



Suggestion Plan of launch and operating for first Children's Museum in Samarkand "Centre of Creation and Invention"

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ABSTRACT

This research paper proposes the establishment of the first Children's Museum in Samarkand, marking a significant milestone in Uzbekistan's museum landscape. Drawing from the city's rich historical and geographical landscape, the museum aims to provide an educational and exploratory space for children, blending tradition with modernity.

Drawing upon leading global experiences in the field of children's museums, and after studying the environment surrounding Samarkand, the researcher presented a comprehensive operational plan in this study for the proposed Samarkand Children's Museum. The study methodology comprises three key components:

- Theoretical framework: Grounding the concept of the Children's Museum serves as a foundational aspect of the research, introducing a novel proposition to the museum community in Samarkand.

- Statistical analysis: A comprehensive assessment of the local community's needs through field surveys involving students, teachers, and researchers provides insights into the demand for a children's museum in Samarkand.

- Practical proposal: The research presents a detailed plan for the museum's vision, mission, and operational framework, including site selection and building design.

By addressing the gap in existing literature, this research contributes to the field by offering a holistic approach to establishing, constructing, and operating a children's museum in Samarkand.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been a fundamental pillar in museum work, with a significant function linked to the existence of museums since their inception and throughout their history (Curran 1995:5). Progressive museum education, relying on advanced methods, emerged around the early 20th century in USA: it aims to develop and strengthen the education role of spaces such as public institutions. Museums have always aimed, as public institutions, to educate, inspire, persuade, or motivate the public in addition to their role of preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting. Museums have sought to renew and sustain children's activities within their walls, making the museum environment different from that of schools and homes (E. Hein 2006: 161, 167).

The world's first children's museum was established in New York, USA, in 1899: the Brooklyn Children's Museum. In August 1913, it was followed by the Boston Children's Museum¹ (Feber 1987: 63). Meanwhile, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, USA, founded in 1925, is considered to be the largest children's museum in terms of area, covering 215,000 square metres (El-Sadek 1993: 38).²

American museums adopted a museum education policy to be educational institutions since the 19th century. They shifted towards aimed to increase community participation and build

bridges of trust, openness, and sustainable education between the museum and the targeted audience from the surrounding environment. All American museum policies outlined during that period emphasised museum education as a fundamental pillar within the operational plan of American museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York founded in 1870, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston established in 1870, the Philadelphia Museum of Art established in 1876, and the Art Institute of Chicago established in 1879 (Rawlins 1978: 4-5).

The aim of this paper is to present the plan for building a Children's Museum in the city of Samarkand³, Republic of Uzbekistan in Central Asia. Samarkand is the historical capital of Uzbekistan (Naumkin 1996: 13), with many aspects of cultural and civilisational heritage (Shishkina 1994: 90). All relevant international organisations concerned with museum affairs endorse museum education curricula, and research closely related to building educational programmes for children. In this regard, it is imperative to establish a Children's Museum that preserves, exhibits, and interprets (Knubel 2004:119-132) the city's heritage in a manner suitable for the children in Samarkand.

Initiatives such as the Museum Education Roundtable, organised in 1969 by educators in Washington, and the Museum Educators of Southern California, established in 1977, have played crucial roles in advancing museum education. The Museum Education Roundtable initiated the publication of Roundtable Reports in 1973, later renamed as the Journal of Museum Education in 1984. The purpose of these publications was to promote and report on theory, training, and practice in the field of museum education, contributing significantly to the development and dissemination of knowledge in this field (Ebitz 2005:155).

Indeed, the educational environment within museums offers dedicated space for children, where they enjoy opportunities for self-learning, independence, freedom of creativity and innovation. It develops their ability to engage and utilise their different senses in education and learning, by promoting active participation and genuine involvement, thanks to the implementation of direct and explicit educational methodology for children, and meeting their cognitive curiosity (Silav 2014:357). Museum education is characterised by its effective sustainability in educational activities, as educational and pedagogical activities in the museum encompass "formal education, informal education, and lifelong learning" (Engelhart 1930:174). The urgent need for a Children's Museum in Samarkand can be demonstrated by elucidating, which is distinctive by all standards and achieves educational characteristics that may not be accessible in other educational settings.

Despite the fact that the target audience for the Children's Museum is children at various stages of age, its benefits extend to both adults and children alike. It contributes to the valuable cognitive integration of the individual, known as the individual's knowledge tree, which grows with them throughout their life by acquiring knowledge and experiences in their educational and professional stages. Furthermore, this museum also assists in educational support for both families and schools, making it multidimensional in its benefits for children, families, and educators working in educational institutions. This is especially significant considering that the educational process itself is a cumulative, constructive process, where knowledge accumulates and proliferates exponentially. This wealth of knowledge associated with the presentation of information is accompanied by various integrated and impactful museum display methods. All the principles of the educational process in children's museums are based on the child being the centre of the educational process (Helawa 2003:16,17,19).

Perhaps one of the most important aspects advocating for the establishment of a children's museum is the museum's ability, upon its construction, to cover the axes of museum education and aesthetic education, and the visual perception enhancement it provides for children. Children's museums, in their modern concept, ensure a complete immersion for the child within

the museum environment, an immersion that guarantees mental stability, physical activity, comprehensive knowledge, and ongoing exploration. This has been affirmed by the successful experience of children's museums and their diverse activities in the United States since the 19th century, where American society viewed schoolteachers and museum educators with respect and appreciation, elevating their status above other professions and industries (Blume 2008:83). With the developments of the 20th century, museums responded to the needs created by periodic changes in social, economic, political, and intellectual life, and were able to achieve sustainable educational activities through flexible approaches, known as Life Long Learning. Learning in museums relies on active interaction with exhibits, involving not only the development of the ability to gather ideas and form opinions but also the cultivation of aesthetic and cultural sensibilities (Blume 2008: 84,87).

One of the necessities of building a children's museum in Samarkand is the museum's ability to instil in children a sense of pride in their identity along with a fascination for the world. Children under the age of five are naturally filled with wonder, curiosity, and questions, seeking to learn through exploration, creativity, experimentation, and practice. Therefore, the museum education environment is an ideal setting for early childhood education. Educational museum programmes always aim to achieve sustainable education, which can be measured by several indicators, including:

- The level of engagement of the target audience of children and their families.
- The ease of flow of educational activities.
- The participation rates in museum activities and the full effectiveness during children's presence in the museum.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the educational process in the museum, measuring responses through parental surveys, and assessing their responsiveness.
- Measuring the achievements of activities and outputs of the educational process for permanent and changing museum educational practices (Bowers 2012:40,43).⁴

The importance of educational activities for the children's museum becomes evident through their role in shaping the child's cognitive map. The child goes through two significant stages within the museum: the stage of exploration and familiarisation with the coordinates of the place, known to educational scientists as self-direction, followed by the stage of stabilisation and connection to a specific museum activity. Therefore, it is possible, professionally, to divide the child's visit to the museum into two stages of exploration. The first stage involves spontaneous exploration for a period that may last up to half an hour of the child's time inside the museum. After that, they transition to selective exploration, during which they experience a relative stability within the place, and their own motives and self-goals begin to drive them. Additionally, the children's museum achieves what is known as kinaesthetic thinking, where the child can think, experiment, engage the mind, senses, and emotions simultaneously (Helawa 2003:27,28).

The dynamism and interactive dimension in the museum environment make the child more active and livelier within the museum compared to the school, home, and classrooms. In this regard, the children's museum achieves the challenging contemporary equation in heritage preservation, which is the ability to fully preserve cultural identity while achieving modernisation and development simultaneously. For example, inside Samarkand Children's Museum, a child can witness a complete panorama of the Silk Roads, along with the trades and interactions across time, and the role of Samarkand's city in these major trade routes between the East and West. They also become acquainted with the most important trades, industries, mechanisms, and aspects of today's Uzbekistan⁵.

