

Museum Education in Practice

Report on trends in museum education 2007 – exposition and conclusions

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Preface

This document is a summarized version of *Museum Education in Practice: a report on trends in museum education in 2007*. The exposition and conclusions have been transcribed in full from the original. The bibliography has been revised and lists only the publications that are cited here. We have opted for this solution because the costs of having the entire Dutch report translated, edited and printed would have been rather costly.

SUMMARY

Museum education has become a discipline in itself. This is one of the encouraging conclusions of *Museum Education in Practice*, which reports on trends in museum education in the Netherlands since 1996.

Educational activities in museums have changed in recent years. Since the last report appeared twelve years ago, museums have become more embedded in the local cultural and social infrastructure. The Culture and School policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has breathed new life into the contact between museums and primary and secondary schools – which could now be described as regular rather than incidental.

The transfer of knowledge and insight and making museum visits more pleasurable are still the primary goals of museum education. These are closely followed by the cultivation of involvement and empathy. Most museums consider these goals more important than before.

There are more museums with a special education department. There has been a significant improvement in funding, staffing and support facilities. Despite a steep rise in the use of digital presentation techniques and interactive exhibits, conventional presentation techniques and so-called 'kijkwijzers' (educational viewing guides) are by far most commonly used.

Museums still experience a degree of tension between their education and other public tasks. However, the debate no longer revolves around the legitimization of museum education, but centres around the question where it stands in the list of priorities. Nowadays, education is seen as a core mission and a spearhead. Education is focusing on an ever-widening audience and strives to bind this audience to the museum.

Museum Education in Practice: a report on trends in museum education in 2007 is an explorative project conducted under the auspices of Cultuurnetwerk Nederland with funding from the Arts Directorate (Culture and School) and the Cultural Heritage Directorate of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Exposition

AIM

The aim of the study was to gauge the situation of museum education in the Netherlands in the first years of the 21st century and to compare it with the situation described in the evaluative report of 1996, viz: *Tendrapport museumeducatie (Report on Trends in Museum Education)* by Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes. To facilitate a comparison between the two reports, the questions that were asked in the first study were repeated in the second, though topics were added or omitted to reflect current developments. These choices are explained in the relevant chapters of the original document.

The findings presented in this report will serve as input for the policy and practical activities of museums, educational organizations and government agencies. Hopefully, they will prompt museums to discuss and (further) develop their own educational policy. The report also provides teachers and other education professionals with a general impression of the various possibilities and strategies for collaborative associations with museums. Finally, it presents government agencies with openings for explicating questions that have previously appeared in policy papers and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The study was prompted primarily by the fact that over ten years had passed since the publication of the last report on trends in museum education (1995). Secondly, recent publications had suggested that, since then, substantial shifts had occurred in museum education in the Netherlands. The policy document *Bewaren om teweeg te brengen (Conserving to effectuate, 2005)* which was presented by Medy van der Laan, State Secretary for Culture at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap/OCW*), was the first policy document since 1976 to present an integrated vision of museum policy. According to Van der Laan, museums play a key role in enhancing awareness and knowledge and in developing the critical and creative potential of individuals and groups. She is also counting on museums to present narratives about culture, history and identity in a way that will invite (young) visitors to draw their own conclusions and make their own choices. Van der Laan notes that museums are endeavouring to reach broad groups in society by devising new educational concepts and lowering thresholds. To strengthen the ties between museums and other institutions she suggests that schools work together with the local community and support organizations.

Educational strategies are not only changing in museums. In *Pegasus' vlucht gevolgd. Cultuur en School 1997-2007: doelstellingen, onderzoek en resultaten (Pegasus' flight, the next stage. Culture and School 1997-2007: aims, research and results)* Van Hoorn and IJdens (2008) report that, since 1996, schools have been engaging in a whole array of cultural activities and are looking for networks in which each party can contribute expertise and bear responsibility in a cultural infrastructure that is in tune with the users.

