

# Study on the Current Situation and Development of Museum Education in China

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**Abstract**—The Museum Education Association put forward education as the primary purpose of museum in the latest definition of museum in 2007. With the progress of modern society and the improvement of people's living standards, the influence of museum's educational function is also expanding. It has become one of the important classes of students' education and adult education outside the school and plays an important role in social public education. This paper attempts to explore the development and improvement of museum education by studying the current situation of communication and the update of teaching mode between museum education and related subjects in its development.

**Keywords**—museum; education; public; development

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the reports of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, general secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that "building a powerful country in education is a basic project for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". At the national education conference, the general secretary further puts forward the new requirement of "speeding up the modernization of education and building a powerful country in education", and the importance of education has received more and more attention in the current society. In this context, in August 2007, the constitution of the International Museum Association adopted by the International Museum Association proposed that education should be regarded as the primary purpose of museums. Museum education has ushered in an unprecedented new period, no matter from the perspective of the society's emphasis on museum education, or from the perspective of museum education's needs for learning from the theories and methods of relevant subjects and the teaching model with the development of the era. This paper will discuss the development and improvement of museum education through studying the current communication and the update of teaching mode between museum education and related subjects in the development of museum education.

## II. HISTORY OF MUSEUM EDUCATION

In the process of modern China's development, when Zhang Jian, an industrialist, first proposed the establishment of a museum, he pointed out in his proposal for the establishment of an exhibition hall by the Department of higher education that "only having education in a small

number of schools with orderly teaching and limited graduation process, can the talents they cultivate become scholars, respect their unique learning, cover libraries, museums, and serve as the backing of the school". According to this, he already explained the important role of the museum in the revitalization of education. Cai Yuanpei, Zeng Zhaoyu and Li Ji all emphasized the importance of the museum on all aspects of education in the early days of the establishment of the Chinese museum. In modern China, the emphasis on museum education was further strengthened when most public museums were founded by the ministry of education.

With the progress of society, people's living standards are constantly improving. The demand for education of all ages is stronger than before, and the influence of museum education function is also expanding. It is another important classroom for the education of students and adults outside the school, and plays an important role in the current social public education. In August 2007, the International Museum Association adopted the revised constitution of the International Museum Association, which defined the museum as "a non-profit permanent institution open to the public, serving the society and its development, collecting, protecting, researching, disseminating and exhibiting the material and non-material heritage of human beings and human environment for the purpose of education, research and appreciation". In the definition, education is proposed as the primary purpose of the museum. In March 2015, China promulgated the revised museum regulations, in which the second article defined the museum as "museum refers to a non-profit organization that collects, protects and displays the witness of human activities and natural environment to the public for the purpose of education, research and appreciation, and is registered by the registration authority according to law". It also put education first in the purpose of museum. It can be seen that the contemporary museum continues to attach great importance to the educational function before. With the passage of time, science and technology have been updated, research has been further refined, and museum education has correspondingly made progress and faced with challenges. Under the new era, museum education is still a content worthy of study.

### III. THE REFERENCED SUBJECT AND TEACHING MODE OF CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM EDUCATION

Today's museum education has been affected by many aspects, such as the higher requirements of the society for education, the change of museum visitors' demand for museums, the experience changes brought by new media and technology updates, and so on. Therefore, museum education should strengthen basic theory, applied research and project development research. [1]

Museum education refers to the field involving wide ranges. Because of the openness of museums and the freedom of communication education, it can fully link museum education and other disciplines. And its framework can be launched from education, design, communication, behavior, psychology and other aspects. Limited by the length of the paper, this paper only selects the museum education in reference to the theory and research methods of related disciplines.