Museum education in children's museums is characterised by flexibility and adaptability, qualities essential for any contemporary and developed scientific community. Museum education possesses an unparalleled ability to address educational and social issues within a context of fun and safe openness. This, in turn, instils renewed confidence, psychological comfort, and reassurance in children and adolescents during dialogue and conversation about topics that may stir within them. For example, a children's museum can discuss and address issues related to religious or racial bullying, instilling values of tolerance and human dignity in the hearts of children (Akbar 1994:7). The continuous expansion and cognitive development inherent in children's museum education programmes are crucial for the purposeful educational advancement within Uzbekistan. Moreover, the authenticity of museum education necessitates a foundation built upon prior knowledge of museums, reflecting and discussing their relevance to the current educational landscape. It is imperative to intentionally consider new learning and integrate it within teaching practices within the museum's location and the surrounding city environment, merging this newfound knowledge with existing educational and conceptual frameworks (Castle 2006:124,128,130). Consequently, children's museums transition into influential educational institutions when they identify and fulfil the needs, requirements, and desired expectations of museum visitors, children, and their families in the museum education's process. This deliberate shift from focusing solely on museum collections to prioritising the targeted audience provides an ideal environment for active learning (Chang 2006:170).

Samarkand Children's Museum will undoubtedly provide the optimal space for both children and their families. Families, described as social groups consisting of at least one adult and one child, find a unique dynamic within the museum's environment. An analytical observation of family behaviours within the children's museum reveals varying responses from parents. Mothers tend to engage more with the museum exhibits, while fathers lean towards interacting with the children themselves in relation to the exhibits. Additionally, fathers exhibit similar interactions with both sons and daughters. Furthermore, the museum's education programmes and activities achieve what is known as guided or collective family education, as well as fostering independent or self-guided learning. Children experience the latter amidst a group of peers. What distinguishes the Children's Museum is its ability to provide a complete embrace for children and their families within its corridors. A family visit to the museum becomes a pre-planned social event, allowing families to engage in social activities together and fostering collaboration among them (Dierking 1989:9-11).

The need for the Children's Museum for different age groups of children in Samarkand will manifest itself as a grand stage for education, entertainment, practice, activities, and cognitive interaction in all its forms and shapes. Simultaneously, parents view the Children's Museum as a symbolic marketplace, opening a window of cognitive shopping for their children. The more the museum succeeds in meeting the curiosity of children and their families, the more impactful and effective its message becomes. The museum serves as a marketplace of knowledge, with visitors acting as the shoppers (Falk 1982:12). Moreover, dramatic representation and theatrical performances play a significant role in the educational content of the Children's Museum. They transport children through a sincere journey filled with realism, allowing them to select historical period clothing, food varieties, and all details as they were in the past. Therefore, the design of the Children's Museum is intended to actively participate in the continuous change of its built environment and the social life of its community, serving not only as a collector and mirror of objects, memories, and events but also as a stage for exchanging experiences and ideas (Friman 1994: 15,16). Furthermore, the environment of optional free education provided by the Children's Museum makes it more appealing and interactive for children compared to the traditional compulsory learning environment such as school (Garcia 2012:48). All of this underscores the utmost importance of establishing Samarkand Children's Museum.

The Children's Museum will achieve the cognitive construction for the targeted audience of children in Samarkand, which requires engaging children's minds, hands, and senses simultaneously during museum activities. This is the essence of guided constructivist museum education through programmes tailored for this purpose, whether in museum education departments or those included in children's museums. Therefore, museum designers and educators need to collaborate to provide the targeted audience of children with experiences closely related to the subjects to be taught. Children and their families will follow their own agendas and construct their knowledge frameworks. However, museum specialists also need to be aware of potential misconceptions that may arise from some misunderstandings of the exhibit's narrative and strive to minimise them (Jeffery-Clay 1998:6,7).

1. STATISTICAL STUDY OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND THE NECESSITY OF ESTABLISHING SAMARKAND CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

In the initial stages of this research, the researcher conducted a survey to gather opinions from specialists and children alike, aiming to assess the readiness of the surrounding environment for establishing a children's museum in the city of Samarkand. The survey included various age groups and consisted of specific questions directed at measuring the level of interaction of the local community in Samarkand in the event of building a children's museum. This survey aided the researcher in gaining a better understanding of the surrounding community environment and provided precise measurements of the surrounding appreciation and the effectiveness and success of operating a children's museum if established in Samarkand.

The survey was translated into three languages (English, Uzbek, and Russian) to ensure clarity of the questions among the public, and to facilitate their answering and interactions with this survey. The survey results were extremely compelling, surpassing all initial expectations regarding the research topic. Participants from all age groups in the survey expressed positivity and great enthusiasm towards the idea of inaugurating the first children's museum in the city of Samarkand. Moreover, the responses demonstrated their eagerness to volunteer within this museum.

The questionnaire included a total of 15 questions divided into two parts. The first part consisted of "Yes-No" questions aimed at measuring the importance and clarity of the concept in the minds of participants from various specialties and age groups, including children themselves as the focal point of the research topic. It also aimed to determine the readiness of the local Uzbek community in Samarkand to accept and succeed in the idea. The second part of the questionnaire included "Choose" questions, with four options for participants to choose the most suitable and appropriate answer from their perspective. These questions were designed to measure the willingness of the local community to volunteer and serve the idea if a children's museum was founded in Samarkand. They accurately measured the extent of interaction of the community, across different age groups, with the proposed operational plans and programmes inside the children's museum. Therefore, this survey provides a comprehensive museum-oriented view closely related to the research topic, aiding in the realistic assessment of community awareness and satisfaction in the local environment of Samarkand and its readiness accept construction of the children's Museum in Samarkand.

The statistical study served as the first and most crucial practical step in crystallising the proposal of building a children's museum in Samarkand. Based on its results, the practical proposal was formulated, including the selection of the museum's location and the presentation of a comprehensive operational plan for its management. The results of the opinion survey are partially analysed based on the age groups participating in it, followed by providing general analytical insights into the survey.⁶ (Appendix 1)

1.1. Statistical Study 1: Researchers and specialised students in museum sciences and studies in Samarkand

The researcher began by discussing and proposing the idea to specialist researchers in the field of museum studies and sciences, as they are conscious of the significance of the proposal. Some of them would even be part of the administrative structure of the Children's Museum in Samarkand if it was to be implemented. The responses of the specialists were as expected, with a strong enthusiasm for the concept and a desire to support it through all available means. Their responses were also based on a combination of academic and relatively accepted field experiences, given the novelty of museum studies in Uzbekistan. A total of 25 specialists in museum sciences and studies answered the questionnaire, with the following responses:

From the specialists' responses, they strongly reflect on not having a children's museum in Samarkand so far, with a disapproval rate of 96%. The approval rate for building a children's museum in Samarkand reached 100%. Despite their expertise, over 95% of them had never attended a children's museum activity in Samarkand or any other city in Uzbekistan, and only a small proportion (less than 12%) had attended general activities for children in various institutions outside museums. This prompted them, in question number (6), to unanimously agree by 100% on the great benefit and urgent need to build a children's museum in Samarkand. Similarly, they all insisted that having a children's museum in Samarkand would greatly benefit the education and development of children. They also unanimously agreed on the active role of the children's museum in assisting schools and serving the local Uzbek community. Additionally, with a rate of 96%, they expressed their keen interest in visiting the museum once it is built in the future. This successfully supported the suggestion of building a children's museum in Samarkand (98%). The survey results strongly support and advocate to focus on building a children's museum to decision-makers in cultural and touristic institutions. As for the statistical analysis of the museum specialists' answers to the second part of the questionnaire, which involved multiple-choice questions with five options, their responses were the following:

All of them expressed their serious willingness to volunteer to serve the Children's Museum in case it is built in Samarkand, with varying available hours for volunteering weekly. This variability in their availability for volunteering is due to their different schedules and available free time. What is particularly noteworthy is that 50% of the specialists who are already working expressed their readiness to volunteer for two hours weekly, which is a positive proportion. Additionally, 90% of university students majoring in museum studies and cultural heritage indicated their ability to volunteer for the museum for five full hours weekly, which is the maximum volunteering time option provided in the choices.

