A Mindworks Exhibition as a Model for Informal Education on a University Campus [MAS]

Coleen Rarlsen, Shannon Rirkwood, and M Gershon Bulgatz
Montana State University-Billings, Billings, MT

Formal education is the dominant aspect of learning on a university campus and emphasizes the abstract and artificial. Life relates thoughts and feelings to behavior in a natural setting and can be called informal. The university competes with life. This problem has been recognized and one alternative model is an interactive exhibit based on non-linear processes. How prevalent and viable is such a model? A survey concerning these and other questions were sent to psychology departments in the United States. Forty-one out of 148 were returned. One hundred percent had no knowledge of an interactive exhibit on a university campus. The respondents felt that an interactive exhibit could be used best for class projects and community service. Connections with other departments on campus could be done thoroughly showing that psychology is embedded in other fields, similar methods are invoked in different disciplines, informal contact can occur, cooperative exchanges can take place and it can connect to the community. The interactive exhibit is not prevalent but is useful and seems adaptable to a variety of needs. The interactive exhibit is an informal place that generates enthusiasm and creativity.