The growing emphasis on social cohesion has made museums (once again) aware of their role in society. An interesting case in point is the *Blauwdruk (Blueprint) Project*, concluded in 2005, in which four museums explored the possibilities of attracting new target groups and attempted to ascertain how the institution of 'the museum' needed to change in order to retain the interest of these target groups in the long term. Partnerships with other museums and social and cultural organizations formed a key part of the project. *Blauwdruk* was launched in the wake of experience gained in UK projects on museums, museum education and social inclusion, which used new strategies to attract the 'museum-estranged'. Culture – and hence museum education – is an essential part of the

inclusion policy, which focuses on shared norms and values and identity questions. Museums can contribute by giving new meaning to their collections and by developing new educational concepts and narratives.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND DESIGN

Museums tend to associate the term 'museum education' first and foremost with lessons and activity programmes for schools. But museum education should extend farther and meet the learning needs of individual visitors and groups and specific target groups outside the sphere of conventional education. Effectively, we understand museum education in terms of formal, non-formal and informal learning – which should not be conflated with marketing, information and promotion campaigns to entice people across the threshold.

The data used for this report were collected in 2007. The purpose of the study was similar to that of its predecessor in 1995, which placed trends and developments in museum education in a long-term perspective. Other, comparable studies were conducted in the past by the SCO-Kohnstamm Instituut in Amsterdam – a nationwide research institute – and published in 1980, 1989 and 1996. Researcher and professor Folkert Haanstra, who has worked on all the previous studies and advised on this one, has been a constant factor throughout.

The question addressed by the study is:

How does the situation of museum education in the first years of the 21st century compare with that of the mid-1990s?

The study examines the current situation in terms of:

- 1) staffing and funding for museum education;
- 2) theories on museum education prevailing in the museum sector;
- 3) the position of education in the museum;
- 4) the status of educational staff in the museum and the relationship between museum education and other activities that target the public, such as information and promotion;
- 5) the development and application of – new – concepts in museum education;
- 6) the way in which museums evaluate the effects of museum education;
- 7) the way in which the various target groups are reached, with specific attention to schools;
- 8) cooperation between museums and other organizations concerned with museum education and the forms of cooperation.

The study consisted of three parts: (1) a literature search covering the period 1995 – 2008; (2) interviews with educational staff from 26 museums and two support organizations; and (3) two nationwide surveys among educational staff and museum directors and managers.

LITERATURE SEARCH

Using a list of keywords, the researchers trawled the recent publications (1995 – present) on museums and museum education in the library of Cultuurnetwerk Nederland. The list was checked by the authors and confirmed as complete. It included all relevant publications from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, national advisory boards such as the Council for Culture (*Raad voor Cultuur*) and the Educational Council of the Netherlands (*Onderwijsraad*), and national sector organizations such as the Netherlands Museums Association (*Nederlandse Museumvereniging*), the Netherlands Institute for Heritage (*Erfgoed Nederland*), the Association of Netherlands Municipalities

(*Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten*) and the Interprovincial Platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience (*Interprovinciaal Overleg*).

INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATIONAL WORKERS FROM MUSEUMS

The literature search unveiled the trends and questions that have appeared in museum education in the past ten years. These were used as a basis for interview guidelines designed to collect qualitative data in the form of visions, opinions etc. Themes that emerged from the literature search were added to topics from the previous reports.

The interviews were held with museum workers with special responsibility for education. If there were several workers, the departmental head was interviewed. Twenty-eight interviews were conducted (at 26 museums and two support organizations) in the summer of 2007. These were then transcribed and approved by the interviewees.

NATIONWIDE SURVEYS

Two types of questionnaires were distributed nationwide. Educational workers at the museums were sent a detailed questionnaire covering all aspects of the educational activities at the museum. Museum directors and managers received an abridged version of the same questionnaire. The questions were based largely on those in the previous survey. To ease comparison many of them were copied word for word. The results of the literature search and the preliminary results of the interviews with museum staff were also taken into account when the questionnaires were being compiled.