The second question was regarding their opinion on the duration of children's visits in the museum. Up to 50% of them preferred children to spend five hours inside the museum. Others were considered that children should be able to enjoy the museum for a duration of up to 6 or 7 full hours. This highlights the importance of having museum programmes following predetermined and agreed-upon schedules. The majority supported the idea of operating the museum for 6 or 7 full days per week, and 88% agreed on the necessity of the museum operating and receiving children and families in both morning and evening shifts. This confirms the importance of including morning and evening programmes in the proposed operating plan.

Opinions were divided regarding hosting children's birthday celebrations inside the museum, with 55% agreeing and 45% against the proposal. This reflects the need for sustained and effective marketing of museum activities and programmes, as well as raising awareness about the museum's mission and goals to attract large numbers of families to the museum. Moreover, it emphasises the need for providing adequate facilities and services such as restaurants and

relaxation areas within the museum's premises to make it more appealing for family activities and celebrations inside the museum.

1.2. Statistical Study 2: Teachers and Educators in Children's Educational Stages at Schools, Including Parents

This statistical study considered teachers and educators in schools setting, who were parents, as they are two crucial to the proposal. They are both education pioneers in the city and content creators in schools. Some are also parents and reveal how families do to secure the educational and scientific future of children. From this age group, 20 teachers participated, including parents, from various elementary and pre-university schools. These are the targeted age groups of the project. All of them have from one to three children.

Regarding the first part of the questionnaire and the (YES-NO) question, after providing them with the necessary explanation about the nature of the questionnaire and its purpose, 75% of teachers and parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the absence of a children's museum in Samarkand so far. They unanimously agreed, with a percentage of 100%, on the necessity of establishing a children's museum in Samarkand. Due to their work in the field of school education for children, 70% of them attended activities for children within schools. However, this percentage significantly decreased to 26% for attending activities for children in Samarkand inside museums, indicating the city's lack of a museum dedicated to children. They highlighted the urgent need to complement the regular educational movement in the city.

The rate increased again in the fifth question, which reflects an increase in the participation rates in museum activities dedicated to children in other cities outside of Samarkand in Uzbekistan, with the percentage of yes answers reaching 58%. These rates are still low for those in the educational profession and the most attached community groups to children, both as educators at school and as parents at home. Awareness gradually increases from one question to another among classroom teachers and parents. They agreed, with a percentage reaching 92%, on the societal benefit of a children's museum in Samarkand. Due to their specialised work, they confirmed, with a percentage reaching 96%, the ability of the children's museum to develop children's talents and add new capabilities and skills to children of all ages. With a percentage reaching 94%, they confirmed the important role of the museum as an educational environment in addition to the school. They unanimously agreed, with a percentage reaching 100%, on their desire and interest in visiting this museum in the future if it was built in Samarkand. With a percentage reaching 98%, they supported the success of the idea when implemented.

Undoubtedly, this group of teachers and parents is extremely important as they fall within the target audience for this project, ensuring the achievement of successive visits to the museum, whether in school groups or families. These are the results of the statistical analysis of teachers' and parents' answers to the Second Part of the Questionnaire, which were five Multiple-Choice Questions.

Despite their professional commitments, all of them expressed a sincere willingness to volunteer at the children's museum in Samarkand if it were to be built. The available hours for volunteering varied weekly, given their varying work schedules at their schools. 78% of the teachers expressed a desire to volunteer for two hours per week at the museum, while 54% confirmed that the visit duration to the museum should be extended to five continuous hours. The remaining percentages leaned towards increasing the duration to six or seven hours, which is very close to the time students spend in schools. This confirms their encouraging vision for the presence and success of operating a children's museum in Samarkand.

Their estimations differed regarding the proposed number of days for operating the children's

museum weekly. Their percentages ranged from 48% agreeing to operate it for three days per week, while 25% preferred operating it throughout the week, and 26% favoured operating the museum for 5-6 days per week. Undoubtedly, these estimations will be more realistic if the museum exists, and a comprehensive operating plan is developed along with educational and teaching programmes distributed in a timetable. 74% of them recommended operating the museum both in the morning and evening. Additionally, 46% confirmed their willingness to celebrate their children's birthdays at the museum, while 54% accepted the proposal but did not have a strong opinion on the matter.

1.3. Statistical Study 3: Children in Different Educational Stages

The questionnaire was distributed among groups of students in Samarkand schools, as they represent the focal point in this research project. Their answers constitute a real weight in understanding the reality of the surrounding environment and the target audience of the children's museum in Samarkand. The number of children who responded to the questionnaire was 90 students, aged between 10 and 14 years old.

After distributing and explaining the questionnaire translated into their local language, their answers were the following. Dissatisfaction reaches up to 92% about the lack of a museum in their city, while 94% of them support the idea of building a children's museum in Samarkand. 67% of them participated in activities dedicated to them within schools, social institutions, and amusement parks. Naturally, they have not participated in any activities or events inside museums before. The reason for joy and optimism is that their support rate in response to the question about the community's benefit from building a children's museum and whether the museum will help in developing their skills and abilities ranges from 92% to 98%. Despite their young age, they affirmed the educational and learning role of the museum and its global impact alongside the school upon its construction, with a rate reaching 81%. Moreover, they affirmed, with a rate of 87%, their intention to visit the museum in the future. Regarding the potential success of the proposal of launching a children's museum in Samarkand, their affirmation rate reached 94% of the total participating students in the survey. As for the statistical analysis of the children's answers to the second part of the questionnaire, with multiple-choice questions covering five points, their answers were the following:

Despite not fully understanding the concept of volunteer work, all participating students showed a strong willingness to volunteer and be present at the museum for periods ranging from 2 to 5 hours as volunteers. Moreover, they demonstrated a heightened awareness in their responses regarding the expected time for visiting the museum; all their answers indicated high preferences for spending 5-7 continuous hours inside the museum. This confirms their full endorsement of the idea, despite not having experienced it. These results are a positive indicator for the establishment and realisation of a children's museum in Samarkand. They also agreed, at a rate of 88%, on the possibility of the children's museum operating six or seven full days per week. Additionally, 80% expressed a desire for the museum to operate throughout the day, morning and evening. Furthermore, 70% of them expressed enthusiasm for celebrating their birthdays inside the museum as a new and exciting experience, while 30% showed either minimal support or no interest in celebrating birthdays within the museum.

The overall results of the first part of the questionnaire, encompassing all ages and specialisation groups participating, indicated a strong consensus and urgent necessity for the establishment of a children's museum in Samarkand. It also underscored the significant lack of children's participation in activities and events within museums in and outside Samarkand. Additionally, it confirmed the readiness of the local Samarkand and Uzbek environment to fully engage with such museum. The overall survey results have been transformed into a graph Fig. 1.

