

## Museum Education and Museums in Saudi Arabia

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**Key words:** Museum, Museum Education, Museum and Schools, Museum Educational Programmes, Museum Learning, Saudi Museums.

**Abstracts:** The educational role of museums has been recognized and acknowledged since at least the early 19th Century. According to the international Council of Museums (ICOM) definition “ A museum is an non-profit making , permanent institution in the surface of society and of its development and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, research, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment”. This statement, illustrates the importance and the growing recognition of the significance of the museum role in education. From this point of view, this paper discusses the link between museums and education and the general concept of museums as educational institution. In addition, this study initially discusses museums and their specific goals and objectives in the field of education within a broad context. It then examines museum education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It also looks at some of the philosophical bases on which museums in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia need to build their educational programmes and activities for the genial public. It also proposes a museum education programme based on the country’s rich heritage.

### التعليم المتحفي والمتاحف في المملكة العربية السعودية

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الكلمات المفتاحية: المتاحف، التعليم المتحفي، التربية المتحفية، المتاحف والتعليم، متاحف المملكة العربية السعودية، البرامج التعليمية المتحفية، المتاحف والثقافة.

ملخص البحث: يتناول البحث التعليم المتحفي ومتاحف المملكة العربية السعودية. وهدف البحث إلى إبراز التعليم المتحفي وأهميته لهذه المتاحف، ودورها في المجتمع السعودي. استخدم البحث المنهج الوصفي. وتم تناول الموضوع ضمن ثلاثة محاور رئيسية، المحور الأول منها، استعرض أدبيات التعليم المتحفي، وأهم النظريات والإطار الفلسفي للمتاحف من الناحية التعليمية والثقافية. المحور الثاني واستعرض عناصر التعليم المتحفي في المتاحف السعودية ومنها الجوانب الفلسفية، والسياسات التي تحتاج أن تبني من خلالها متاحف المملكة برامجه التعليمية المتحفية، وكذلك المقتنيات وطرق عرضها والاستفادة منها معرفياً وثقافياً. إضافة إلى الخدمات التي يجب توفيرها من خلال إقامة برامج وأنشطة تعليمية تفاعلية جاذبة تشجع على زيارة المتاحف. أما المحور الثالث فهو الخاتمة التي تلخص وضع هذه المتاحف، ما تم التوصل إليه البحث.

خلص البحث إلى أن التواصل المجتمعي مع المتاحف في المملكة العربية السعودية قليل ومحدود، إضافة إلى أن هذه المتاحف لا توجد بها برامج وأنشطة تعليمية يمكن أن تكون عامل جذب لأفراد المجتمع، بينما اقتصر دور المتاحف السعودية على استقبال الأطفال وتلاميذ المدارس ومشاهدة معروضاتها بالطريقة التقليدية المتضمنة زيارة قاعات العرض والشرح السريع لمحتويات هذه القاعات. ويوصي البحث بأهمية الأخذ بالتوجه الحديث من خلال إقامة برامج تعليمية متحفية هادفة تتضمن جوانب تفاعلية من خلال ما يعرف بغرف الاستكشاف، وورش عمل يمكن للأطفال المشاركة فيها بشكل مباشر. إضافة إلى تأسيس علاقات فاعلة مع المدارس والمؤسسات الثقافية والاجتماعية؛ لخلق جسور تواصل تعمق الصلة بين المتاحف والمجتمع وتعزز دورها التعليمي.

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### **1. Museums and Education: Literature Review**

Education may be defined as the transfer and increase of knowledge. What then is the link between museums as institutions and the concept of education?

Some people still think of education as merely formal instruction, the formal process by which information is passed from teacher to pupil in a classroom setting. Education, however, is broader than this. There are many different methods of educating in a community besides books, schools and universities. The museum is one of these. It is, in fact, a reference source where factual information can be obtained. Museums present through their exhibitions and collections the relationships between tangible objects and humankind. They are similar to libraries although of course there are obvious differences between the two institutions. While a library is primarily responsible for printed and written records of knowledge, a museum is primarily responsible for preserving tangible objects on which the information in the library is often based. Museums have become a resource for learning about people's lives in the same way as libraries have.

Museums have a particular advantage. As Grinder and McCoy (1985:17-18) and many others have pointed out:

Museums can offer real objects – tangible examples of ideas, processes, natural environments, and history. Classroom experiences are limited to books, lectures, media, and simple hands-on experiences. The two institutions, by working together, can provide truly outstanding educational opportunities for young people. Teaching directly from original objects in a museum can enrich school learning, for interpretation can include new experiences in perceiving the objects.

