

# Study on Educational Activities for Children's Branch of Shanxi Museum in China

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## ABSTRACT

In China, children's education in museums is developing in the process of exploration and reference, and the children's education activities in Shanxi Museum are representative to a certain extent. Taking the children's branch of Shanxi Museum as the research object, this study explored the contents, benefits and existing problems of children's education activities, and put forward some suggestions on this basis.

**Keywords:** Museum, children's education, Shanxi Museum

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the modern times, with the change of the outlook on children, children are regarded as individuals with independent personality rather than the appendage of adults. Teenagers and young children have become the focus of social attention. At the beginning of the 20th century, with the rise of Granville Stanley Hall and John Dewey's "Paidocentricism" in the United States, children's education began to receive the attention of Western countries, and then children's museums began to be independent from adult-based museums[1]. Since Brooklyn Children's Museum, the world's first children's museum, was established in New York in 1899, there have been more than 300 children's museums in the United States. Affected by this, many western countries have also established children's museums. According to the latest statistics of the American Association of Children's Museums (ACM), there have been more than 400 children's museums around the world by the end of 2013. In addition, many countries have set up children's activity zones in various museums[2], and paid attention to the connection between school curriculum and museum experience[3]. In contrast, although children's education in China's museums started late, but with the attention of the government, it is constantly developing in the exploration and reference. Therefore, this study takes the children's branch of Shanxi Museum as the research object to explore the contents, benefits and existing problems of children's education activities, and puts forward suggestions on this basis.

## 2. CHILDREN'S EDUCATION ACTIVITIES OF SHANXI MUSEUM

Since its name was changed in 2004 (formerly known as Shanxi Provincial Museum), Shanxi Museum has carried out a wide range of educational activities since its completion. In the past ten years, its depth and breadth have expanded. The following is a description of the educational activities outside and inside the museum.

### 2.1. Education activities outside the museum

#### 2.1.1. On-campus courses by the museum

The children's education activities outside the children's branch of Shanxi Museum started in 2010, and the main force is to get a position in the campus curriculum. The main forms of such educational activities include mobile exhibition, knowledge lecture, hands-on experience, etc. The theme content of educational activities is determined according to the exhibition theme of the museum, traditional festivals and the educational development level of children of different ages. For example, in 2010, "Jin Story Meeting" was carried out in primary school classroom; since 2014, "A Cute Museum" social education activity was carried out for junior and senior high schools; in 2015, "Hello, Museum", children's museum enlightenment education experience course was carried out for kindergartens.

### 2.1.2. *“Time Spaceship” courses*

The brand education activity of Shanxi children’s Museum – “Time Spaceship” courses are also an important part of the education activities outside the museum. “Time Spaceship” courses have been officially launched since 2013. Shanxi Museum has cooperated with several primary and secondary schools in a private way. Through various teaching forms such as interesting lectures, hands-on activities, field visits and child museum guide training, the museum will be brought into the classroom, so that children can learn and walk into the museum from more angles and learn the historical and cultural knowledge outside the textbooks. Since 2014, “Time Spaceship” courses of Shanxi Museum entered the junior middle school class. Based on the textbooks of middle school, the contents of the history textbooks are extended; the history is displayed with real cultural relics; and the history is excavated in various forms. Students can combine the “learning” and “doing” through knowledge explanation and hands-on operation to visualize the knowledge in the textbook (see Appendix). The existing modules of “Time Spaceship” courses include “Museum Growth Course”, “I Am a National Treasure Interpreter” and “Museum Knowledge Popularization Course”.

## 2.2. *Educational activities in the Museum*

Children’s education activities in the museum are to carry out children’s education projects by using the exhibition, exhibits and museum space of the museum. The main contents are as follows:

### 2.2.1. *Festival-themed education activities*

At present, Shanxi Museum has four major festival-themed activities, including Spring Festival, Hanshi Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. The content of activities is relatively fixed, which can be roughly divided into three categories: (1) experience the traditional festival customs, such as making wood pictures and paper-cut in the new year’s day, making lanterns and sweet dumplings in the Lantern Festival, flying kites and playing Cuju in the Hanshi Festival, making zongzi in the Dragon Boat Festival, making moon cakes in the Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.; (2) extend the festival cultural knowledge, such as knowledge lectures, prize-winning contests, pocket books, interesting folding, etc.; (3) festival theater. Through registration, children rehearse the repertoire, and perform the drama on stage during the festival, such as the 2014 Hanshi Festival children’s history drama “Loyal Soul of Qu Yuan” and the 2015 Mid-Autumn Festival small theater “the Moon Follows People Thousands of Miles” and so on.

### 2.2.2. *Educational activities derived from exhibitions*

Such activities can be divided into “according to the basic display” and “according to the curation”. As for the former, for example, in 2018, Shanxi Museum launched “Jin is you and me” -- you are the Jin” education project, which is a museum education activity for primary and secondary school students based on the research of “Jin soul” theme exhibition; the latter includes “India Tour” in 2014 with “the world of India” as the knowledge background, and “In North America @ North America” in 2015 according to “Native American Art Exhibition”.

### 2.2.3. *Team of children museum guides*

This is the brand education activity of Shanxi Museum, which has been carried out since 2007. The target object of the activity is primary and secondary school students. The “team of children museum guides” has been developing for ten years, from the beginning of the summer activities to the current rich activities.

### 2.2.4. *“Weekend Classroom” museum course*

The “Weekend Classroom” museum course is an enhanced version of “on-campus courses”. Shanxi Museum combines the excellent courses of “on-campus courses” with the interactive experience form of educational activities in the museum, and gradually transfers the investment direction of “on-campus courses” to the museum. For example, in the Spring Festival of 2018, the museum classroom (temporary exhibition category), “Learning Traditional Music and Etiquette – I’m a Little Musician in the Palace” and the museum classroom “Understanding Hanshi Festival from Cultural Relics” in the Hanshi Festival.