All the museums which were members of the Museum Association – a total of 392 – received a questionnaire and a covering letter at the end of October 2007. Each museum received a questionnaire for the directors and the management and a questionnaire for the educational workers. A total of 252 museums (64%) participated in the survey by filling out the questionnaire as opposed to 186 (57%) out of 328 museums in 1995. Hence, there was an increase of 20% in the number of contacted museums and an even greater increase of 35% in the number of respondent museums.

WORKING CONFERENCE

Cultuurnetwerk Nederland and the Public & Presentation Department of the Museum Association jointly organized a working conference in Centraal Museum Utrecht on 15 May 2008, where the provisional results of the nationwide questionnaires for museum directors and educational workers were presented and discussed. This was followed by five parallel sessions in which specific themes were related to the overall research question. Each session consisted of a brief introduction by two museum experts, who then posed various hypotheses which were discussed with the audience. Odette Straten (Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen) and René Pinggen (Museum Jan Cunen, Oss) introduced *The Position of Museum Education*. John Leek (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, Hilversum) and Chantal Thomassen (Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht) introduced *Public Mediation*. Eveline Reeskamp (Centraal Museum, Utrecht) and Epcó Runia (Mauritshuis, The Hague) introduced *Educational Presentation*. Noepy Testa (De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam) and Natasja Wehman (&Wehman, Amsterdam) introduced *Target Groups and Partnership* and Ruth Horstmanshoff (Museum GoudA) and Herman van Gessel (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam) introduced *Ideas on Education and Participation*. Staff from Cultuurnetwerk Nederland assisted at each session and compiled reports of the discussions. The introductions, the responses of the sixty museum experts from almost as many Dutch museums, and the reports are incorporated in the conclusions to this report.

NATIONWIDE MUSEUM ASSOCIATIONS AND STEERING COMMITTEE

The Netherlands Museum Association and the Association of State-Subsidized Museums provided administrative support for the survey and helped with the formation of an expert steering committee, consisting of Fokelien Renckens-Stenneberg (Netherlands Museum Association), Marthe de Vet and Herma Hofmeijer (Association of State-Subsidized Museums), Richard Hermans and Floriëlle Ruepert (Netherlands Institute for Heritage), Jan Sas (Reinwardt Academie) and Riet de Leeuw (Directorate, Netherlands Institute for Heritage, Ministry of Education, Culture & Science).

The steering committee concentrated on, amongst others, the structural organization and the timetable of the survey, the selection of museums for the interviews, the interview guidelines, both the questionnaires, and the content and editorial aspects of the report. This report would never have seen the light of day without the expert, critical and enthusiastic efforts of the steering committee.

The Cultuurnetwerk Nederland project team which was responsible for the research and publication consisted of Piet Hagenars (project manager), Melissa de Vreede, Marie-Louise Damen, Jan Ensink, Marjo van Hoorn, Karin Laarakker, Jan-Pieter Maaijwee, Josefiene Poll and Folkert Haanstra.

The Ministry of Education, Culture & Science supported the research by subsidizing and participating in the steering committee.

Conclusions

The conclusions below are based on the results of the three-pronged research project and the working conference. They attempt to answer the general question addressed by the study by comparing the situation of museum education in the early years of the 21st century with the situation in the mid-1990s. They are organized according to the eight themes listed above. To clarify the developments and trends in museum education and to place them in perspective we refer consistently to the conclusions from the report of 1996.

STAFFING AND FUNDING FOR MUSEUM EDUCATION

The Report on Trends in Museum Education of 1996 states that no interruptions had appeared in the trend of the previous ten years. There are, on average, signs of stabilization or a slight increase in the activities and resources. To some extent this reflects an increase in the absolute number of museums that perform specific activities, but it may also point to a proportional decline, given the steep rise in the number of museums in general (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, i).

In 2007, education was included in the activities of 99% of the respondent museums. Clearly, museums nowadays have far better access to funding, staff and support services than in 1995. On average, the educational budget has either increased or remained the same and more staff places have become available for education. The expectations for the education budget are also largely positive. People are happier with the external factors than in 1995.

Budget size, staff numbers, and access to specific educational facilities seem to be closely connected with the size of the museum. In absolute terms, large museums have a larger budget and more staff – and often – more educational facilities than mid-sized and small museums. However, mid-sized and small museums spend relatively more money on education. They devote a larger part of their budget to education, and small museums intend to spend even more in the future.