Museum collections are a resource in themselves and provide an excellent resource for the better understanding of human culture. All too often in the past a museum was seen as a building solely for the preservation and exhibition of collections. As such, it was all too often a dull and unwelcoming place, particularly for children.

#### **Museum education has as its just objective:**

making of a relationship between the collections of the museum and the needs and interests of the particular museum visitor. Ideally, this relationship needs to be as active as possible, dynamic and flexible. (Hooper-Greenhill 1991:3).

However, it must be recognized that social,

cultural and religious needs and values must be met. This is especially true in Saudi Arabia, where these factors are so important in the practice of daily life.

Generally speaking, the way in which an education programme is presented by a museum is an individual choice made by that museum.

There is no prescribed syllabus and no curriculum. It is the nature of the collections and the policies of the museum that determine the way in which the relationships between the museums and people are made.

(Hooper-Greenhill 1991:5).

Traditionally, the museums' role was limited to acquisition, research, conservation, restoration and display. In the modern world, museums have moved forward to assume a wider responsibility. However, changes in museum policy have taken place only gradually and the concept that a museum has an obligation to educate the wider community, regardless of age or type, has taken longer to be accepted.

Today, museums have progressed from being just research and collecting institutions. Effective communication with the public through their exhibitions and a wide range of activities is part of this obligation. Important to this is their educational role.

#### **Allan (1960:24) states:**

Museums have, however, moved forward from being content to collect, to identify, to preserve and to present in an attractive form. They have accepted public responsibilities to teach the truth as far as they know it and to teach new ideas to their visitors, whether they come singly or in groups, casually or of set purpose. It has become the accepted function of museum exhibits to encourage the development of ideas.

Exhibitions need to be more attractive and therefore new display techniques based on modern technology should be considered. Such techniques should be based not only on static displays but also on the creation of interactive exhibits to involve visitors in active participation in exhibitions. These techniques would also contribute to the quality and standards of an educational programme.

In all this the objectives of interesting and enthusing visitors, both young and old and of increasing their understanding must be kept in firmly

in mind.

Museum and gallery visits open up new learning possibilities through the study of evidence and real things, which can stimulate the ability to concentrate, explore and observe. This skills development is made possible through seeing and handling real objects, which encourages original thought. The play of the imagination and of feeling is more important than the transmission of facts. Close attention to and understanding of beautiful things will help develop a critical appreciation of things in general. Above all, going to a new place and meeting new people will open up a child's world. The opportunities for personal and social education in coming to museums, the making of the visit, the travelling, dressing and behaving in an appropriate but individual fashion, are emphasized as of equal importance to other aspects of learning. (Hooper-Greenhill 1991:52).

A well-balanced educational programme must reflect the museum's objectives, its methods and its evaluation of them. The educational programmes will vary widely from one museum to another. This will depend on its collections and its field. Once the long-term educational objectives have been laid down, the means to achieve these objectives have to be considered by the museum authorities in the country.

It may be appropriate here to include a brief discussion on education and entertainment in museums as some people may argue that one does not preclude the other. Museums in many countries have developed special facilities to encourage more visitor attendance and attract more revenue. The purpose has been to make visitors feel welcome by creating a pleasant physical atmosphere with restaurants, pleasant courts, shops and comfortable seating (Daifuku 1960:77).

Daifuku (1960:79) made a linkage between entertainment and intellectual stimulation when he stated: "Museums are not educational institutions in the formal sense of the word, but rather a source of intellectual stimulation and entertainment."

The role of museums as places of entertainment is not generally acknowledged by the more intellectual museum administration but has been supported by Burcaw (1983:130) who stated:

The big problem the museum faces, in designing good exhibits, is in reconciling the statements "If you're not in show business", you're not in business", and "The business of a museum is education, not

entertainment". Both statements are valid, and museum people should accept them. The problem is to achieve a proper balance between the two in the activities (including the exhibits) of the museum. The visitor comes to the museum primarily to be entertained, yet the museum exists primarily to inform. The museum must attract visitors and give them a pleasant experience while educating them. The entertainment aspect must be neither too much nor too little. It must be appropriate to the kind of museum, the kind of visitors, the kind of subject matter.

