

# **Culture, Children & Youth development: a Case Study of the National Museum Lagos and the Yeti Initiative**

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## **SLIDE 1**

### ***What is culture?***

- This paper is going to focus on the role of museums in the development of our children and youth using culture.
- It is also going to use the National Museum Lagos as a case study.

There are many interpretations of this phenomenon (culture) as there are many scholars and students. Here are some definitions.

- Anyandele, E.A., puts culture as “what man interposes between himself and his environment in order to ensure his security and survival”.  
Babawale, T., p. 8
- Taylor, E.B., sees culture as “a complex whole which includes shared ideas, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”  
Babawale, T., p. 8

## **SLIDE 2**

### ***Culture, museum and the community***

- Even though culture cannot be seen, heard, smelled, touched or tasted, it has been in continuous existence for years.
- Culture is very real and important that without it, human societies and existence would be quite impossible.
- Man reacts to the culture that surrounds him from birth to death.
- Man inherits his culture ready made from his ancestors. He starts this process from his childhood days.
- The culture of today was determined by the past and the culture of tomorrow will be a continuation of the present.
- In other words, culture is a continuum, a string of values that flows freely down through time from one generation to another

## **SLIDE 3**

### ***What has the museum got to do with culture?***

## Definition of Museum

As defined by ICOM, **a museum is a permanent institution in the service of society and of its development**, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purpose of education study and enjoyment.

- Education is the core function and activity of museums.
- The museum collects and preserves artifacts.
- However, without the process of public display and interpretation, they don't result in a museum.
- The museum is actively involved in this display and interpretative process.
- They mirror our culture back to us.
- They tell us who we are
- All museums make a statement about society.
- Culture is self-regulatory as it largely controls and guides social behaviour.
- Children and youth are the bedrock of the society, they also learn from what is presently around them.
- Therefore, the museum as the chief custodian of our culture must be actively involved in the grooming of these young ones.
- And there is no better way to do these than through the use of our culture to instill moral values in our children.

## SLIDE 4

### *The National Museum Lagos & Yeti cultural awareness programmes for the youth*

- Museums not only preserve, interpret and promote the natural and cultural inheritance of humanity, but hold primary evidence for the establishing and furthering of knowledge (ICOM code of ethics 2006)
- Over the last six years the NML has embarked on aggressive campaigns to revive our dying value system among our children and youths with the aim of instilling positive values, attitudes and behaviors in them for progressive change.
- The need for this re engineering became necessary because of the prevalent negative behaviors among youths which if left unattended to may even make our society worse than what we already have.
- Childhood in the most wonderful stage in the life of a person.
- Children are the most important citizens of the world
- They represent the future of families, communities, countries and the world as a whole.
- The NML is both an expression of the community and an instrument to serve it. Service here includes interpreting and communicating cultures for the benefits of not only tourists but also the local community and more importantly, our children, our future.

## What is Yeti?

- Youth Edu-tainment Initiative
- Established over ten years ago
- The initiator seeing the importance of the museum in children and youth development insisted on a partnership (Public / Private) with the museum (2003).

### **Yeti's main aim**

A need to build an institution that facilitates the discovery and management of gifts/ talents/skills in entertainment and arts amongst youth (at an early age).

### **Mission statement**

- To provide education that will develop the moral and cultural consciousness of the youth.

### **Aims and objectives**

- To bridge the widening gap between youth and the values of our society.
- To build responsible citizens
- To inculcate values that can help youths of today redirect their minds and energy towards contributing positively to the progress and advancement of their immediate environment and humanity in general.

### **Lagos Museum year round programmes for youth and children**

Children make up the bulk of our audience. They troop to the museum all year round to have first hand knowledge of the histories of their fore fathers.

The experiences gained during these visits remain with them forever, so the museum is careful in the kind of information passed onto these children.

All year round, the education unit of the NML comes up with programmes for children and youth with the hope that the experience gathered would help to break boundaries, prejudice and intolerance thus building bridges of integration.

These programmes are culturally based and are fixed to commemorate important dates in our country or in the world.

The unit has specialists in various art fields e.g. performing arts, Theatre, visual art, music, Adults children educationists etc.

We have programmes and activities such as

- Jan: Shell/Ncmm arts prog for the physically challenged children
- Feb 13: Murtala Muhammed Day
- May 27: Children's Day
- July – Aug- Long Holiday Programme
- Aug/Sept – Eid Fifri Children's fiesta
- December – Children's Xmas party
- Oct 1<sup>st</sup> – Independence Day Celebration for children.

Activities Include:

Shell /NCMM Art Programme for the physically challenged child.

- All over Nigeria
- Scholarships for the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> positions
- Other valuable gift items for the other regional winners.
- Painting competition timed
- Themes such as “My world” “Discover Who You Are” “My Family” “Life in My Village” etc aim.

Feb 13, 1976 was the day one of Nigeria’s popular president was assassinated. To mark this event, every year, the museum in collaboration with an NGO headed by one of the children of the late president Gen. Ramat Murtala Muhammed organizes an inter-school’s debate on topical issues such as, child labour, terrorism, kidnapping, etc., for a few secondary schools who are constant visitors to the museums.