THEORIES ON MUSEUM EDUCATION

In 1996, there were three sets of goals for educational activities. Museums still see the transfer of knowledge and insight as their primary goal, followed by more pleasure in museums visits. Museums are gradually accepting that a museum visit should be enjoyable and entertaining. Educational activities were already being 'de-ideologized' in the 1980s when less importance was being ascribed to character formation than in the 1970s. In 1996 a low score was also recorded for: 'To make visitors aware of certain issues'. In natural history (environmental issues) and anthropological (multiculturality) museums this goal is proportionally more important than in museums with other kinds of collections (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, iii).

The literature search indicated that the current theories in the museum world about the goals of museum education are not all that different from those of ten years ago. The three goals that were mentioned most frequently and in combination with one another were *the transfer of knowledge, social awareness* and *involvement and empathy*. Transfer of knowledge and aesthetic experience appears mainly in the art and sculpture museums. Museums that chose social awareness as a goal want to give meaning to developments in society. They resist the – often automatically accepted – need to spread *high culture*. Cultural history museums want to make the visit as enjoyable as possible and therefore chose involvement and empathy in a cultural history setting.

The questionnaire responses more or less confirm these findings. The goals that scored high in the 1995 study scored high again in 2007. According to the respondents, *the transfer of knowledge and insight* and *making visits more pleasurable* are still the primary goals of museum education. These are followed almost immediately by the *cultivation of involvement and empathy*, which almost all

types of museum – headed by history and technology museums – regard as more important than in 1995.

The score for *'To make visitors aware of certain issues'* was markedly higher for all types of museums in 2007. Another difference, compared with 1995, is that the score from the natural history museums is now slightly lower than from the anthropological museums, but the difference is not significant. Interestingly, the score that this goal received from the art and sculpture museums was much higher than in 1995.

The goals *'To increase the number of visitors'* and *'To cultivate aesthetic experience'* are more important compared with 1995. The latter applied especially to the art and sculpture museums, the anthropological museums and the museums with a 'mixed' collection.

It emerged from the interviews and the working conference that museums are more aware than before of their social environment. They want to be a part of the local community and involve neighbourhood or city residents in their activities. Ideally, the residents should become visitors, who are proud of 'their' museum. Not a single museum clearly chose one goal above the rest; they all sought a combination. The signs point more to individual emphasis than clear-cut choices.

THE POSITION OF EDUCATION IN MUSEUMS

In the report of 1996 the vast majority of the museums rate their duty to the public on a par with their duty as curators. The influence of educational staff on the presentation policy is far from optimal. In twenty percent of museums they say that they 'sometimes' exert an influence on the presentation of the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. The answer was 'usually' in twenty-five percent and 'always' in fifty percent of cases. Exhibitions are mounted more often on a project basis. Integration of the educational activities with other public duties is seen as desirable, but specializations, including knowledge of transfer techniques, are expected to be retained. Educational activities in museums are regarded in a new, more pragmatic light. Education is also seen as a marketable commodity. It meets a clear need and is socially and politically relevant (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, ii).

In 2007 almost every museum has a policy plan and an educational plan. The responses to the questionnaires indicated that the vast majority of museums now see their duty to the public as just as important as their duty as curators. Accordingly, education occupies an important place. More museums now have their own education department, which, in itself, suggests that education has gained a stronger position in museum practices in the past ten years. There is still however a tension between education and other public duties. In contrast with the previous decade, the discussion no longer turns on the legitimization of museum education – that ceased to be an issue a long time ago – but about what takes priority in public duties.

The interviews suggest that people are reasonably satisfied with the position that education has carved out for itself. Education is seen as a core commitment and a spearhead. Even the art and sculpture museums, which have traditionally accorded less prominence to education, now see it as an important task. The fact that cultural education has become a spearhead in government policy is also having a salutary effect on the position of education in museums. If a museum opts to serve the public and education, it must, as Van der Laan states in her policy document, invest money and expertise and pursue its mission with creativity and flexibility.