It is possible to entertain and educate at the same time, or to do neither. At one extreme the result will be a midway or carnival, at the other a mausoleum. A good museum combines education and entertainment.

In spite of this, there are commentators who have argued that education has long been considered an important function of museums.

#### **Hooper-Greenhill (1991:16), for example states:**

By the middle of the nineteenth century the age of the public museum had begun. As we have already seen, education, understood and interpreted on many different levels and in many different ways, was regarded by many as the primary function of museums (my emphasis).

As a better education and wider travelled public has begun to understand the value of museum collections and regard displays as a source of learning so too have museums begun to understand the value of educational programme relevant to their society. This is especially true in Saudi Arabia. Saudi people travel more and there have been improvements made to the education system in the country. These have resulted in a more highly educated public.

The educational role of a museum can be seen as having different purposes in relation to the particular society which the museum serves.

Museums, [the Council] believes, no longer exist to serve the cultural or social needs of a small elite. Instead, they have a dynamic educational function to fulfill. In the world's more prosperous societies, they exist to help man make better use of his leisure time. In the developing countries, they bring him face to face with the benefits of technology, the lessons and example of history and the value of culture, his own or other people's. (Ripley quoting Cartwright 1969:84-85).

Visitors to Saudi museums can acquire, amongst other things, a knowledge of the long history of the country. It is in this way the museums can emphasise the value of their culture.

Many museums throughout the world have accepted their responsibility to education and are providing a better understanding of environment, society and history through their exhibitions and activities. This change reflects increased public interest in museums for they are able to provide a unique educational experience based on authentic objects.

Successful museum school programmes have been developed in many overseas countries. For example, a teaching annexe of Derby Museum, in the United Kingdom, occupies the ground floor of what was formerly a grocer's shop. In this building, a room of approximately 31 square metres has 6 square metres taken up by tiered seating for 35 to 40 children. This room is lit by artificial light. A small electric circuit and switchboard, controlling concealed fluorescent lighting, spotlights, dimmers and a rotary disc for fire-light effects have been installed. Dark brown walls and long brown curtains have been used to conceal the storage area and provide a background for the variety of settings. The principal use of this room is as a reconstruction of a Stone Age cave. The dark walls and curtains provide a cavernous effect while large branches of trees and a hanging animal skin help to break up the rectangular dimensions of the area. A mock wood fire is built on a large flat stone and the reddish-brown lino on the floor is covered with straw. The objective is to provide a background to an illustrated talk on the period while relating different objects one to another, and providing as many activities as possible in which children may participate. Individual children can also use a hafted flint axe to chop wood and measure themselves against a cut-out figure of Neanderthal Man.

Museums stimulate imagination, observation and thinking. They encourage people to learn not only about their own culture but also about other cultures and other world views. The experience they provide the visitor is available in perhaps no other educational institution for a three-dimensional object can make a lasting impression that is not available from film images or from the written word. Their contribution to education is therefore significant. Exhibits in a museum not only provide an opportunity for visitors to look but to think, to wonder and investigate, and thereby to expand their knowledge.

Schools, and mass media, generally do not have the opportunity of confronting students or adults with a three-dimensional reality. There will always be description, copies, and imitation. Even television, as important as its information qualities are, will never be a substitute for the direct impact of three-dimensional reality. The museum with its authenticity, where the time spent on certain objects is solely controlled by the visitor, the museum with its originality offers a particular opportunity for such confrontation. And the chance to arrange things so as to show the gestalt [form or configuration] of a complex matter and its interdependence with other realities, offers an important opportunity for human reflection. (Von Dohnanyi 1972:79).

Educational activities in museums should be directed towards helping people to look constructively and creatively at objects. A variety of such activities can be offered to the public both inside and outside the museum, such as seminars, evening lectures, films and audio-visual exhibits. These have the ability to draw the visitors into learning and thinking experiences and also to strengthen the link between the museum and the general public.

Outside activities, such as special loan programmes, travelling exhibitions and school kits, help bring the museum to children, either in schools or in community centres. The loan of exhibits to schools, colleges and universities, and adult education centres, particularly in isolated or rural areas will, by exposure to museum collections and research, foster a deeper understanding of the role of museums. Museum objects which remain on loan for a lengthy period enable students or a community to become thoroughly familiar with them. Travelling exhibitions can be an important means of helping people to learn and understand other cultures, particularly for those who are not able to visit a museum regularly (Unesco 1960:86). This is especially important in a country like Saudi Arabia where distance and isolation are significant factors.

