

The Nature of Science Reflected in Exhibitions of Natural History Museums as Informal Educational Institutes

CHAN-JONG KIM¹, SUN-KYUNG LEE² and MYEONG-KYEONG SHIN³

¹*Seoul National University*

²*Seoul National University*

³*Cheongju National University of Education*

This study investigated to describe how the nature of science was revealed in both on-line and off-line of four natural history museums located in Korea. Natural history museums are well known to be an informal educational setting and nature of science has been one of major topics in school science education. Therefore the nature of science is supposed to be counted in developing the exhibitions. In each of four target natural history museums and natural history exhibitions, representative exhibits subtitled by scientific inquiry and the history of science cases were selected for the study. The analyzing exhibits focused on whether visitors interact with exhibits, exhibition modality and media, and exhibition labels with emphases on declarative description or interpretative one. In analyzing the contents, the focus was on concerns of scientists, scientific community, social and cultural aspects, uncertainty of scientific knowledge, and providing sufficient evidences. Based on the study, exhibitions of scientific inquiry was in preferred uses of panels, pictures, fossils, video clips, and paper articles. The methods of description were not obvious to tell which type was preferred. For all target exhibits, it was hard to conclude that they clearly considered the nature of science as an essential element in designing and developing their exhibitions. More deliberate input of nature of science is suggested for worldly renowned natural history museums have taken major care of it and the previous researches keep insisting that the nature of science would be more efficiently achieved in an informal educational setting rather than in classrooms.