Museum education is closely related to psychology. The traditional museum education is that the museum provides exhibits. Under the guidance of the commentator, the visitors learn more about the exhibits. Now, with the development of the times, the museum tends to establish the museum education oriented for the audience, which focuses on the independent learning of the visitors and carries out guided auxiliary education. The audience of museum education is the visitors who are interested in museum content. There are differences among visitors. Museums need to show appropriate learning experience content according to the specific situation of visitors, and need to have in-depth understanding of visitors' visiting purpose, experience, interest, etc., which inevitably involves the discipline knowledge of psychology. Psychology studies people's psychological phenomena, mental functions and behaviors, involving many fields such as perception, behavior, emotion, social relations, etc., and is also related to museum education. In psychological research, the interest of visiting is closely related to the purpose and object of visiting. The purpose of visiting comes first, and then the brain decides whether to visit, and then there will be contact reactions of environmental conditions, facilities, display, explanation and related activities in the museum. In addition to the above reasons, interest will also be affected by gender, occupation, age, education level, living background and other factors. Male audience generally strives to have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the exhibition, while female audience's understanding of the exhibition is relatively one-sided. The audience with specific interest pays special attention to the exhibition content matching their own interest, and pays less attention to other content. Those who are engaged in related museum professions are more concerned about the exhibition content and related parts, and pay less attention to the exhibition less related to the exhibition. The level of education is generally in direct proportion to the degree of the audience's attention to the exhibition content. In other words, highly educated audiences pay more attention, while less educated audiences pay less attention. The practitioners of museum education made some attempts after realizing the influence of visitors'

psychology on the visiting effect. Shanghai Natural History Museum has set up a special recommended tour route for visitors of different ages. Parent-child families, primary school students and middle school students have different needs. When designing the route, parent-child route is more inclined to things themselves, only guiding visitors to understand the natural phenomena and the existence of various animals and plants. The route for primary school students shows the trend of independent exploration for route visit, in which the words "look", "find", "listen" in the route navigation reflect the exploration and guidance of the visit. The route for the middle school students puts forward the thinking on the connotation of knowledge and the reasons behind the development of things, such as, "exploring the influence of the four main environmental factors of light, temperature, water and soil on biology and their adaptability". This has a certain improvement in the depth of knowledge. The design of this route takes into account the learning psychology and acceptance ability of different age groups, so as to meet the visit needs of different age groups.

Another one related to museum education is digital media. In the era of rapid development of science and technology, digital media widely participate in all aspects of museum education. Digital media has the characteristics of humanization, intelligence and diversity of forms, which can achieve more real effects and impact. It has a profound impact on people's work, learning and daily life. It also has a lot of new changes in the field of museum education. People are very used to participate in the museum exhibition activities through watching, touching, interactive experience, hands-on operation and other ways. There are also popular interactive technology and virtual reality technology. These high-tech digital technologies have been recognized by the public with their strong participation, and gradually become an indispensable technical means in museum exhibition and visit. At present, with the docking of museum and digital media, the impact of digital media is a competitive supplement to museum education. They can be better integrated and communicated in this way. In 2017, the Palace Museum launched "VR Museum", which uses many advanced technologies such as AI, VR, AR, voice and image recognition and other advanced technologies to allow visitors to be on the scene, break the boundaries of time and space, and enter the historical scene created by technology to walk and touch, creating a precedent for domestic museums to use innovative technologies. Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum adopts the matrix panoramic technology. Visitors can check the specific situation of the pit that the visitors can't get close contact with by logging into Baidu Encyclopedia digital museum. This technology uses computers to splice more than 1000 photos of 35 million pixels to form a super large picture of 20 billion pixels, which can easily observe the tattoos on the terracotta warriors and horses, and the details are in place.

From simple collection display to interactive display that makes the audience full of curiosity and freshness, the development of digital technology makes museum education have more possibilities. However, when the digital media involves museum education, it should not only consider the

display of technology through scientific and technological means, but also think about the essential intention of museum education. This is what museum education needs to think about. The museum always uses digital technology to make the process of museum education vivid and visualized, so as to achieve the best experience effect of education. It is not used in any case without thinking.

In pursuit of development, on the one hand, museum education should draw lessons from the theories and research methods of related disciplines, actively explore the general application of related disciplines, and then combine with the characteristics of museum education to form a more rich and solid overall framework of theory; on the other hand, museum education should pay more attention to the teaching mode, and make use of the advantages brought by the museum environment, and adopt good points and avoid shortcomings to meet the needs of museum visitors according to the specific situation and various modes used reasonably.