It is important for museum staff to take teaching collections to schools in order to encourage children to handle objects. Some museums encourage visitors, particularly children, to interact with objects. While looking may be educational, touching and feeling stimulate the child through use of the hands as well as through the eyes, ears and brain (Unesco 1960:89). Handling museum material, where this is feasible, should be encouraged, particularly in

situations where children can benefit from doing so and no damage to the object is likely to occur.

Of particular interest is the recent inclusion by some museums of:

.... participatory activities for visitors in addition to guided tours, encouraging discovery learning at the individual's own pace and level of interest. (Marcouse, 1973). Moving exhibits, talking telephones, large to-scale models and real objects that can be entered (submarines and coal mines), audio-visual guides, activities that invite the visitor to touch, experiment, smell, hear and see the remarkable, the unusual, and the rare – are all worthwhile, dynamic, exciting education projects. (Grinder and McCoy 1985:17).

It is this kind of interaction between exhibit and visitor which is becoming recognized by museums as an effective learning process. Consequently, interactive exhibits are more evident in museums today. This aspect should be considered by the museums in Saudi Arabia.

The use of mechanical visual aids, such as films, videos and slides can be a great asset to both the visitor and the staff.

Museum exhibitions should be designed for, and focused on, the education of the general public.

Exhibition design is also an essential part of the education process. As Velarde (1984:394) has stated:

It is essential to think in terms of giving the visitor something he cannot get at home, at school or form a library or shop; and to decide what the public should learn, feel, enjoy or believe when it leaves the exhibition.

The museum visitor seeks information from museum displays. It is important therefore that these displays be effective for they are the point at which the public and the museum meet. Museum labels should provide the visitor with information on the name of the object, its local name if necessary, its collector or donor, its use, function and role and the techniques of manufacture, design or decoration. This will provide the visitor with a complete background for the object.

## **2. Educational Components of Museums in Saudi Arabia.**

### **2.1. Philosophy and Policy.**

There are a number of general or philosophical bases on which museums in Saudi Arabia need to build

on their educational programmes.

The concept of a museum education, programme, however, raises some questions as this concept is new to museums in Saudi Arabia, and before considering and adopting such a concept, museums may raise a number of questions.

We need to consider how far the country has moved in the field of museums and their development. There are significant changes occurring in Saudi Arabia. A network of site museums is being constructed and a major National Museum was opened in 1999. There is a growing awareness at Government level of the importance of developing modern museums, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage is heavily working on this. The aim of which is to encourage an appreciation of the country's past. The primary function of these museums is educational. They attempt to impart to the Saudis of today the richness of their archaeological and historical heritage.

The effectiveness of Saudi museums in achieving the educational aims of providing a better understanding and appreciation of their collections to the general public, as well as increasing interest in museum exhibits should be considered. Museums in Saudi Arabia do not as yet contribute effectively to this educational role.

One of the main arguments of this paper is that museums of Saudi Arabia should be responsive to the cultural and social need for developing educational programmes within the context of a modern Islam state. The following points serve to illustrate this argument.

There is a cultural and social need for developing a more educational role for museums in the country as modern developments and the industrialisation of the society threaten the country's traditional ways of life. Museums are able to help provide the new generations with an understanding of their heritage by educating with an understanding of their heritage by educating them in the history of their country.

However, it is clear that the Saudi public still do not see museums as places of learning. Until museums are able to change this attitude, it is probable that they will remain isolated from the community. This is indeed a major task for museums in Saudi Arabia. Museum school programmes are one way of changing this attitude among school children and through them their parents.

Museum education programmes are essential in Saudi Arabia because Saudi museums have an important role to play both within the Kingdom itself

and the surrounding region and also in the Islamic world as a whole. As outlined before the country is rich in archaeological sites and historical monuments with many discoveries yet to come. Memorial Halls and Folklore museums also present the country's heritage to the public. In addition to this heritage, the country, through its oil industry, has an important place in international affairs. These are areas in which museums could help to develop an understanding among Saudi children both of the material heritage of the past and the values of past civilizations, and of their relationship with the modern world. Museums in Saudi Arabia, because of its position in the Islamic world could provide a balance by showing the history of Islam and the era of the Islamic Caliphate. This would help strengthen the unity of Islamic people and their awareness of their common religious heritage.