It emerged in the interviews that educational workers have no regrets about being excluded from decisions on purchases: 'Education and communication play an important role in the exhibition policy. Not in the purchasing policy. We do not see that as necessary.'

As mentioned in the report of 1996, small museums in particular, despite relatively high investment in education, have problems with staff and facilities. This is underscored by the results from the

questionnaires. It is almost impossible to divide up tasks in small museums. Managing and conserving the collection takes up most of the attention. Despite relatively high investments, some museums have neither the funds nor the expertise for education. Various publications point out that educational coaching in smaller museums could be more professional. The Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage should assist here; the New Fund for Cultural Participation could step in, especially now that national advisory boards (2006) have said that more attention should be paid to education in cultural heritage institutes, including museums.

THE STATUS OF EDUCATIONAL WORKERS

The report of 1996 says that educational activities are carried out by designated educational workers in only a small percentage of the museums. In most of the large museums they are carried out by a combination of educational workers and staff who have other tasks as well. In the mid-sized and certainly in the small museums the educational activities are invariably carried out by staff who have other tasks as well.

The relationships between the different duties and tasks in the 'business hierarchy' of the museum are very variable. In some cases the staff who are responsible mainly for educational activities are still in a – traditionally – subordinate position, but in a growing number of museums equal status is accorded to a public services department which may consist of PR, marketing, education and presentation. There seems to be greater convergence between educational activities, public relations and marketing. A limited number of – mainly – larger museums employ special PR workers, but more often than not, PR and marketing are spread across different members of staff, including educational staff; in smaller museums it forms part of the job of the director or curator (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, iv).

Judging from the responses to the questionnaires, various changes appear to have taken place in the status and influence of educational staff. Nowadays there are more museums in which educational staff are responsible for presentation and showing people around. However, they have far less say in purchasing policy and the scheduling of temporary exhibitions than in 1995. They also take fewer initiatives to mount temporary exhibitions than in 1995. In 2007 the overriding majority of the museums involve educational staff in presentation and in guiding the public around the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. The educational staff contribute to the content and form of the exhibition and the viewing guide and are more often responsible for maintaining external contacts that relate to education. In 2007 specially qualified PR staff are more often responsible for public relations.

The respondents are happy with the teamwork between educational workers and other staff members. They are much happier about training and experience. Satisfaction regarding input in museum policy is, on average, more or less the same; respondents from mid-sized and large museums are happier in this respect than respondents from small museums. In short, museum education has become a 'real' discipline and is respected as such.

More and more museum tasks are being carried out by volunteers. The role of volunteers in museum education is by and large supportive and practical; they are far less involved in the development of educational presentations and material.

Like the questionnaires, the interviews show that, nowadays, the PR tasks mentioned by Haanstra and Oostwoud Wijdenes (1996) are not performed by educational workers but by PR staff. The educational worker does, however, keep in touch with all sorts of people and organizations, including schools and training centres. Given the tendency towards demand-driven programmes, these contacts are becoming increasingly important and also more labour-intensive. It is partly for this reason that some museums have separated development from implementation. Educational staff draft the contours of the programmes while freelancers work out the details, write the texts and compile the learning and teaching materials. Museum teachers and guides – including many

volunteers – are instructed in how to show groups around. In many other museums the educational worker is, however, a jack-of-all-trades who does everything himself.

CONCEPTS OF MUSEUM EDUCATION

According to the report of 1996, the guided tour is still the most common method of active presentation. There is a clear trend towards the organization of events: theme-based activities that last for a day or more, such as valuation roadshows, read-aloud festivals and play sessions with old Dutch toys. The range of children's activities has been greatly expanded and there are plans to develop it further in the near future. These plans relate not only to additional activities but also to presentations specifically designed for children. Living history is a strong talking point, even though it is applied only in a limited number of museums. Role-play by museum staff, museum theatre and story-telling are examples of the increasing use of dramatic genres in museum presentations. In passive presentation there is a clear trend towards dynamic and hands-on exhibits and other objects that stimulate the senses. Direct involvement and experience take top priority. Because of the high costs and expertise requirements, experiments with interactive media are taking place on only a modest scale. Technological advances are not expected to bring about any radical changes in the short term (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, iii-iv).