As for the second part of the questionnaire, all age groups and specialties showed unanimous agreement on volunteering at a children's museum in Samarkand for a few hours, depending on their available time. The results also confirmed the desire to operate the museum for 5 to 7 days a week and throughout both morning and evening periods. Furthermore, the results indicated a willingness to celebrate and launch events at the children's museum once it is built in Samarkand, as illustrated in diagram Fig. 2. The survey was not the only method used in this study. Information gathering encompassed also Interviews, Observation, Survey, Focus Group, Artefact Review, Recording Conversations, Web Analytics, Participating Data (see Nelson and Cohn 2015:29).

Moreover, examining the history of children's museums worldwide reveals that they often start with small, specific experimental activities, serving as the starting point for constructing a children's museum. Therefore, the researcher undertook several innovative activities practiced for the first time in early childhood education in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.⁷

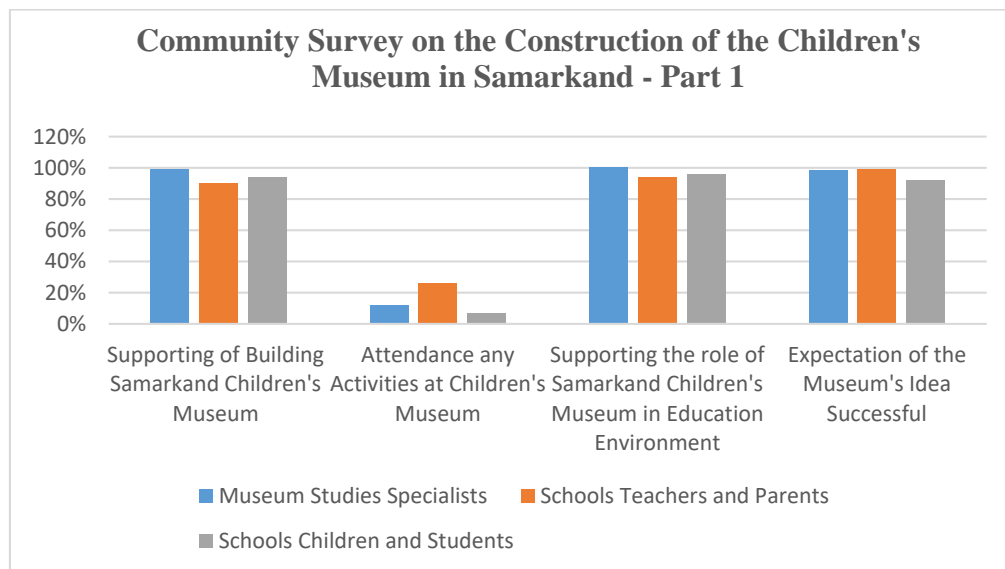


Fig. 1: The graph illustrates the percentages representing the total responses of the first part of the questionnaire.
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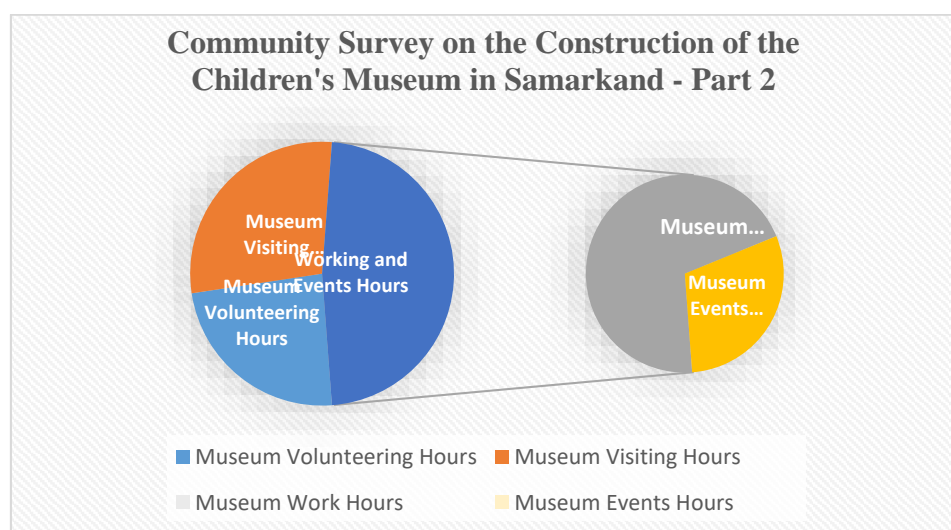


Fig. 2: The graph illustrates the percentages representing the total responses of the second part of the questionnaire. © Mohamed Ahmed

2. APPLIED STUDY FOR BUILDING AND OPERATING THE “SAMARKAND CHILDREN’S MUSEUM”

This part of the research study includes an applied study for the construction and operation plan of the Children's Museum in Samarkand. It involves a comprehensive proposal for the operation of the museum, which includes a holistic vision for the proposed museum building, a proposed exhibition storyline, the proposed vision and mission of the museum, proposed operational capabilities for museum work, and proposed educational and cultural programmes for the museum.

2.1. Proposed Museum Building

The researcher aimed to achieve a balance between authenticity and contemporaneity, as well as simplicity and contemporaneity, when selecting the proposed location for Samarkand Children's Museum. The choice was made for a historical building in the city that meets all the basic requirements to present a comprehensive proposed vision for Samarkand Children's Museum. Situated in the central area of Samarkand, it is easily accessible by both private and public transportation, catering to the needs of the local community, including school-aged children (Ahmed 2024). The proposed building for the museum is the historical National Bank in Samarkand, which has been repurposed into the “Art Residence”. Currently, it functions as a centre for modern art activities and accommodates temporary galleries within a limited portion of the building. However, if used as a Children's Museum, the available space will be maximised; sustainability will be ensured and the benefits from the building's capacity will be optimised. The Art Residence is under the administration of the Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage in Samarkand. This location is ideal for the Samarkand Children's Museum. It not only preserves a part of the city's historical identity for children but also occupies a central location in the city. Moreover, it provides all the necessary facilities for the museum's operational plan and aligns with the strategic vision of the design makers at the Ministry of Tourism in Uzbekistan (Ahmed 2024).

Regarding the historical background of the building, in the late 19th century, Samarkand emerged as one of the largest commercial and industrial centres in the Turkestan region. It was decided to establish branches of the State Bank in the city. According to historical sources, the bank was built in 1905 and served not only Samarkand but also Bukhara and Kokand. Adjacent to the bank on M. Koshgari Street stands a two-story building, which originally appears to have been a single-story structure with a high base. This building may have housed the city treasury or apartments for bank employees. The courtyard of the bank complex included a stable, a boiler room, and two well-built brick houses for bank managers (Ahmed 2024) (Ziyaeva 2013:20).

From 1925 to 1930, during Samarkand's tenure as the capital, this building housed the People's Commissariat of Finance. Subsequently, it underwent renovations, with a second floor added in the 1930s. By the mid-1930s, it was repurposed as a dormitory for the Agricultural Institute. Later, a two-story building with a basement was erected adjacent to the bank, blending seamlessly into the original structure. Over time, the building served various functions, including housing the Pension Fund and an educational block of School 17. Today, it has been restored and repurposed as the “Art Residence” (Ahmed 2024) (Abramov 1989:26,27). The total area of the building, including architectural units and open garden, is an ideal space with all necessary facilities and architectural flexibility required for establishing the first Children's Museum in Samarkand and Uzbekistan. The exhibition halls in the main building are suitable for the Children's Museum, while the attached units are suitable for a children's library adjacent to the museum, administrative offices, a restaurant, and recreational areas. Additionally, the open garden of the building is suitable for various educational museum activities for children.