If museums in Saudi Arabia are to conform to the internationally accepted definitions of a museum, they should be seen as educational as well as cultural institutions. Museum educational programmes should be introduced as part of museum activities. Because of the nature of the organization of Saudi society, a national museum policy with clearly defined aims and goals is needed if museums are to fulfill their educational potential and to ensure that their schools education programmes are effective. All of these would justify the development of educational programmes in Saudi museums.

These programmes would need to link with the school curriculum. It is important that museum education programmes relate to the school curriculum. Fortunately, the subject of some of these museums is directly relevant to the teaching of history in schools. These include the National Museum and the other regional museums.

At Primary school level, a specific period of history is taught as part of the curriculum. This includes the early history of Islam and the era of the Islamic Caliphate. The National Museum has sections which deal with the above topics. At Intermediate and Secondary level, pupils study the history of Saudi Arabia, including the Al-Sa'ud Dynasty and the three periods of the Saudi State. The museum also covers different aspects of the Saudi history as well as the unification of the Kingdom.

It is important that museum educational programmes for children include the needs of the school population in the remote areas away from museums.

In Saudi Arabia however, it is difficult to determine whether museums could be seen as

educational institutions and places of entertainment. Traditionally education is seen as separate from entertainment. If we accept Burcaw's (1983) argument, museums in the Kingdom should entertain their visitors as a possible means of attracting more people to visit museums. However, education should be the primary purpose of these museums.

Nevertheless, the educational programme of the museum can be presented in a way that will give the visitor a pleasant and enjoyable experience, while still providing a learning experience.

The first and, without doubt, the most important problem which museums in Saudi Arabia have to face is to ensure that museum education staff are trained and have appropriate qualifications.

It is important in developing museum education programmes that museums in Saudi Arabia are aware of existing problems in this area. The current museums are only able to handle a limited number of visitors because of their size. The existing museums should consider moving to larger buildings. This will help them to provide a better service and activities to the public.

Whatever may be the final decision on the educational programmes to be adopted, one thing remains important that is these programmes and the educational policy must be planned and adjusted to suit the social and cultural structures of contemporary Saudi society.

Another question which should be considered is the type of educational programmes which could be developed by museums. Their objectives and audience need to be defined. Examples of educational programmes which could be developed by museums in the Saudi Arabia and their objectives and audiences will be discussed in detail in the later pages of this study.

## 2.2 Practice

### 2.2a. Collections and Presentation

Museums in Saudi Arabia are intended to provide educational and cultural services to the general public. Those museums which are responsible for the preservation of the heritage of the country have established successful research and excavation programmes, and their collections are often well displayed. In the area of public education it would seem, from the visitor figures available that in museums generally throughout the country it would be useful to strengthen further their services to the public and, where possible, to establish formal programmes

for schools.

It is understandable that the general public takes time to realize the value of museums. This places an extra burden on those museums to take the initiative in actively encouraging the public. Imaginative displays, educational programmes and direct advertising will all help to increase public recognition of the value of these cultural centres. To develop more effective education services in museums across the country qualified professional curatorial, interpretative and educational staff will be needed. The interest of school teachers in the potential of museums needs to be stimulated. Formal approval from education authorities needs to be obtained. The upgrading of current museum buildings will also be necessary.

In recent years the museums in Saudi Arabia have built up substantial collections which are of great benefit to scholars and students, particularly of archaeology and history. It is now appropriate to consider how these can best be used for the educational benefit of the general public as a whole. There are many practical problems that will need to be solved but none is insurmountable.

Arranging significant educational exhibitions is one example of how museums can meet the educational need. It is important that the museum provides the general visiting public with a good educational experience. The meaning of some exhibitions in a museum can all too easily be lost on lay visitors, whether local residents or foreign tourists. Museums have to take into account the educational needs and interests of their particular community.

Museums which do not offer enough to their visitors in the field of education may come to be considered by their public solely as places of entertainment and a way of passing time. Museum labels are important and merit very careful consideration. Ensuring that they are effective in communicating the message is a skilled job but one that is vital to the success of an exhibition. If the words are too long or the sentence structure too complicated, the visitor becomes confused or, worse, bored.

The concepts expressed in a label are important. So too are the physical conditions under which the label has to be read. Positioning, lighting, size of print are all critical. Examples of such problems may be seen, for example, in the display of the Museum of the Department of Archaeology, King Saud University.

