

## THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN SPIRITUAL-AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH

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### **Abstract**

This article analyzes the role of museums in the spiritual and aesthetic education of the younger generation, their educational and pedagogical potential, and the opportunities for attracting youth to museums in modern conditions from a scientific and pedagogical perspective. In the era of digital transformation, museums are interpreted not only as repositories of historical and cultural heritage but also as social institutions that create an interactive, innovative, and dialogic educational environment.

Using the activities of the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan as an example, the article highlights the role of museums in youth upbringing and reveals the significance of initiatives such as the children's museum experience, free admission days, and "Museum Week." Furthermore, it analyzes the formation of museum pedagogy, its development in German and Russian practice, and the theoretical foundations of B.A. Stolyarov's concept. Based on the views of Eastern thinkers – Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Imam Ghazali – as well as Jadid enlighteners like Mahmudkhuja Behbudi and Abdulla Avloni, a model of education based on cultural heritage is scientifically synthesized. In conclusion, it is substantiated that museums serve as an important pedagogical platform for shaping historical memory, aesthetic taste, creative thinking, and the national identity of youth based on the concepts of the "open classroom" and the "living school."

### **Keywords**

Museum pedagogy, spiritual-aesthetic education, cultural heritage, youth education, interactive learning, historical memory, national values, museum-school cooperation, children's museum, digital transformation.

In the conditions of digital transformation, shaping the spiritual and aesthetic worldview of the younger generation and raising them as individuals loyal to

national and universal values, possessing creative thinking and aesthetic taste, remains one of the most urgent tasks today. In this process, along with the education system, cultural institutions, particularly museums, play a significant role. Museums are not only places for preserving and promoting historical and cultural heritage but also actively participate in society as an incomparable tool for spiritual and educational upbringing. Through them, young people gain a deeper understanding of their national roots and acquire essential concepts such as historical memory, aesthetic taste, and respect for art and culture through practical experience. However, the influence of modern technologies, the strengthening of virtual communication among youth, and the decline in interest in traditional forms of culture also affect museum activities to some extent. Therefore, the issue of attracting youth to museums, increasing their interest in these institutions, and transforming museums into educational environments through interactive and innovative approaches is becoming increasingly relevant.

Specifically, the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, founded in 1876, plays an important role in studying and conveying our country's priceless historical heritage to the general public [1]. Throughout its activity, this institution has not only collected unique exhibits but also provided great service in developing historical and educational work. For the first time in Uzbekistan, in August 2011, the "World of Miracles" children's museum was established under the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan of the Academy of Sciences. This children's museum is intended for all children aged 4 to 14 [13]. The museum operates with the aim of interesting the younger generation in the world of history, culture, and science, and encouraging them toward new knowledge. Through interactive exhibitions, interesting activities, and practical lessons, children's thinking, imagination, and creative abilities are developed.

At the initiative of our President, the task of establishing modern children's museums has also been set at the Imam al-Bukhari complex and the Center of Islamic Civilization. This initiative serves to strengthen the spiritual and moral education of the younger generation and familiarize them more deeply with the scientific heritage of our ancestors, Islamic culture, and national values.

The issue of attracting youth to museums has been relevant in every era. In particular, in the last decade of the previous century, with the consolidation of independence, major tasks such as economic recovery, strengthening the state's international image, and changing social consciousness through art and culture were put on the agenda. In this process, art—especially theater and literature—became the main tool of promotion. The staging of works celebrating historical and national traditions and the spiritual heritage of the people, along with encouraging

authors of artistic works written in the spirit of national values, served to strengthen the sense of patriotism in the minds of the youth. In order to create favorable conditions for museum visitors, especially children and youth, important procedures have been established in accordance with paragraph 6 of the "Regulation on the procedure and conditions for visiting museum items and museum collections included in the National Museum Fund" of the Republic of Uzbekistan. According to it, every Tuesday and Friday of the week, children under 18 and their accompanying parents (or persons replacing them) are provided free entry to state museums. Also, within the framework of "Museum Week," held annually from September 2 to 8, the opportunity for the public to view items and collections included in the National Museum Fund for free was created [2].

In particular, the critical opinions and feedback expressed by visitors play an important role in creating new ideas and conditions for future projects. The concept of "thoughts regarding the spectator" first emerged in the United States in the service sector, specifically through studying the types of services provided to customers in shopping centers and cafes, and was later applied to museum activities. This became an important stage in strengthening the connection between the museum and the spectator, and increasing the quality of service and interactivity.

At the same time, such approaches encouraged a reconsideration of the educational and pedagogical tasks of museums from a new perspective. Gregory Ramsey, a famous American education expert, stated that "the school and the museum should return to society as the territory of ancestors." In his opinion, the modern world is built for adults, and there is almost no place for children in it [3]. This naturally raises the question: "What is museum pedagogy and why is it necessary?" Years of international experience show that museum pedagogy plays an important role in shaping children as individuals, educating them, and raising them as mature people in harmony with society. This system teaches children to live not only their own lives but also the lives, cultures, and heritage of others, calling them not to destruction, but to creation [7].

Museum pedagogy is a separate scientific field formed from the synthesis of pedagogy, psychology, and museum studies. Initially, this concept appeared in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century and was recognized in scientific circles. Scientists such as A. Lichtwark, A. Reichwein, and R. Freudenthal made great contributions to its development. In 1913, A. Lichtwark was the first to emphasize the importance of the museum as an educational center and proposed new methods for communicating with visitors. R. Freudenthal developed a methodology for conducting school-system lessons in museums, emphasized the

necessity of pedagogical specialists, and proposed naming them "museum educators" [5].