It emerged from the interviews that the form and content of museum education is strongly dictated by certain trends in society. Government policy is, of course, a key factor, not only in education (Culture and Schools) but also in leisure and welfare. Secondly, technological innovations have placed extra media at the disposal of educational services. New academic insights into, for example, educational developments and the experience economy are also shaping educational practices in museums. Kolb was most frequently cited as the inspirational source for new educational concepts and there were repeated allusions to Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory. The aim is to make the experience as pleasurable as possible for each individual; so, everyone's 'ideal learning process' is taken into consideration.

Despite the steep rise in digital presentation techniques and interactive appliances in recent years, it seems, according to the responses, that conventional means of presentation are still very much alive, especially text placards, leaflets and brochures. Slide presentations have, however, made way for computers, videos and DVDs in large and mid-sized museums. In general, art and sculpture museums differ more often from the rest in the presentation of their collections. This is presumably tied in with the nature of the art objects, i.e. authentic works that should not come into direct contact with the public. And, of course, art museums are more intent on communicating aesthetic experience. The size of the museum and the accompanying budget play an important role in decisions on renewing the presentation of the collection. Museums with a modest budget cannot always afford the heavy investments required for new technology.

Many museums recognize the trends in presentation. Half of them agree that important changes have taken place in educational presentation in recent years, referring usually to the increase in the use of audio-visual materials and in the attention paid to children and young adults.

As in 1995, the guided tour and the viewing guide are still the methods most used for presenting the collection to the public. One recent innovation, which cropped up in the literature search and at the working conference, is the deployment of hosts and hostesses as points of contact for inquiries etc. There has also been a clear rise in the use of interactive information technology in the form of digital personal assistants (DPAs), computers and websites. Though most visitors use these facilities in the right way, many are more interested in the technology than the exhibits. Many museums find it difficult to make their information challenging, accessible and topical.

The mix of information and entertainment (infotainment) is an important success factor in reaching the public: the entertainment element takes priority above the informative (learning) element. The theory is that visitors absorb information more easily through casual 'interactive' encounters, so more

attention is paid to involvement and empathy. This is reflected in the increase in workshops, events, role-play, games, personal stories, eye-witness accounts, the deployment of actors, and living history. Museums use all sorts of devices to actively involve all the visitors, from groups of schoolchildren to individuals. The questionnaire responses pointed to more diversity in the activities but a fall in the number.

Though the respondents in the 1995 survey said that they did not expect technological advances to lead to radical changes, it appears that nowadays many museums use all sorts of ICT facilities. Digital media are used as extra information bearers in the museum itself and (prospective) visitors can surf to the website to get an idea of what the museum has to offer without actually dropping by. Almost all museums have a website, but its educational and interactive content is still limited, especially in the case of small and mid-sized museums. Many options, such as webgames and e-learning, are under-utilized. Most of the interviewees see digital media as a means of communicating information and not as a substitute for an encounter with the actual exhibits.

EVALUATION OF MUSEUM EDUCATION

The report of 1996 indicates that more public surveys and evaluations of educational guidance were being conducted than ever before. The academic research revolves around expanding the concept of learning. This not only means that the learning effects are examined in a more narrow sense (e.g. the enhancement of knowledge) but also that the experience and personal interpretation of the visitors are included in the survey. This change goes hand in hand with increased attention to (or the 'utilization' of) involvement, emotion and interaction (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, vi-vii).

The trend towards public surveys continued after 1996. The questionnaire responses indicated that educational activities are being evaluated more and more frequently. Most museums ask the public to express their opinions in a comments book or in an incidental interview. Questionnaires are also used more frequently than in 1995. This rise is due mainly to the fact that the small and mid-sized museums used questionnaires more often in 2007 than in 1995. Panels and in-depth interviews are seldom used as evaluation tools.