As mentioned before, a museum exhibition is a learning environment. The elements of this

environment are not just the objects on display but the words in the accompanying labels. These add to an understanding by visitors of the exhibition. It is important therefore that what they say is meaningful and relevant.

Some museums think that a word or two is sufficient to explain the object on display, for example, "basket with decorative handle" or "knife for killing animals". Modern museum practice recognizes, however, that visitors want more than such obvious statements. This is true in museums such as the Archaeology Museum, King Saud University, the Museum of Abdul Raouf Hasan Khalil in Jeddah and the King Abdul-Aziz Memorial Hall.

Labels like these do not add anything more to the knowledge of the visitor regardless of their age or educational background. They have little educational value for any visitor.

Changes to exhibitions and temporary displays encourage people to re-visit their museum. This would be particularly helpful in the National Museum in Riyadh. The aim is to strengthen public appreciation of museums. It also encourages the habit of making return visits. With any exhibition, whether it is permanent or temporary, both the educational value and the individual's enjoyment should be taken into consideration.

#### 2.2b. School Services

It is apparent that the first steps in developing museum education programmes in Saudi Arabia should be in the area of schools services. These should seek to develop a child's general knowledge in the fields of science, archaeology, history, natural history and social studies. School children should be encouraged to visit museums. To achieve this requires co-operation between museums and schools.

A special education area or 'discovery room' designed solely for children could be provided within museums. Essential equipment for this room could perhaps include:

- A large, flexible area, large enough to take a school class.

- Audio-visual equipment and computers.

- A wide variety of painting, drawing and modeling materials.

- Display areas and cases.

- Perhaps small laboratory facilities and equipment for simple conservation.

- A small library of reference books both for teachers and students, including material about education services and the museum generally.

Educational programmes for school children in museum discovery rooms may cover geology, archaeology, social history or technology. Museums may indeed employ many different approaches in the programmes they offer to schools and to children generally. These could include an academic approach, a practical approach and even an imaginative and creative approach. For example, a museum could offer a short lesson on archaeology and accompany it with films and objects. Alternatively, children could be introduced to the practical aspects of excavation or encouraged, using craft materials, to create artifacts themselves.

Since archaeological collections comprise the most significant museum holdings in Saudi Arabia, a model programme based on an archaeological collection is presented here as an example of how an effective schools programme could be developed.

A model of an archaeological site could be placed in the discovery room and used to provide a practical excavation exercise. Each stratum could be coloured or a different type of soil be used to indicate stratification. The children would then excavate the site and locate various objects such as pottery, glass and coins that had been placed therein. Each stratum would be numbered and named by the children. After the excavation, the group would learn how to take care of the finds by placing them in plastic bags, recording their physical details and then transferring them to the laboratory for further study.

A second exercise for the group could be the practical conservation of cultural objects. A third could be the documentation of objects the children had excavated.

Special worksheets should be prepared for documentation and include the following points:

- Name of the archaeological site.
- Name of the child.
- Date of excavation.
- Name and number of the stratum where the object was found.
- Size of the object.
- Description of the object.

After the practical exercise, the children could be shown a film of a group of archaeologists working at a site. A museum staff member should always be on hand to guide and answer questions. This kind of exercise would provide school children with an excellent opportunity to learn about archaeology and its practical field aspects.

The activities of museums in the field of education for school children in the country should extend beyond the museum building. For example, museums of archaeology could arrange trips for school pupils to archaeological sites in the region. The children could bring back to their school some of the objects collected from the sites where these are not of crucial scientific significance.

The final goal should be the setting up in the school of an exhibition on screens and in cases. This exhibition would consist of museum specimens as well as the objects collected on the field visit, together with other display material (pictures, models etc...) prepared by the pupils themselves. The exhibition could be supervised by the teacher and one of the curators or museum education staff. Such an exercise would reinforce the lessons already learned. Furthermore, the children would learn to use their imagination and thinking skills.

Projects of this nature would forge close links between the museum and school and would encourage the children to see museums as educational resource centres. It would certainly help them to develop a better appreciation of museum material.

The exhibition should, of course, be opened to the whole school and to the general public. The children responsible for its arrangement could act as guides or give short talks on different aspects of the exhibition. This would provide opportunities for children of different ages and backgrounds to exchange ideas. Parents and other adults would also become involved. The influence of the project would thereby extend well beyond the class for which it was originally designed.