Museum pedagogy is a scientific and practical field related to the organization and improvement of the educational activities of museums. Boris Aleksandrovich Stolyarov (1934-2006), a Russian scientist and Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, contributed greatly to its development. He viewed museums not only as institutions preserving cultural monuments but also as centers for education and upbringing, emphasizing that the educational process in a museum should be based on interactive and dialogic communication. According to Stolyarov's teaching, there are three main directions of museum pedagogy: understanding historical-cultural heritage, personal spiritual development, and ensuring youth participation through active communication. The communicative educational model he developed views the museum educational process as a two-way spiritual dialogue, where the exhibit is the information source, the museum worker is the communication organizer, and the visitor is an active participant. Stolyarov recommended methods such as thematic excursions, quest-scenarios, museum-lessons, and dialogic excursions for organizing the educational process in museums. According to his educational concept, the museum is an "open classroom" that implements education in continuous cooperation with schools and higher education institutions.

Today, B.A. Stolyarov's theoretical views serve as the main methodological base for developing museum education strategies and introducing interactive programs and multimedia technologies in Russia and other countries. At the same time, it is noticeable that museum pedagogy, being one of the modern directions of museum studies, has not yet fully revealed its potential for our country's museum specialists and educators [6].

In 1988, as a result of sociological research by the Institute of Museum Studies in Germany, it was revealed that 84% of the 1,460 museums in the country considered working with children and youth as their primary task. 78.6% of these museums collaborated regularly with schools, and 46% with higher education institutions [4]. At the same time, today museums continue to transform into a unique miraculous educational space that allows for meeting the interests and demands of youth and engaging them in free dialogue while facing historical events. Regarding education based on cultural heritage, or the education of youth through museums, let us pay attention to the views of our Eastern thinkers and Jadid ancestors on upbringing. Education based on cultural heritage is a systematic pedagogical process aimed at forming national identity, historical memory, spiritual immunity, and social responsibility in the younger generation by using the

historical, cultural, spiritual, and educational heritage of the people as a pedagogical resource. The main goal of heritage-based education is to raise a spiritually mature person with respect for national and universal values and an understanding of the need to preserve historical heritage. Education through museums is a form of cultural-pedagogical activity aimed at developing the aesthetic, spiritual, and civic qualities of a person through museum funds and expositions. Museum exhibits evoke an intellectual-emotional impact on youth as historical evidence, spiritual symbols, and aesthetic values.

In this regard, if we look at the views of Eastern thinkers on upbringing: Abu Nasr al-Farabi (873–950) viewed education as a means of shaping a perfect human (komil inson). In his teaching: education is based on the harmony of moral virtues and intellectual maturity; society's progress is directly related to the education of the individual; and spiritual heritage (morality, virtue, manners) is the main content of education [8].

Imam Ghazali (1058–1111) defined education as the process of purifying the human heart. Morality stands at the center of education; national heritage is the main source of moral upbringing; and if knowledge is not harmonized with upbringing, a perfect human will not emerge [9].

Furthermore, if we touch upon the scientific and educational views of our Jadid ancestors on upbringing: the Jadids saw education as the main factor of national awakening and social progress [10].

According to the teaching of Mahmudkhuja Behbudi (1875–1919): education is the factor that decides the nation's fate; history, literature, and national values are the core of educational content; and the school is the main institution for transmitting national cultural heritage [11].

Abdulla Avloni (1878–1934) emphasized regarding education: "it is a matter of life or death"; morality, patriotism, and national pride are formed on the basis of cultural heritage; and folklore, literature, and history are important sources of education [12].

Education based on cultural heritage is a pedagogical system aimed at the perfection of the individual through the integral application of spiritual, moral, scientific-philosophical, and aesthetic values created by our ancestors into the educational process. By scientifically synthesizing the views of Eastern thinkers and our Jadid ancestors, the following conclusions can be reached: education is the central factor of personal maturity. Cultural heritage forms the substantive basis of education. Moral, intellectual, and social education are inextricably linked. Education based on national values ensures society's stability and progress.

**Conclusion.** In the conditions of globalization and digital transformation, museums hold a special place as an effective supplement to the education system and a social institution connecting rich historical memory with cultural heritage in ensuring the spiritual-aesthetic education of the younger generation. Today, museums are continuing to transform into a "living school" that not only stores exhibits but also introduces the younger generation to national values, historical heritage, art, and culture through interactive methods and shapes their thinking. During the years of independence, museum activities have been approached at the level of state policy, transforming them into an important platform for educating youth in the spirit of national pride and historical memory. Educational projects developed on the basis of the "school-museum" cooperation model, thematic excursions, museum lessons, and visual and theatrical exhibitions—all of these serve to shape the aesthetic taste, creative thinking skills, and historical consciousness of youth.

In the museums of Uzbekistan, a number of works are being carried out to transform young spectators into active participants through the designation of free visit days for youth, the holding of "Museum Week," and new expositions and interactive programs. However, there are still unused opportunities and aspects that need to be deeply studied and developed in this regard. Museums can become a true spiritual and educational space for the younger generation, and a strong bridge between history and the present.

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## **II. Internet Materials**

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