The efficiency of the surrounding environment and its support for the museum upon its construction lead us to expect it to become the largest and most significant Children's Museum in Central Asia, and one of the largest in the world (Ahmed 2024) (Figs. 3,4,5). The selection of this specific building underscores the importance of flexibility as a fundamental principle in choosing the location and construction of Children's Museums. The organisation as a whole must function as a flexible and responsive entity. The space is a crucial factor in museum education, and creating real and virtual spatial experiences within Children's Museums is of utmost importance. This facilitates the interactions between children and museum exhibits, as awareness of the space and its connection to the exhibits are factors in the museum's success (Leach 2007:199).



Fig. 3: Parts of the yard of the proposed building for Samarkand Children's Museum and its construction units.
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Fig. 4: The internal facade of unit A; the large unit will be used as a main museum exhibition halls will be located. © Mohamed Ahmed

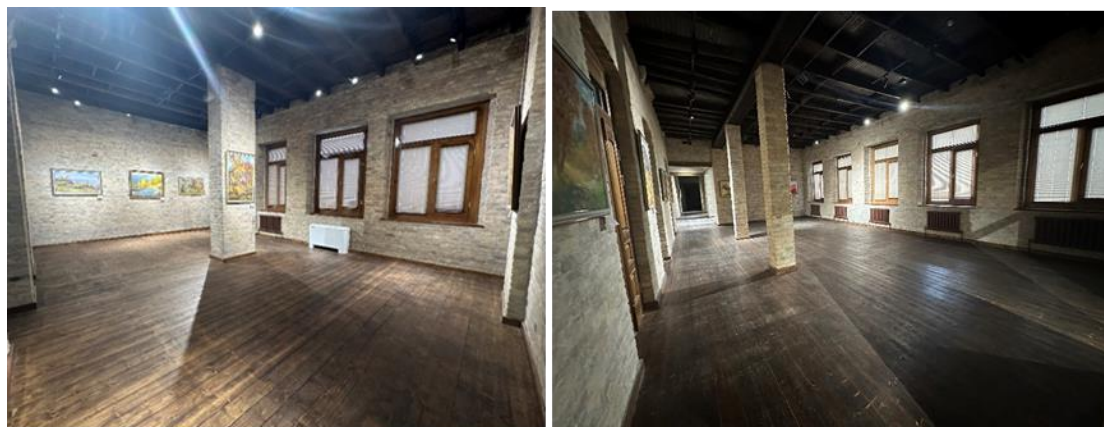


Fig. 5: Unit A; parts of the museum's exhibition halls will be located there. © Mohamed Ahmed

According to surveys conducted on families visiting a variety of American museums, several design considerations for a museum environment should be taken into account in Children's Museums. Many studies have shown that the time families spend visiting some museums is often limited due to dim lighting and visually inappropriate exhibits for children, such as difficulty in seeing exhibits, high barriers, and restricted movement within the exhibition. Furthermore, visiting families tend to enjoy spending time eating, and museum studies have observed their preference for interactive play and exhibits within the museum over non-interactive ones (Kropf 1989:5). Therefore, these design considerations should be taken into account before embarking on the interior design of the Children's Museum within the proposed building⁸, along with the commitment to choosing a comprehensive service-integrated and easily accessible location.

2.2. Proposed Layout for Samarkand Children's Museum:

The proposed museum exhibition narrative can be outlined by identifying the fundamental factors, assistance, and necessary facilities for building the exhibition storyline of Samarkand Children's Museum. This can be achieved through architectural planning and elevation of the proposed building, as well as the distribution of exhibition halls and museum service buildings within, based on the observation of the building and its surrounding environment (Figs. 3,4,5).

The proposed architectural composition of the Children's Museum in Samarkand consists of five architectural units and a large garden (Fig. 6).

- Unit A; the main museum exhibition halls will be located in the large building (Figs.7,8,9).
- Unit B; it will be a separate facility for museum information desk.
- Unit C; it will serve as a multifunctional service unit for museum staff and visitors.
- Unit D; it will be designated as a Panorama and cinema house.
- Unit E; it will be designated as a security restroom and guards' quarter.
- Unit F; the museum garden will be one of the primary areas for recreational and educational activities for children and families, outdoor theatre, and astronomical shows (Ahmed 2024) (Figs.3,6).

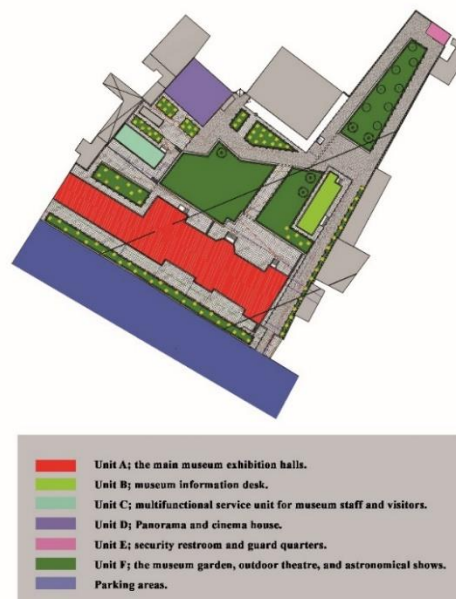


Fig. 6: Proposed Layout for Samarkand Children's Museum. © Mohamed Ahmed

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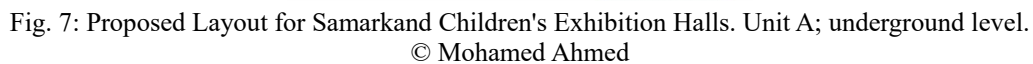




Fig. 9: Proposed Layout for Samarkand Children's Exhibition Halls. Unit A; 2nd floor.
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2.3. The proposed vision and mission for the museum:

The researcher proposes short-term goals as a vision for Samarkand Children's Museum, and long-term goals as a mission for the museum. These serve as a practical and professional guide for building a comprehensive operational plan for the museum and launching educational programmes for it.⁹

Vision: To inspire a lifelong love for learning, exploration, and creativity among the children of Samarkand, fostering a vibrant and innovative community.

Mission: Samarkand Children's Museum sparks curiosity, fosters creativity, and empowers children to explore. We offer enriching experiences that stimulate growth, promote cultural understanding, and inspire innovation. Our mission is to catalyse positive change locally and globally, competing as a leading centre for childhood innovation in Central Asia.

2.4. Proposed Policy and Operational Plan for the Children's Museum:

The proposed policy and operational plan for the museum serve as an administrative tool to set objectives, define tasks, clarify decision-making processes, motivate decision-making, and evaluate outcomes. It enhances operational efficiency, visitor satisfaction, educational impact, external support, professional standards, and sustainability (Stapp 1992:14). Establishing a high-level committee resembling a museum board of trustees with diverse educational expertise is essential. The museum policy should encompass infrastructure, operational capacities,¹⁰ volunteer management,¹¹ exhibit development, target audience,¹² languages,¹³ resources,¹⁴ roles, partnerships, marketing strategies, and evaluation methodologies (Stapp 1992:15,16) (Appendix 2). The policy of the Samarkand Children's Museum should include the following principles, which are inspired those developed for schools and families' activities in the British Museum (Woff 2013:18,19) (Fig. 10).