The objectives of such children's programmes should be to arouse the interest of young people in their cultural heritage and to encourage school children to visit museums and monuments, both as part of the formal education curriculum and independently. It is important to inculcate a responsible attitude among Saudi children towards the material heritage of the past. It is important to stimulate their curiosity and imagination, in the fields of archaeology, history, art and technology, using the resources of the museum under the guidance of an education officer and the classroom teacher. The aim should be to help improve the children's motivation to learn in an informal educational environment, to help them understand and appreciate their heritage and, in providing them with access to original objects, to help them look at these objects constructively and creatively.

For practical reasons, visiting school groups

should be limited in size. Too many children in a group are difficult to control and the benefits of the visit are lost. Schools should also be encouraged to make a series of visits each year, not just one. In this way a variety of educational programmes could be provided. Schools wishing to bring classes to the museum need to ensure they are well prepared by their teachers. Close prior consultation between teachers and museum officers is therefore essential.

Exhibitions prepared by schoolchildren can also be placed on display for a time, usually in the discovery room. These can then be maintained by museum staff. This will provide the schoolchildren with further opportunities for learning, and each school can own its individual display.

The establishment of a discovery room clearly provides an opportunity for close links between museums and schools and will again encourage children to see museums as educational resource centres not just as places of entertainment.

Loan services and travelling exhibitions are another educational service a museum can provide to schools. Loans should include support materials and models as well as objects. All must be packed carefully, properly transported and well housed in the school and care taken to avoid damage. A museum officer should visit schools and present talks on the loan collection, using artifacts, photographs and slides. The careful recording of loans is essential and catalogues and other information relating to the loan collections should be made available to schools.

A network of small regional museums or display centres is another possibility which museums in Saudi Arabia might consider using as part of their activities, both for schools and for the general public. Mobile units could transport almost anything from archaeological and ethnographic material to plants, animals and paintings. This would help to bring the museum's resources to more isolated schools and communities, particularly those in remote areas.

During school holidays museums could offer a variety of enjoyable programmes for children and students at all levels of education. Such programmes could include organized trips to archaeological sites and historical monuments, discussions and seminars in the museum for teachers and students, workshops in art and crafts and various competitions (with small prizes) in different fields, or art and craft exhibitions.

Special programmes should also be provided for the physically and intellectually handicapped, both children and adults. This would encourage them to visit museums and participate in its activities. The

social benefit to these people could be substantial.

Schools throughout the country may well wish to develop their own museums. Students could use the collections of the school museum for study. It thereby becomes an integral part of the school and a valuable pedagogical aid. The museum could be used as a display gallery for works of art by the students themselves.

The reasons for visiting museums may be as various as the physical and social characteristics of the visitor. For example, the highly educated visitor is most likely to cite learning, education and growth as reasons; and the importance of these motives has been found to increase with the age of the visitor.

People have many reasons for visiting museums. The museum visitor is most likely to be motivated by a combination of purposes including: "learning, enjoyment, seeing the museum and its exhibits; and social reasons such as concerns for his or her children". (National Museum of Canada 1983:36).

No study of what motivates museum visitors in Saudi Arabia has been undertaken.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the critical observation which emerges from this study is that museum education in the country is not playing a full and effective role in the social and educational development of Saudi Arabia.

Change and innovation in the field of museum education, can only be achieved by trained staff. In this respect, museum training programmes are essential in Saudi Arabia.

When museums in the country are compared with those of advanced countries, and when the lack of awareness in Saudi society of the importance of museum education is considered, it is apparent that museums still have a long way to go both in their own development and in the field of education.

Education should become the main purpose for the development of museums in Saudi Arabia. The role of museums should be to convey to Saudi of today the richness of their archaeological and historical heritage, to encourage scientific research and the study of the country's past and to communicate the results of these to the people. This can best be achieved through museum education programmes.

Museums in the country should play a serious educational role and must not isolate themselves from the community. Introspective attitudes which concentrate activities solely on preservation and research rather than education and display only serve to alienate the public. Important though they are, they are not the only functions; museums have a major educational responsibility as well. It is apparent that the Saudi public still does not see museums as places of learning. Until museums are able to change this attitude they will remain isolated from the community. This is indeed a major task for museums in Saudi Arabia.

The change can only come about through better publicity, innovative exhibition design, better services and the provision of educational programmes, particularly for schoolchildren. Effective exhibition design and attractive museum publications help to communicate with the general public.

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