## 3. PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN’S EDUCATION ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN’S BRANCH OF SHANXI MUSEUM

### 3.1. *The exhibition form is not suitable for children*

The exhibition of children’s branch of Shanxi Museum is still based on the consideration of adult audience, basically without considering the children audience. According to the actual research of the researchers, some exhibition halls are pasted with obvious “please do not approach” and “please do not touch”. Once the distance is too close, a harsh alarm will be heard. For example, the square tripod in Shanxi Museum is displayed in a dim environment. If you want to see the decorative patterns and inscriptions on the tripod, you need to look closer. But once you get closer, the alarm will be heard, and the staff will come to stop it

immediately. Another example is the exhibition hall of Buddhist style. Although it fully imitates the structure of the cave niche, the light is dim. Most of the display cabinets are more than 1.2 meters high, and there are guardrails about 1 meter away from the display cabinet, which is unfavorable for children to watch.

### ***3.2. Internet construction is still at a low level***

Shanxi children's museum not only has the official website, but also has official micro-blog, WeChat official account, etc. Although the internet communication has been used, the results are limited. First of all, the construction is not perfect, and the information distribution in the official website is disorderly and unsystematic. For example, when researchers search the download link of museum education on the official website, they will find four issues in the "museum education activities" and one issue in the "latest announcement"; the search box does not respond; some functions cannot be used. For example, the author wants to register to get more information, but the registration page cannot be displayed. Secondly, the promotion effect of the internet is limited. The official micro-blog fans of Shanxi Museum are 120,000. Most of the micro-blogs have no more than 10 comments and forwarding, and there is only one hot content comment with more than 100 comments. Researchers have found that there are only 46 comments on the official website "visit messages" since 2013, and the latest one is June 17, 2017.

### ***3.3. The cooperation between the museum and the school is not in place, and there is a lack of focus education for children***

The development of the cooperation mode of the museum and the school is not only the matter of the museum, but also the participation of teachers and parents to integrate them into the museum curriculum development system[4]. Teachers are the leading role at school, and parents play an important role in the process of children's growth. If teachers and parents do not cooperate actively, the effectiveness of museum curriculum will be greatly reduced. Although teachers training and parents cooperation are mentioned in the cooperation between the museum and the school, the children's branch of Shanxi Museum has not fully incorporated it into the cooperation.

## **4. SUGGESTIONS**

### ***4.1. Changing the way of exhibition***

The Boston Children's Museum adheres to the tenet of "I've heard, I forget; I've seen, I remember; I've done, I understand". The great thinker in ancient China Xunzi said, "Hearing something is better than hearing nothing; seeing is better than hearing; understanding is better than

seeing; doing is better than understanding; you learn from what you've done otherwise you cannot learn." Its connotation coincides with Dewey's idea of "learning by doing". The authors think that the exhibition of Shanxi Museum should make some reproduction as far as possible, so that children can not only see, but also touch. Through multi-sensory interaction, children can have interactive experience and intuitive feelings to promote their development. Museums should consider how to build a comfortable and relaxing environment from the perspective of children. The lighting and space design of the exhibition hall should cater to the theme of the exhibition without making children feel nervous or uneasy[5].

### ***4.2. Improve the level of Internet Construction***

Shanxi Museum should fill, update and typeset the current web pages, and also set up a "virtual museum" online so that museum visitors can enjoy the virtual exhibition directly. Moreover, we should learn from the children's version websites of Capital Museum and Qingdao Museum, and make suitable adjustments according to children's intelligence and psychological factors, so as to provide convenience for those children who cannot visit museums frequently due to various conditions. Shanxi Museum is aware of the lack of website construction. In the fifth issue of museum education, it mentioned the gap with foreign museum website construction. In addition, we should make effective use of the Internet for publicity. In the era of Internet popularization, children use mobile computers more and more. How to attract children's attention on the network communication platform is an urgent task. The publicity of Shanxi Museum website and official micro-blog is limited, but its WeChat official account has a good development prospect, and its general browsing volume is about 2,000~15,000. Shanxi Museum should study the use of different platforms by children and parents, and formulate different publicity programs.

### ***4.3. Strengthen cooperation between the museum and then school; deepen children's focus education***

In addition to regular school education, teachers and parents themselves can actively support museum courses, and encourage students to learn museum courses[6]. That will get twice the result with half the effort. Therefore, it is suggested that the children's branch of Shanxi Museum, on the one hand, can recruit primary and secondary school teachers as volunteers in the museum to carry out interpretation work; on the other hand, through the participation of primary and secondary school teachers of all grades, different museum series courses for different education stages should be designed to deepen children's focus education and finally achieve the full coverage of children audience aged 2 to 15 .

## 5. CONCLUSION

Museum is an important bridge connecting the society, which is different from school education and family education[7]. Although children's education is just one of the aspects of museum education, it could reflect the social education effect of the operations of the Museums. In modern society, the public are very concerned about the healthy growth of children. Museums are duty bound to promote children's all-round development with their own advantages. Compared with the Western states, children's education in Chinese museums is still in its infancy[8]. Each museum should combine its own unique collection resources and cultural advantages, make children's education work plan under the guidance of sufficient theoretical basis and practical experience, and carry out rich and colorful children's education activities. The development of children's education should not only focus on quantity, but also on breadth and depth. The perfunctory activities of children's education are harmful to the development of children's education in museums in China.

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