

## Educational Features of Museum Expositions

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**How to cite:** Seyidova, Z. (2026). Educational features of museum expositions. *Porta Universorum*, 2(4), 71–77. <https://doi.org/10.69760/portuni.26040009>

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### ABSTRACT

The article examines the educational features of museum expositions from scientific-pedagogical and socio-cultural perspectives. It is shown that a museum exposition is not merely a space where exhibits are displayed, but also an important instructional tool that contributes to the formation of visitors' worldview, especially that of schoolchildren, to the development of their aesthetic taste, and to the profound assimilation of historical and cultural heritage. The study substantiates the role of the principle of visuality in the museum environment, the importance of taking age characteristics and spheres of interest into account during the interpretation of exhibits, and the necessity of integrating guide activity with modern technical means. Based on the experience of Azerbaijani museums—particularly the Azerbaijan National Museum of Art, the Jalil Mammadguluzadeh Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic Museum of Literature, and the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum—the article analyzes the impact of exposition materials on the aesthetic, intellectual, and moral development of schoolchildren. It also demonstrates that museum lessons, open classes, interactive programs, creative workshops, “open door days,” “museum nights,” and other educational events play an important role in increasing the effectiveness of museum education. The educational potential of museum expositions is of particular significance in preserving society's cultural memory, promoting national and moral values, and shaping the younger generation as individuals.

**Keywords:** Museum exposition; museum pedagogy; museum education; schoolchildren; aesthetic education; cultural heritage; Azerbaijan

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Museums are important cultural institutions that operate on the principle of collective responsibility in terms of preserving the heritage of humanity and transmitting it to future generations. This responsibility must be aligned with the historical and cultural needs, moral expectations, and social demands of society. Against the background of rapid changes observed in social life, the functional essence of museums has also acquired new content, and educational activity, scientific and informational exchange, and the presentation of museum collections within the exhibition space have become priority directions. Museums are not stable social institutions of a static nature; on the contrary, they are dynamic institutions that systematize events occurring in the surrounding world within the

framework of historical memory, reflect them in the exhibition space, and ensure cultural continuity between generations (ICOM, 2022).

From the perspective of studying the socio-cultural activity of museums, a museum exposition serves as an important visual means that contributes to the understanding of human history as well as national history, and to the assimilation of universal, national, historical, cultural, and literary values. In Azerbaijan, a country with ancient and rich historical-cultural traditions, numerous museums are in operation. The expositions and collections of these museums, located in different regions of the republic, are continuously enriched through ancient historical, cultural, and literary artifacts uncovered as a result of archaeological excavations.

A museum exposition is not merely a space where objects are displayed, but also an important educational and instructional tool that influences the formation of visitors' knowledge, worldview, and aesthetic taste (Hein, 1998). The educational characteristics of a museum exposition are clearly reflected in its content, structure, methods of presentation, and interaction with the audience. This paper examines these characteristics through the lens of Azerbaijani museum practice, with particular attention to the impact of expositions on the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral development of schoolchildren.

## **2. THE EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF MUSEUM EXPOSITIONS**

### ***2.1 Visuality and the Formation of Historical Understanding***

A museum exposition forms in the visitor a systematic understanding of historical and cultural processes. Each exhibit displayed in the exposition serves as a bearer of a particular period, event, personality, or socio-cultural environment. When these exhibits are arranged according to logical sequence and scientific principles, the visitor gains a clearer understanding of the past and is able to perceive the connections between different stages of historical development. By conveying information through visual means, the exposition communicates knowledge more effectively than what is often difficult to acquire through books or oral explanation alone (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007).

One of the fundamental principles that determines the effectiveness of the cognitive process in all fields is visuality, which manifests itself more clearly and effectively in the museum environment. A more comprehensive presentation of an exhibit through various auxiliary means not only intensifies the process of perception, but also broadens the scope and content of the knowledge acquired. The impact of the teaching and educational process organized in accordance with a particular socio-cultural environment is directly determined by the character of that environment and the degree of its appropriateness (Əmirxanov, 2009).

The educational function is one of the principal tasks within the system of museum activity. The museum environment, in which educational initiatives related to the implementation of teaching and upbringing processes are carried out, possesses rich pedagogical and socio-cultural potential. This potential significantly influences the improvement of the qualitative indicators of museum education, the expansion of its impact, and the strengthening of its practical effectiveness.

### ***2.2 Aesthetic Education and the Development of Artistic Taste***

Museum objects reflecting various branches and genres of art acquire a more attractive content in exhibitions and exert an important influence on the formation of artistic-aesthetic feelings, emotional impressions, and a sense of beauty among schoolchildren. Such exhibits serve not only the development of aesthetic taste, but also play an important role in enriching the content of an individual's aesthetic needs and in directing those needs. As prominent Azerbaijani psychologists Akbar Bayramov and

Abdul Alizade have noted, when a person perceives the beauty embodied in a work of art, the aesthetic feelings that arise are not accidental in nature; on the contrary, these feelings are formed in direct connection with their spiritual needs.