Principle	Implementation in Samarkand Children's Museum
Rich and extraordinary experiences	Design immersive and interactive exhibits that captivate children's imagination and curiosity. Offer hands-on activities, storytelling sessions, and interactive workshops.
Flexible learning opportunities	Provide customisable educational programmes and workshops tailored to different age groups and learning styles. Allow for self-guided exploration and discovery within the museum's exhibits.
Integration into school experiences	Collaborate with local schools to integrate museum visits into their curriculum. Offer educational resources and materials for teachers to prepare students before their visit and follow-up activities afterward.
Importance of teachers	Train museum staff to engage effectively with visiting teachers and provide them with resources and guidance to enhance the educational value of their visit. Offer professional development workshops for educators.
Increased expectations	Continuously innovate and update exhibits and programmes to meet the evolving needs and interests of children and families. Regularly solicit feedback from visitors to improve the museum experience.
Varied and active engagement	Offer a diverse range of interactive activities, including hands-on experiments, games, role-playing scenarios, and multimedia presentations, to engage children actively in learning and exploration.
Stimulus to attract new audiences	Organize special events, themed exhibitions, and outreach programmes to attract diverse audiences, including underrepresented communities and visitors from different cultural backgrounds.
Extension and enrichment for audiences	Develop partnerships with other cultural and educational institutions to offer joint programmes, tours, and collaborative projects that extend and enrich the museum experience for visitors.

Fig. 10: Principles and their implementation in Samarkand Children's Museum.

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Implementing these principles will ensure that the Samarkand Children's Museum effectively meets the needs and interests of its young visitors and the educators while fostering a love for learning and exploration.

3. THE PROPOSED CURATORS AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SAMARKAND CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The necessary qualities for curators of children's museums and the proposed administrative structure, including heads of museum education departments, vary considerably. Among the most important is the curators' belief in the museum's concept and their unwavering commitment to its continuous development. They should view the children's museum as a key component in shaping the national identity of children from a young age (Castle 2006:124,128,130).

Despite the challenges faced by museum educators, they must demonstrate creativity, flexibility, and humour to overcome the diverse responsibilities they encounter. Moreover, they should possess the ability to realise the vision and mission of the children's museum institution (Dragotto, Minerva, and Nichols 2006:221). Museum educators must balance two fundamental tasks within their museum: catering to the needs of younger children while also effectively engaging older ones (John and Koran 1986:15).

Studies on the professional development of museum educators have identified a common factor

in their academic backgrounds. Many hold degrees in art and education or related fields. This academic foundation, often acquired through post-secondary studies, enables them to directly apply their knowledge in the fields of fine arts and education within the museum context. Additionally, museum educators require a strong background and understanding of educational psychology, philosophy, sociology, as well as general educational theory and practice. They should not only possess theoretical and practical expertise but also demonstrate proficiency in applying these concepts to diverse learning methods and the varied needs and interests of their audiences. Finally, museum educators should be specialised in museum sciences and studies, with their museum-related studies forming the basis of their expertise rather than serving as secondary supplementary education (Reid 2014: 113,114).

There is a range of expertise required for the envisaged team at the Samarkand Children's Museum, with not all of these professional skills necessarily present in high proportions. However, museum management must strive to build and reinforce them within the museum's organisational structure. The museum team should embody principles of love, honesty, respect, and a commitment to diverse learning methods and cultural appreciation.

Team members should have a clear understanding and appreciation of the museum's philosophy and mission, supporting and meeting the needs of the museum audience while considering its feelings. Museum educators must also demonstrate readiness to expand the museum's audience over time, requiring a precise understanding of the community's changing trends, issues, and demographics, as well as a commitment to modernity and contemporaneity. Moreover, the Samarkand Children's Museum team should possess evaluation capabilities for museum exhibitions and activities from both the museum audience's perspective and in light of the museum's educational mission. Continuous assessment of exhibits and programmes is necessary to ensure the museum's educational objectives are met. Effective oral and written communication skills, volunteer management, and financial and human resource management skills are also crucial for museum educators to achieve the museum's educational goals. As museums are part of the formal and informal educational landscape, museum educators must cultivate positive working relationships with other cultural institutions, schools, universities, and civil society organisations to provide the best possible educational experience for visitors. Furthermore, curators of the Children's Museum should engage in scholarly dissemination and exchange experiences through conferences and workshops in museum education, continuously striving to enhance their expertise and professional and institutional development (The Members of AAM 1989:11-13).

The researcher proposes establishing specific criteria and mechanisms for selecting museum curators, encompassing a range of essential and complementary experiences, abilities, and skills required for the role of curator at the Children's Museum (Ebitz 2005:167). These qualifications include (Fig.11):

Basic Abilities & Skills	Additional Abilities & Skills
Develop educational materials	Knowledge of research and evaluation on visitors and their experiences in museums
Practical knowledge and skills teaching	Knowledge of information technologies
Experience, knowledge, and skills in exhibition development, design, installation, and interpretation	Skills in teamwork and community collaboration
Experience, knowledge, and skills in serving audiences with diverse economic, ethnic, and	Knowledge of museum marketing

Basic Abilities & Skills	Additional Abilities & Skills
cultural backgrounds, and audiences with special needs	
Knowledge of the history, theory, and practice of learning in art museums	Possessing previous teaching experience
Giving a human face to museums	Skills in budget management and fundraising
Skills in written, verbal, and visual communication	Skills in supervision and in programme and project management
Proficiency in Uzbek, English, Tajik or Russian	Skills in leadership, strategic planning, and advocacy
Implementing programmes	Knowledge of Samarkand art and history

Fig. 11: A Sample of Wanted Basic and Additional Abilities & Skills for Samarkand Children's Museum Staff. © Mohamed Ahmed

4. PROPOSED MUSEUM PROGRAMMES AND VISION FOR MUSEUM-SCHOOL COLLABORATIONS IN SAMARKAND

Children visiting the museum often come in groups led by parents or schoolteachers. Therefore, it is essential to designate specific timeframes for fixed and variable programmes during museum visits. This is because the attachment of children to a group and a specific timeframe by parents or teachers may sometimes negatively affect the required time to be spent inside the museum. Additionally, children and parents share control over family learning processes, as visitors read labels and share the information they have gathered.

Museum education can fundamentally be an entry point to entertainment, and the creation and implementation of museum education programmes rely on joyful improvisation. Indeed, this characteristic is part of the great appeal of museum education as a field of practice and interaction. The process of preparing, experiencing, reviewing, and implementing educational and pedagogical museum programmes does not take much time for many, as museum education is not a sequential curriculum and does not require exhaustive formal approvals from committees. Instead, it is a dynamic, interactive form of education characterised by spontaneous, systematic spontaneity within the framework of serving the museum's agreed-upon vision and mission.

School-based curricula and museum pedagogical curricula are different, as school education is practiced within utilitarian/school structures that bring together certified teachers and students. It is designed for students who attend approximately 180 days per year for 12 years to study sequential curricula in terms of difficulty and content. It is known that the rates of follow-up and scientific benefit vary according to the quality of the school, its absorptive capacity, available services, and socio-economic status of the community. In contrast, museum education does not have these disparities, as its educational and pedagogical programmes are designed to accommodate all children regardless of their economic and social levels. Thus, the educational environment for pre-university children and adolescents is completed through the collaboration of both school and museum institutions (Vallance 2004:343).

The Children's Museum integrates its teaching methods and mechanisms into an interactive educational environment. It has been shown that the presence of a clear educational strategy between schools and museums enhances the learning experience for students. Such cooperative educational projects between schools and museums have yielded interesting results. Museum

education programmes often succeed in creating a framework that integrates art, education, and technology. Children's museums and educational departments in various museums can reach broader and more open educational horizons through activities and technological means. Therefore, the active learning approach adopted in museum education, in turn, implements non-formal learning strategies to achieve more formal learning. The Children's Museum involves the implicit use of cognitive skills such as memory or knowledge construction, known as educational games or serious, simplified, and complex games. For example, complex games are usually long and combine various playing mechanisms such as storylines, difficulty levels, and rewards or prizes for unlocking them, making the playing experience interesting for children and achieving a deep and long-lasting educational process for them. On the other hand, mini-games are usually short and do not require detailed rules. The choice between these two types of games largely depends on the target audience, location, allowed time, and enjoyable experiences in museums, and the accumulation of cognitive learning, are among the most fundamental aspects of museum education based on various knowledge bases (Bossavit 2018:171,172).

