings. For example, students perceive the work they undertake in the museum setting to be freer than their formal school and university work. They talk about it terms of a more

broadly conceived learning experience despite some having directly linked assessment tasks (Groups B and C). Being in a different space and breaking down some of the traditional barriers that separate students from one another and the tutor help to create that sense. It can be difficult to measure this type of learning and experience. In the last decade, there has been an emphasis on the use of Generic Learning Outcomes to explore and validate learning in museums. This results in the contradictory position of formal assessment of non-formal activities in free-choice settings (Brown, 2013, 30). A different conceptual framework is required to assess the kind of learning that takes place. Brown argues that the «distinction between formal and informal learning [...] is specious» (35). He suggests an alternative view based on the formal learning model by Laurillard (2002) in which five different kinds of learning experience are identified.

- *Attending or apprehending* a lesson as a largely passive recipient of information.
- *Investigating or exploring* some bounded resource in a more active way where decisions about what to attend to, in what sequence and for how long are managed by the learner.
- *Discussing and debating* ideas with others.
- *Experimenting* with and *practising* skills.
- *Articulating and expressing* ideas through the synthesis of some new product.

(Laurillard, 2002 cited in Brown, 2013, 31)

This is helpful for working with groups in a range of settings and would be useful in getting participants to reflect on their own learning experiences and preferred styles of working. So, blurring the boundaries between different learning approaches would help both the traditional classroom and the gallery setting. How to foster the more useful of the experience above would drive the layout and use of physical space and the nature of the relationship with peers and the teacher.

Another issue is the use of space and classroom design:

Callously, one might state that classrooms are more intended to house learners, like so much livestock, rather than provide these learners with innovative ways to connect to whatever topics under consideration. Moreover in this enduring state of educational architecture it can be construed that schools and classrooms are more teacher workspaces than they are student learning-places (Chandler, 2009, 261).

This author feels that in order to ‘enhance meaningful learning’ classroom designs could be usefully informed by some of the ideas in museums, among other places (Idem and also Montgomery, 2008). The work on foyers is also informative in that universities and schools could learn from more specific ways of starting and closing learning sessions as a matter of building good habits as well as carefully considering the reception areas and thresholds of buildings used by students. As noted already, the lobby «... is the beginning and the ending of the *museum narrative*» (Mortenson *et al.*, 2012, 1) just as some physical parts of the school and university serve an allied function.

Teaching practice is thrown into focus through this work. Immediacy behaviours are a revealing way to consider the impact of being in a different space on working with groups and tutors can learn to use some of the more favourable techniques back in the classroom to good effect. It is also valuable to examine what discourages teachers from undertaking trips and freeing their practice as a result⁵.

Overall, museums and galleries provide unique and exciting spaces that impact on their visitors’ learning experiences, enriching and invigorating their learning and, in many cases, encouraging a more positive approach to learning in general. Further research into how and why this is the case could be usefully undertaken with an emphasis on ensuring that the most useful factors could be brought to bear on learning in different contexts.

Author’s Presentation:

Dr. Carrie Winstanley’s interests lie in pedagogy and andragogy both in and out of the regular classroom, with a focus on inclusion and broadening diversity in all phases of education. Carrie is a Principal Lecturer at Roehampton University, London, having taught in schools and higher education for more than 25 years. She continues to run holiday and weekend workshops with able children from varied backgrounds in museums, galleries and schools. With higher degrees in psychology, philosophy and history of education, Carrie’s work is practical, and strongly grounded in theory.

Notes

¹ For a more formal discussion of student views see Winstanley, in Boddington *et al.* (2013), 123-133.

² Fuller research about the unexpected reluctance of students to be involved in trips and visits found in Winstanley (*op. cit.*).

³ With the propensity for online booking forms it is sometimes impossible to complete all the required fields for an HE group and so the form is rendered useless and the booking must be done in another manner. This is not encouraging for inclusion.

⁴ Contextual Model of Learning: Eight Key Factors that Influence Learning. Personal Context: Motivation and expectations; Prior knowledge, interests, and beliefs; Choice and control. Socio-Cultural Context: Within-group socio-cultural mediation; Facilitated mediation by others. Physical Context: Advance organizers and orientation; Design; Reinforcing events and experiences outside the museum.

⁵ See Hannan *et al.* for a discussion of these issues (2013, 164-165).

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