The examples of decorative-applied art of Azerbaijan and works of fine art preserved in the Azerbaijan National Museum of Art play an important role in shaping the aesthetic interests of school-age youth. The works of outstanding Azerbaijani artists—including Mirza Gadim Irvani, Mir Mohsun Navvab Garabagi, Bahruz Kangarli, and Azim Azimzade—distinguished by their high aesthetic value, create deep emotional impressions in schoolchildren and foster in them a lasting interest in national art, artistic heritage, and creative thinking.

Although Bahruz Kangarli lived only thirty years, works such as *Autumn Landscape*, *Wind*, *Sleeping Child*, and *Boy from the Village of Avshar*, included in the museum's permanent exposition, serve as artistic expressions of the painter's deep spiritual attachment to his homeland, native nature, and its aesthetic beauty. Alongside nature motifs, human destiny also occupies a special place in his creative output. Particularly in his portrait works, he depicted the images of homeless children, refugees, and compatriots deprived of their native environment, thereby reflecting the social tragedies of the period with strong emotional impact.

### **3. THE ROLE OF AZERBAIJANI MUSEUMS IN SCHOOLCHILDREN'S EDUCATION**

#### ***3.1 The Jalil Mammadguluzadeh Nakhchivan Museum of Literature***

The role of the Jalil Mammadguluzadeh Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic Literature Museum is of particular importance in terms of shaping schoolchildren's worldview and fostering their intellectual development. In the museum's exhibition halls, exhibits of diverse content, vivid character, and high value are displayed. These include rare manuscripts belonging to artists, poets, and scholars; delicate miniatures created for classical literary works; rare printed books; copies of newspapers and journals; works of modern Azerbaijani writers; documentary photographs; and writers' personal memorial objects (Əmirxanov, 2001).

Schoolchildren visiting the museum observe the exhibits with great attention and move through the exhibition space with constant interest. The presented exhibits create favorable conditions for strengthening their theoretical knowledge about the lives and creative activity of outstanding masters of Azerbaijani literature such as Khagani, Nizami, Nasimi, Fuzuli, Khatai, Vagif, M. F. Akhundov, M. A. Sabir, and H. Javid, among others. The visual and illustrative materials displayed in different halls ensure that this knowledge is perceived through concrete artistic and historical examples, thereby making an important contribution to the enrichment of schoolchildren's literary worldview.

#### ***3.2 The Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum***

The activity of the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum is especially noteworthy in terms of museum pedagogy. In order to increase the effectiveness of museum education, a differentiated and individualized approach to each age group is applied. Special programs based on the principles of play, interactive engagement, and practical participation are developed for preschool children and primary school pupils (Babayeva, 2020). Separate sections within the exhibition space take into account the behavioral characteristics, attention span, and level of perception of this age group.

A particularly significant example is the alaçıq environment created within the museum exposition. Established as an initial experiment, the "Nomadic Alaçıq" game serves to present the traditional domestic environment to children in a visual and emotional manner. Inside the alaçıq, constructed from

reed matting and felt materials, there are traditional household items, carpets, and accessories, while the overall interior is complemented by photographs reflecting that period. Children become acquainted with the unique content and meaning of each object and gain the opportunity to watch animated films with the aid of modern information technologies. This form of presentation fosters in children attachment to national-spiritual values, patriotic feelings, and a desire to engage with the national heritage (Eyvazova, 2018).

## 4. PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF EFFECTIVE MUSEUM EDUCATION

### 4.1 Requirements for Effective Exposition of Exhibits

In order to increase the impact of exhibition materials on the formation and expansion of schoolchildren's worldview, several key requirements must be purposefully ensured:

1. **Special attention should be paid to the principle of placing exhibits within the exhibition space.** Exhibits should be positioned in those parts of the hall that are most appropriate in terms of content and most likely to attract visitors' attention, and favorable conditions should be created for their visual perception.
2. **Scientific accuracy should be ensured in the presentation of museum guides.** When providing information about exhibits, guides should rely not on random assumptions, but on reliable facts, historical sources, and well-grounded evidence.
3. **The age characteristics of schoolchildren should be taken into account in the interpretation process.** The content, language, and method of presentation should be adapted to the students' age level, cognitive abilities, and perceptual characteristics.
4. **Consideration of schoolchildren's spheres of interest should be regarded as an important condition.** Highlighting aspects that correspond to their interests makes it possible to establish more active interaction with the exposition.
5. **The possibilities of modern technical means should be widely used.** Alongside the guide's explanation, the use of audiovisual and other modern technological tools enhances the impact of the exposition and creates conditions for a fuller perception of information.