In the case of formal education, integrated teaching methods can be applied by incorporating school curricula into history and other subjects relevant to students' studies at different stages of their education. The museum assumes the tasks of interpreting and simplifying these curricula and their contents (Marcus 2008: 55,56). Additionally, the museum's exhibition design can enhance students' understanding of history, geography, and other sciences closely related to the city of Samarkand.

The museum environment at the Children's Museum will foster a type of scientific and practical educational integration between museum curators, decision-makers, and teachers from various schools in the surrounding area. This integration is likely to contribute to the advancement and development of educational capacities among pre-university children, fostering a scientific environment, increasing innovation and cognitive awareness, and nurturing aesthetic appreciation and artistic taste (Mühlberger 1985: 93-103).¹⁵

The education department at the museum should offer a wide range of expertise to elementary school children visiting the exhibition. The diversity of children's age groups and lifestyles poses a significant challenge to any museum educator (Woff 1998:3,4). Educational programmes in children's museums have become more sophisticated and positive, requiring deeper consideration in shaping children's awareness and perception and finding fundamental solutions to social problems encountered by children at various stages of their development. Children's museums are obligated to partner with schools to use museum exhibitions and collections in campaigns to enhance reading and writing skills among children. Simultaneously, museum educators are required to produce programmes that attract large audiences and deal seriously with issues of role definition and identity, all while maintaining the operational capacity of the museum and ensuring its continuity (Munley and Roberts 2006:29).

In accordance with the policy of museum education in American museums, the educational role of the museum is considered a professional standard of its importance, societal impact, and educational enrichment (Stapp 1992:10). The educational objectives of both the school and the museum converge to enhance children's awareness, cognitive understanding, and enrichment. Here, the museum serves as an auxiliary educational and recreational environment to both the school and home, focusing on fostering children's cognitive development through interactive and dynamic means, allowing children to actively engage in educational activities. One proposed method to reinforce the integrative educational role between the museum and the school is through reciprocal visits and activities. In fact, school teachers can regularly participate within the museum to exchange experiences with children's museum educators and

educational departments of other museums. Collaborative educational programmes between the museum and the school should be developed and integrated into the work plans of both institutions. Therefore, educational programmes in children's museums are often proposed and designed by museum decision-makers based on cumulative objectives and evolving visions to achieve the greatest possible cognitive, educational, and pedagogical benefits for visiting children (Berry 1998:11,12).

The children's museum currently adopts a multi-sensory approach in its educational programmes, aiming to broaden the horizons of children and cover various aspects of their interests. For this purpose, many museums have named the spaces dedicated to education and learning within the museum with diverse names such as "Educational Corner", "Exploration space", "Innovation Hall", "Educational Laboratory", and "Creative Appreciation House", reflecting the diversity of activities and experiences offered to children inside museums (Ott 1980:7-9). Furthermore, educational museum programmes for children should embody values that enhance concepts of justice and ethics, working diligently to bridge the gaps between sources of knowledge. Museums also serve as vessels for cultural diversity awareness. Development is intrinsic and accompanies educational curricula, significantly augmenting museum programmes supporting children's school curricula. The children's museum provides an ideal informal educational environment alongside formal schooling, completing the child's cognitive development (Rose 2006:81,93). Thus, various forms of artwork within children's museums represent the key to a long-term relationship between the museum and the child, embodying aspects of sustainable education in this relationship (Szekely 2014:36).

When considering the establishment of a children's museum or developing educational museum programmes for children within an existing museum, several points must be taken into account:

- Awareness of the evolving context of museums and their continuous radical transformations.
- Complete focus on the targeted audience, not just collections.
- Rapid developments in childhood educational tools.
- The evolving job description of museum educators, transitioning from practice to profession.
- The perspective and expectations of decision-makers and museum officials regarding the museum's effectiveness in serving the public.
- Careful attention must be paid to employing information technology.
- Using teamwork and management skills.
- Leadership.
- Budgeting.
- Dealing with diverse audiences.
- Exhibits' development.
- Visitors' and programme's evaluation.
- Research and publication in museum education.
- Preparing museum educators who benefit from continuous professional development.
- Additionally, museum programmes should also include contemporary information, harnessing the power of audio-visual and virtual media, providing a form of "educational entertainment". They should achieve integrated visual and cognitive culture for the child through exhibits and activities conducted during their museum visit (Ebitz, 2005:150,151).

Based on that, the Children's Museum can be described as the "Constructive Museum" and

"Free Learning Laboratory", where experiences unfold and integrate to reach an advanced constructive level that contributes to the building of children's personalities and capabilities. This is achieved by providing participation in natural experiences that lead visiting children to construct their personalities. The museum offers specialised knowledge that integrates with the experiential human knowledge of visitors-children and their families in ways that match the emotions, imagination, and desires of the visitors. Today, children's museum programmes focus on learning methods, multiple intelligences, aesthetic experience, and cultural diversity (Ebitz, 2005:153). Therefore, when developing educational programmes in children's museums, it is necessary to understand the content of the constructive educational context, with theories based on child psychology and understanding; these learning contexts form a contextual learning model to understand visitors' motivations (Ebitz, 2008:18). Constructive education within the children's museum provides many different products and interactive learning opportunities by creating links between things and their presence in our daily lives. Moreover, educational programmes in children's museums endorse visual thinking strategies (Mayer 2005:14).

Children engage in museum education activities, where the museum educator complements the children's educational framework using the post-structural semiotic approach, which aims to study signs. It goes beyond written texts as they presume all carriers of meaning are culturally loaded symbols that must be interpreted. This fosters more interaction between the reader and the text, artwork, or value targeted by the museum activity, creating multiple contexts that serve the child's cognitive state. Accordingly, professors of museum education at George Washington University coined the term "Museum Literacy" in 1984, which was embraced by cultural sociology to conceptualise the museum as a culturally multi-contextual product (Mayer 2005: 357-358).

One of the significant gains resulting from museum education in children's museums, which can be targeted when developing museum education programmes at the Samarkand Children's Museum, is the development of critical thinking skills. Within their museum experience, children are encouraged to view issues from all angles and be open to new ideas. A children's museum also achieves what is known as inquiry-based learning through its educational programmes, enabling students to construct and discover knowledge themselves. To achieve this, teachers encourage them to observe their surrounding environment, uncover distinctive characteristics, pose questions, infer meaning, search for alternative explanations, form conclusions, provide evidence, and engage in continuous reflection on their understanding, relying on observation and precise inference, which are the essence of the scientific method. Knowledge is thus achieved among the targeted audience of children in the children's museum. Moreover, inquiry is also used in subjects such as social studies, language arts, and philosophy, where students are encouraged to think critically through school curricula. Similarly, this is achieved in programmes presenting observation and inquiry-based artistic works. For example, through the museum exhibition at the children's museum, students can spend extended periods of time with a particular artwork, observing it closely, establishing connections, interpreting it, considering alternative readings, and confirming their observations. Through this process, students naturally practice and refine their observation, connection, interpretation, and other skills, which is realised in the environment of the children's museum (Hubard 2011: 15-16).