There was very little literature that documented Dutch research on the effect of museum education. There are also very few assessment reports for individual museums that have actually been published. This raises the question whether museums do not engage in assessments or whether they keep them for internal use. This would be a pity as they would then deny one another reciprocal learning opportunities.

The analysis of the interviews confirms the above conclusions. Educational staff evaluate their activities through visitors' books and questionnaires and by walking around the exhibition space and picking up reactions of the visitors. It appears that swingeing cutbacks have made a dent in the budget and left no money for extensive public surveys.

AUDIENCE AND TARGET GROUPS

The report of 1996 observes movements in various areas of museum education. It notes, for example, a decline in activities for special groups (the elderly, the disabled) – which used to take place regularly – in favour of incidental activities. The authors of the report wonder whether this decline might be tied in with the rising popularity of museum events. Besides interested individual visitors, the main target groups are schools, tourists and children.

In the large and mid-sized museums there is plenty of support for widening the audience and targeting new groups in order to build a public support base. Almost fifty percent of the small museums has no desire to target other groups. That said, most museums see only very limited possibilities for attracting a new audience. Most museums do not give priority to attracting visitors from ethnic groups; the costs of publicity and of reconfiguring the collection would be substantial and the returns uncertain. It seems therefore that, for the time being at least, the groups who already

visit museums will benefit most from this consumer-friendly approach (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, iv).

The days when the education department in a museum concentrated solely on schools are well and truly past. In recent years museums have been trying to attract and retain an increasingly broader public. They do more research on the tastes and preferences of the target groups and take them into account when mounting exhibitions. Indeed, the interviewees named 'all visitors' as the target group. Most displayed a certain degree of missionary zeal to engage with people who are not used to visiting museums.

The results of the nationwide questionnaires show that nowadays it is adults – individuals and groups – who form the most important target group for the educational activities in museums, usually interested laypersons, experts, devotees and senior citizens. Second place goes to children between the ages of six and twelve and teenagers (individuals). Less attention is paid to foreign tourists than in the previous report. The educational activities are least directed at ethnic groups, the disabled and the under-fives. Engaging with ethnic groups, young adults and visitors from the region is still regarded as a challenge by many museums. The literature search suggests that the low incidence of museum visits by ethnic groups may be largely due to a generally low level of education and the fact that the average age is still young. There are scarcely any museum programmes that target senior citizens, who are overrepresented in the museum-going public.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

The report of 1996 touches briefly on partnerships and collaborations. Other museums, other education departments and primary schools were mentioned most. There were also arrangements with local and regional broadcasting companies to publicize exhibitions and events (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, iv)

The questionnaire responses indicated that museums collaborate most with cultural institutes, including (the education departments of) other museums, provincial support institutes, arts centres, libraries and archives. Most of them also have ongoing associations with local artists, local and regional broadcasting networks and the business community. There are fewer collaborations with public organizations though more attention is being paid to contacts with welfare agencies and organizations for the elderly and ethnic groups.

In general, no significant changes appear to have taken place in partnerships and collaborations since 1995. There is more contact in some areas – such as ethnic organizations – but not to a significant degree.

Fifty percent of the museums nonetheless said that radical changes had taken place in partnerships and collaborations. These changes relate mainly to the relationship between museums and education. The interviews also revealed that all museums engage in partnerships. The larger museums in the main cities tend to have the most partners, most of them concentrated in the urban area. The museums outside the Dutch Randstad (central commercial belt) focus more on provincial collaborations for practical and financial reasons. For instance, in Drenthe and Limburg there are special traffic arrangements for groups of schoolchildren that visit cultural institutes, and discussions take place on the amenities. The interviewees named schools, fellow-institutes and freelancers as the most common partners.

The reasons for partnership are not always practical and financial. Partnerships broaden horizons and are a source of knowledge. They enable museums to integrate with the local community and build a support base and an audience. If benefits are to be gained on all sides, each partner needs to state explicitly in advance what they hope to achieve from the partnership. It emerged from the interviews and the working conference, that some partnerships are agreed in writing, but most operate on the basis of verbal agreements and good faith.