- Issues that discuss the political terrain of Nigeria from independence to present are discussed and questions are also based on this period aim.
- May 27 – Children’s Day
- Themes such as: Children the Pride of our Nation, Children and Tourism, ‘Children and Universal Heritage’ ‘Children as Agents of Social Change And Development.
- Traditional cooking competition (branded), Traditional dancing competition, March past in traditional attires, Head tie (Gele) competition, Body adornment, Traditional Hair do, etc aim.

#### Long Holiday Programme

- This happens during the long vacation period often around July-Aug.
- To help discover their talents and also harness it.
- Activities include:  
Art and craft making, play performance, traditional songs & dances, bead making knitting, painting, tye & dye, adire. Batic, serving, weaving, hair weaving, soap making, working with clay, ceramics etc.

This is a 5 week training programme with professionals in the different areas that culminates in an exhibitions and a play performance with families of participants in attendance.

#### Aim –

##### Eidel Fitri Children’s fiesta

- This is to help children appreciate the Ramadan Moslem period. It is a fiesta that happens after the fasting period of 30 days.
- Themes such as ‘Islam and the youth,’ ‘Tolerance among Islamic youth’ Islam is against Terrorism and violence’
- Activities include:  
Quran recitation, Islamic songs preaching love, peace and tolerance, poems e.t.c.

#### Aim

##### October 1<sup>st</sup> – Independence Day Celebration

In conjunction with YETI in a public/ private partnership since 2003.

Themes such as: Nationalism and the Nigerian youths ‘Be a Patriot’, ‘Culture, Politics and our Youth’ etc

Activities include:

Play performances with such titles as ‘Help our Tomorrow’ Advocacy for child Right Care, Theatre for development workshop-Discus on social issues as it affects children and youth, Dancing Mosquito-campaign against malaria, N20--- the Journey- advocating saving culture among youths, Temi the dancer- A drama that builds in the Nigerian child a sense of helping, sharing, and giving towards mankind.

Aim

December 20 – 26

Children’s Xmas Carnival

Aim

These programmes are some of the several children and youth programmes the museum organizes to facilitate value orientation for peace, progress and development of our society.

## **SLIDE 5**

### ***Achievements***

Through these programmes, the NML has moved from the role of acquiring and conserving to a more proactive one of encouraging the active participants of the communities and also serving as educator and cultural mediator to an increasing number of visitors belonging to all levels of community, locality and social groups.

It has also continued to be a centre for education, research and orientation.

- Our communities are better sensitized about the fact that culture and heritage preserved and exhibited in our museums represent their identity.
- Artistic ability has been stimulated and there has been increased willingness to support our projects from outsiders.
- We have products from these programmes who have become well known artists e.g. Mufu Onifade, Ade Bamgbose etc.
- Youth Empowerment; they have learnt a trade, appreciate their culture.

## **SLIDE 6**

### ***Major challenges***

- Training of museum educators to suit the different museum clients
- Getting more people involved in these programmes.
- Sensitizing the parents & community leaders
- Funding
- Tribal sentiments
- Religion
- Influx of alien cultures

- General response in participation
- Unstable and non-implementation of Government policy.

## **SLIDE 7**

### ***What can be done?***

- Staff training
- Sensitizing the public, parents, communities leaders and all stakeholders about the museum through the media
- Through school, school curricular, teachers' awareness programmes, government, traditional institution etc.
- Outreach programmes – take the museum to the people.
- Questionnaire to know what to do.
- Get art patrons and corporate establishments to get involved in funding.
- Government policies to ensure oil companies & other corporate institution give vote to cultural programmes.
- Seek new methods and technologies of communicating our knowledge and experiences to the world.
- Museum educators should share knowledge through workshop, conferences etc. like we are doing here at this workshop
- They should get deep into the criticism of their task.
- The different communities should be integrated into museum activities.
- Partnerships that can give force to the activities & programmes should be sought e.g shell, YEYI etc.
- Eradicate Drug Abuse & Peddling, Prostitution, Area boyism, militancy like we have in the Niger Delta, shun terrorism and violence, kidnapping etc.
- It has helped the children and youth to be confident in their dreams and focused.
- Generally, these programmes have articulated that our youth are restless and full of energy and if engaged in creative and productive activities, the society will be better for it, making the larger public see and review the situation of the Nigerian child.

## **SLIDE 8**

### ***Conclusion***

Museums are treasure houses of the human race, they should not only study the memories of the world's people, their culture, dreams and hopes but should also attract more audiences, achieve social relevance and be of service to the society-the people for whose purpose they were created- thereby contributing to its development.

Today the museum has become a powerful teaching medium, reaching not only the researcher and the expert but, with its exhibitions and varied interpretive and educational programmes...the community.

E.P. Alexander (1983) Museum Masters

I will end my presentation with these lines from Prof Hein at the first concluded ceca conference in Iceland, for the sake of our children and youth

“As we develop educational activities, we should keep in mind the direction in which we want individual and society to progress and whether our educational activities could reasonably ( and do) lead in that direction

G.E. Hein

Thank you all for listening.

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