Nowadays, experiential teaching is widely used in museum education. Experiential learning emphasizes that learners get direct experience through personal experience, pays attention to the needs and feelings of the main body, inspires the value and significance of life, stimulates and cultivates emotions, and connects with social life. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to the cultivation of students' self-reflection consciousness, promote the internalization construction of experience and practical application, so as to achieve better learning effect. [2] Because of the physical, intuitive and interesting features of museums and the needs of visitors' autonomous learning, it is a reasonable way for museum education to adopt the experiential interactive learning mode. Visitors can directly obtain relevant knowledge about the exhibits by visiting the exhibits or supporting explanations in the museum, directly contact with the learned things, and obtain first-hand learning resources. According to the visitors' own needs and feelings, they can independently choose the exhibition hall and exhibits that meet their own learning needs in the relatively free environment of the museum. Since experiential learning mode can stimulate the learning interest of visitors, the museum will naturally integrate experiential learning into its design. In 2019, Sanxingdui Museum's exhibition "Harmony and Enjoyment — the treasure of ancient music relics in Central China" added the interactive game of "playing clay pottery" in the design. People can experience the craft of hand-made throwing and molding, making music and dance acrobatic servants under the guidance of professionals, and feel the beauty and antiquity of central China's culture.

#### IV. EDUCATORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUM EDUCATION

More and more people choose the museum as an important place for lifelong learning, while the public who are new to the museum do not know how to use the museum resources very well. At this time, the museum educators will serve as a bridge between the museum and the visitors, provide various supports for the visitors, such as teaching activities, learning exhibitions, etc., to promote the learning

of the visitors in the museum. Therefore, the visitors' learning effect is influenced by the professional level of museum educators. [3]

Museum educators first appeared in the early 20th century. In the 1960s, museum education emerged as an independent department. From the 1990s to now, the educational function has gradually become the primary function of museums, and museum educators naturally become an important subject in the implementation of this function. Nowadays, the role of museum educators is becoming more and more complex. They not only need to carry out educational projects for schools and the public, compile educational courseware for museums, build bridges between museums and individual masses, but also need to carry out theoretical research and evaluation of museum education, find out the relationship between museums and visitors, and provide help for the future development of museum education.

The American Museum Union published "excellence and equity: the public dimension of education and museums. It mentioned that in order to clarify the importance of museum education function, museums need to explore new ways to serve public diversity, and reflect the needs of social diversity in their operation and projects. Therefore, the following requirements are put forward for the professional ability of museum educators. The educators must focus on the audience and the community, and improve the public service ability of the museum. And then, they can adapt to the changing needs of the society and also have diverse perspectives. At the same time, they are able to fully consider the diversity of audiences in science, culture, aesthetics and other fields. In terms of responsibility, educators need to have profound background knowledge and be able to educate individual and group audiences of museums in all aspects related to human development, educational theory and teaching practice. The educators need to have strong audience awareness and team spirit to better meet the needs of audiences, as well as have strong learning spirit to realize the education function of museums. Among them, the requirements for museum educators are also applicable in today's China. Museum education practitioners need to have a wide range of professional knowledge, as well as teaching and learning ability, be able to put theoretical knowledge into practice and complete their own work. In addition, due to the complexity and diversity of the aspects involved in museum education, it is necessary to have the attitude and tendency of giving full play to its own value in the aspect of consciousness and providing the educated with museum knowledge.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Museum is the product of the development of the times, and museum education will inevitably improve the work content with the development of the times. As a comprehensive topic, museum education not only involves museum collections, museum education methods, museum education audiences, but also focuses on the links between museum education and society, gives full play to the role of museum links, and actively explores innovation to attract

museum visitors and learners in the new era. The theme of 2018 International Museum Day is "hyperlinked museums: new methods and new public", which shows that museum educators should be fully aware of the great changes in the new era. The way to update the theoretical research methods and teaching models of related disciplines for the development of museum education is still in the exploration stage, and the experience is not mature. It is necessary to mobilize their subjective initiative and not be limited by the situation, expand the perspective of exploration and education, give full play to the potential of museum education, establish a mature system with full theoretical basis and practical experience for the future, promote the development of museum education, benefit the whole public, and build a learning society.

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