EDUCATIONAL TARGET GROUPS

In the report of 1996 the schools are the traditionally most important group for educational activities. The contact with schools is good but there is plenty of space for expansion. There is no contact at all with some primary schools and only a limited number of larger museums target secondary schools. It seems that museums pay more attention to schools than vice-versa. The themes also relate largely to the goals of the museum: the dissemination of culture and audience mediation.

One dominant theme in the relationship between museums and schools is the expert coaching that needs to be offered to schools. There are various ways of compensating for gaps in the teacher's knowledge of the exhibits; take, for example, guided tours, puzzle troves and viewing guides. Strangely enough, these solutions exist only at micro level; there are scarcely any thoughts on potential strategies at meso and macro level.

Changes in secondary education, the introduction of the core curriculum, and the reorganization of the senior school, have raised high expectations at museums. It is expected that museums will assist with the introduction and development of 'regional studies' in the core curriculum. The possible obligation of senior school students to visit museums is also expected to have a positive effect; the consequences of the introduction of the National Curriculum in England are cited as an example. The demand among schools would have to be assessed before these opportunities could be utilized and new amenities developed. Museums must also take account of what the competition is offering. Interviews with educators suggest that content is not the main problem. Museum visits for schools are equally dependent on proper organization (Haanstra & Oostwoud Wijdenes 1996, v-vi).

The literature search revealed that the national Culture and Schools Policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has breathed new life into collaborations between museums and schools. The policy emphasizes the need for schools to work along demand-driven lines, but the schools do not see themselves as capable of articulating their desires and preferences. If schools work along demand-driven lines, the museums should get extra funding to respond appropriately. It is still, after all, the museums that usually develop educational programmes and it is usually the schools that buy them. New developments such as the post of 'in-school cultural coordinator' (*Interne Cultuurcoördinator*), the historical canon and broad schools will boost demand and improve collaboration.

Museums have traditionally focused on the junior stream in secondary schools. The core curriculum with environment education as a compulsory subject was expected to give a new impetus to these activities. An overall inventory compiled by Cultuurnetwerk Nederland indicates, however, that there are more projects for the VMBO (preparatory middle-level vocational education) within arts and culture education (*CKV*) in the senior stream of secondary schools than for the junior stream. Though museums are well prepared for changes in secondary education, they are not always able to deliver the customized products that schools seem to expect. This is due to a lack of educational staff. Even so, many museums take part in the regional networks of cultural coordinators (*CKV coördinatoren*) and cultural organizations and they develop teacher's manuals and learning material on art and culture.

The responses to the questionnaires show, like the previous report, that museums focus mainly on primary and secondary schools and particularly on the upper stream. Collaboration with both primary and secondary schools now takes place on a regular rather than an incidental basis. Similar to the situation in 1995, and despite the tailor-made range of educational activities, the VMBO seems to be more difficult to reach than other types of secondary schools. The same applies to secondary vocational schools.

Guided tours still come first in school activities, but there has been a sharp rise in the percentage of museums that also offer classes and workshops. The hands-on trend that is gathering pace in other educational activities is also evident in the school activities.

Art and sculpture museums and museums with a mixed collection offer customized activities more frequently. This may have something to do with the introduction of art and culture subjects in the upper stream. These museums say more often that the introduction of art and culture has influenced their educational repertoire.

The museums say that schools often play a role in the development of educational material by acting as sounding boards and by testing material.

The results of the interviews confirm that primary schools are the main educational target of museums. Recently, more attention has been paid to young children.

The introduction of art and culture in the upper stream combined with culture vouchers has boosted visits by secondary school students to art and sculpture museums. Other museums report a decline. In contrast with the original intention of Art and Culture, most students visit museums as a class rather than individually or in small groups.

Museums focus sporadically on other educational segments besides primary and secondary schools. These include ROCs (regional education centres for vocational and adult education), PABOs (teacher training colleges for primary school teachers) and teacher training colleges for secondary school teachers. Usually, the museum provides the students with work placements. The museums say that collaborations with teacher training colleges may pay off in the long term. Teachers who learn to use their cultural environment when they are training will be more inclined to do the same when they find a job.

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