### 4.2 Open Lessons and Museum Pedagogy

Open lessons organized in museums are of particular pedagogical importance in the process of determining and assessing students' level of knowledge. Since open lessons conducted in the museum environment ensure the interconnection of theoretical knowledge and visual observation, they increase the effectiveness of the educational process (UNESCO, 2015). The organization of open lessons should be carried out on the basis of the following principles:

6. **Ensuring preliminary acquaintance with the museum exposition:** Students should first be introduced to the exhibition space, its thematic structure, and the general content of the displayed materials.
7. **Providing detailed information on the basis of relevant exhibits:** A detailed and scientifically grounded explanation should be given on the basis of exhibits dedicated to the subject of the open lesson.
8. **Encouraging students' active participation:** Conditions should be created for students to speak on the topic, express their opinions, and put forward independent judgments.

9. **Conducting assessment at the final stage:** At the end of the lesson, students' level of comprehension should be determined through questions and their knowledge evaluated accordingly.

#### ***4.3 Interactive and Event-Based Educational Activities***

Various events organized in museums occupy an important place in the formation of adolescents' aesthetic education. The Jalil Mammadguluzadeh Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic Literature Museum carries out a series of regular events with the participation of secondary school students. Within these events, students representing different educational institutions recite poems and perform short dramatic scenes based on the works of writers. Such activities have a significant impact on the development of schoolchildren's artistic and aesthetic taste and the strengthening of their interest in literary heritage.

The educational activity of the museum may also be realized in the form of "open days," "museum nights," "museum festivals," and other similar events. In such cases, information about individual exhibits is presented to audiences in the form of a story, legend, or fairy tale, and sometimes the presentation of exhibits and folk customs and traditions is organized in a dramatized form. An important feature of such events is that audiences do not act merely as passive listeners; on the contrary, they become active participants in the process (Hein, 1998; Tal, 2004). It is precisely through this kind of interactive participation that visitors perceive cultural heritage more deeply through museum exhibits and assimilate it more comprehensively.

### **5. TECHNOLOGY AND THE MODERNIZATION OF MUSEUM EDUCATION**

In the modern era, the educational possibilities of museum expositions have been further expanded through new technologies. Audio guides, electronic screens, interactive panels, multimedia presentations, and virtual tours create opportunities for information to be absorbed in a more accessible, engaging, and memorable form. These tools reduce the static character of the exposition and transform it into a living environment of communication and learning. In such a setting, the visitor is not merely an observer, but also an active participant in the learning process (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007).

Museums should develop joint projects in cooperation with higher education institutions, secondary specialized schools, and general education establishments. This activity is based, first of all, on direct acquaintance with authentic cultural examples and on their scientific and practical study. Such measures may be implemented through excursions, museum lessons, club activities, and practical forms of work carried out in creative workshops. The construction of museum expositions on scientific foundations, with due consideration for modern pedagogical approaches and technological possibilities, remains an important task (Qurbanova, 2014).

### **6. CONCLUSION**

The analysis carried out shows that, in the modern period, a museum exposition functions not only as a space that ensures the systematic display of exhibits, but also as an important social institution performing strong educational, formative, and cultural-communicative functions. The materials presented in the exposition have a significant impact on the formation of visitors' historical memory, especially that of schoolchildren, on strengthening their attachment to national-spiritual values, on the development of their aesthetic taste, and on the broadening of their scientific worldview.

Within the museum environment, the dominant position of the principle of visibility, the direct observation of exhibits, their interpretation on scientific grounds, and the application of modern

technical means emerge as the principal factors increasing the effectiveness of the educational process. The research has established that, in order to realize the educational potential of the museum exposition, special importance must be attached to the proper placement of exhibits, the consideration of visitors' age and psychological characteristics, the reliance of guide explanations on scientific foundations, and the broad application of interactive and creative forms of activity.

The experience of Azerbaijani museums—including museums of art, literature, and decorative-applied arts—proves that exhibition materials serve not only to provide schoolchildren with information, but also to develop their skills of observation, comparison, analysis, independent judgment, and aesthetic perception. Thus, the museum exposition is an effective means of great importance in the comprehensive formation of the younger generation, in preserving cultural heritage and transmitting it to future generations, as well as in the process of educating society. From this perspective, the expansion of cooperation between museums and educational institutions, the improvement of expositions on the basis of modern pedagogical and technological approaches, and the development of multifaceted forms of educational activity should be regarded as one of the urgent tasks of the present day.

#### DECLARATIONS

**Conflict of Interest Statement:** The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct and reporting of this study.

**Funding Statement:** This research received no external funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency.

**Author's Contributions:** Zenfira Seyidova: conceptualization, literature review, data collection and analysis, writing – original draft, reviewing, and final editing.

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Received: 5 March 2026

Accepted: 12 April 2026

Published: 13 April 2026