

**SCHOOL-MUSEUM INTEGRATED LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN
SCIENCE:**
A learning journey

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by
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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this dissertation is my investigation into how primary school teachers can be guided to provide effective conditions for student learning on teacher-led school excursions to museums. The dissertation follows my learning journey, beginning with my entering experiences as a teacher, museum educator and teacher educator and then following stages of literature search, questions, action and reflection. The research design has affinity with action research and utilises an assemblage of methodologies which are empathetic with the study itself, principally observations and interviews.

My thesis is that a framework based on strategies which reflect informal learning behaviours of family groups, learner-centred teaching approaches, and meaningful integration of school and museum studies, can create favourable conditions for student learning on excursions. Further, with minimal professional development, classroom teachers can implement such a framework.

The first of three field studies tested my understandings about current practices on teacher-led school excursions to museums. Observations of 12 school excursions in Sydney, Australia, revealed a strong teacher orientation toward task completion rather than learning, and underlined the need to search for an alternative approach.

Following a literature search on school visits to museums, social constructivist learning and teaching, and family visits, a School-Museum Learning Framework (SMLF) was designed. The SMLF was trialed in the second field study in which I was the principal teacher as well as researcher, working with a Year 5/6 class. The most significant finding was the students' recognition and declaration of their own learning in an environment in which they had choice and ownership of their learning. Consideration of the nature and measurement of learning in informal settings led to a tentative tool for indicating engagement in learning processes.

In my third field study I investigated the broader application of the SMLF in four trials involving seven teachers. The teachers participated in a one-day professional development seminar and then conducted their own school-museum programs. The results showed the SMLF to be robust under a range of circumstances.

My findings from the trials led to a refined flexible framework: School-Museum Integrated Learning Experiences in Science, which is based on three Guiding Principles: integration of school and museum learning; provision of conditions for self-directed learning and facilitation of learning strategies appropriate to the setting. The findings from this research have significance for students, teachers, teacher educators and museum educators.