Children's museum programmes are no longer confined to practices within the museum walls, but rather the children's museum should adopt an Outreach Museum operating plan, which in turn helps share the museum and its message to a larger number of children. This is in addition to expanding the museum's impact through virtual communication and utilising classrooms from kindergarten to twelfth grade for online interaction. Reaching children inside and outside the city limits and influencing them. The scientific and conceptual use of technology has become an urgent task in children's museums (Sayre and Wetterlund 2008:86,93).

Children's museum programmes have not been limited to physical, real-life practices during museum visits. Rather, the activities of the children's museum extend to embrace virtual museum education and interactive discussions with children. Technology has shifted from web browsing to the interactive culture of the web, where virtual educational programmes in museums include comprehensive expansion of content delivery, achieving the essence of communication and education. This entails deeper cultures and more beneficial experiences (Kraybill and Din 2015:171).¹⁶ One of the pioneering museum experiences in this regard is the creation of the "Samsung Discovering Centre in The British Museum". This experience combines the practice of real-life activities within the museum with opening a window for impactful digital virtual education on web platforms (The British Museum 2009:3,4).

It is preferable for the museum to include specialised programmes divided according to age groups and stages of development. In parallel, general programmes can be developed to encompass all children and teenagers of various ages. It is important to understand the stages of pre-university education in Uzbekistan, as well as the ages of children and teenagers in each educational stage, in order to develop an operational plan for the children's museum that includes purposeful and realistic educational programmes. Additionally, it is necessary to take into account the number of schools and students in Samarkand city to accurately plan programmes and activities at the children's museum. Statistical information helps determining the number of schools and students in Samarkand (Fig. 12).¹⁷

Schools	pupils	Educational Stages & Pupils Age	Notes
81 Public Schools	105,075	Stage 1= 7-11 years old Stage 2= 12-14 years old Stage 3= 15-17 years old	The Museum programmes will cover all these age categories, and the children before the school education (4-6 years old) as well.
9 Private Schools	400		
Total= 90 Schools	Total= 105,475		

Fig. 12: Table showing the numbers of Samarkand school students, their ages, and stages of education. © Mohamed Ahmed

Based on the analysis of the previous statistical information, and in accordance with the quantitative nature of the educational environment in Samarkand city, it is possible to propose a comprehensive operational plan. This plan should include programmes, services, facilities, and the significant events to be conducted at Samarkand Children's Museum. These programmes and events should vary in their forms and contents to meet the needs of children in Samarkand and its surrounding cities. The operational plan for the Children's Museum should include summer and winter programmes, as well as daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual programmes. These are determined based on the number of children as the target audience for each museum programme (Department of Education 1991-92:67-69). The operational programmes can be formulated as detailed on Fig. 13.¹⁸

School Programmes	Family\Public Programmes	Special Needs Children Programmes	Special and Commemoratives Events	Volunteers Programmes
Students and their teachers served	Preschool Programme for Parents and Children	Special Needs Classes	Meeting Museum Masterpieces	Seniors' Outreach Program
Services for Educators Workshops for Educators	Scholarship Art Programme Graduation and Exhibition	Special Needs Staff Training	Intergenerational Programmes	College seminars
Participants served	Samarkand Community Night Reception	Special Needs Events & Ceremonies	Children Museum Conferences	Lecture Series
Adult Art Courses	Sampling from the Art Classes	Special Needs Workshops	Concerts in Courtyard	Semester Course
Youth Art Courses	Artful Adventures Community Groups	Programmes for Hearing-Impaired Visitors	Chamber Music Concerts	Symposia
Student Exhibitions	Families and Children Museum Sessions	Programmes for Impaired Visitors	Film Programmes	Audio Visual Service
Adult Group Visits	Scholarship Art Programme	Programmes for Braille labels	Gifts Day	Audio Tours Exhibitions
Gallery Talks	Fashion art Design Workshop	Outreach Hospital Visiting	Publications & Library Day	Mobile web and apps Training for Volunteers
Subscription Gallery Programme	Game Design Workshop	Special Needs Children Sportive Day	Samarkand National Day	Marketing and fundraising Workshops for Volunteers

Fig. 13: Table showing the operational plan as an annual visual map of the work of Samarkand Children's Museum. © Mohamed Ahmed

In the proposed plan for the Samarkand Children's Museum programmes, all visitor categories have been carefully considered, with specific programmes tailored to each group based on the nature and timing of their visits. The researcher's analysis, drawn from global trends in children's museum visitation, indicates that children typically visit museums either on school trips, with their families, or as part of specialised programmes for children with special needs. Additionally, the museum may organise events centred around significant social and historical occurrences, or create specialised programmes that engage volunteers, both inside and outside the museum, fostering interactions between them and the children. Therefore, the proposed programmes, tailored to each visitor category and aligned with the timing of significant events,

represent a comprehensive and forward-looking vision for the operational programmatic framework of the Samarkand Children's Museum.

Based on the information mentioned above about the number of students and schools in Samarkand city and the scrutiny of the proposed operational plan, the museum management, if constructed, can establish a timeline for its programmes with knowledge of the numbers and participants of students. For example, if the total number of schools in Samarkand reaches 90 schools, with 105,475 pupils, then the museum's capacity for agreed-upon school visits annually would be a total of 312 school visits, averaging 6 school visits per week. The average number of students per visit would be 338 pupils, which can be divided into 6 groups, with 56 students per group.¹⁹ It is worth noting that the proposed museum building's capacity as a children's museum is capable of accommodating these numbers on a daily basis, but it requires operational efficiency for the museum to operate at full capacity during the morning period over six days a week to receive students from schools in Samarkand. Similarly, we can calculate museum sessions for children and their families, as well as all museum activities (Appendix 3).

CONCLUSION

Given the current situation in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, there is an urgent need for concerted efforts to establish a Children's Museum. This museum should serve as a centre for creativity and innovation and take the role of being a beacon for non-formal education in the country. The community, including children, families, and education stakeholders, expressed its need for such a museum.

The study confirms the openness of elements within the Samarkand community to the proposal and their full support. Therefore, efforts should be directed towards inaugurating the Samarkand Children's Museum in line with ambitious visions and goals, adhering to specific operational plans.

Through the proposed programmes of Samarkand Children's Museum, it aims to offer a sequential educative curriculum targeting local children who are frequent visitors to the museum but in an informal manner, unlike the structured educational stages followed by schools.

Additionally, there should be general, non-sequential, and informal educational programmes within the museum targeting young visitors from all backgrounds. In this regard, the researcher recommends establishing a register specifically for children who are regular museum-goers, as well as a separate record for consecutive school visits to the museum. This aims to establish robust databases about children's activities and patterns within the museum, enabling the study and tracking of their activities, development, and interaction with the museum's activities and programmes. These databases will empower the museum to select and launch activities that align with children's preferences and the museum's vision and mission.

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I thank Kimberley Watt who reviewed this paper's academic English.

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE ADDRESSED TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY'S OPINIONS ON BUILDING THE CHILDREN MUSEUM IN SAMARKAND

A questionnaire of the local community opinions on building the Children Museum in Samarkand

Name:

Title:

Age:

Part 1:

No.	Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you think is good, There is no Children Museum in Samarkand?		
2	Would you prefer Museum for children in Samarkand to be build?		
3	Did you enjoy with children activities at any Samarkand Museums?		
4	Do you see any Children Museum activities in Samarkand?		
5	Do you attend any Children Museum activities in other cities in Uzbekistan?		
6	Do you think the children Museum is useful for the Samarkand community?		
7	Do you agree the children museum will be add new skills for our children?		
8	Do you think the children Museum here will be helped the school?		
9	Do you interested to visit the children museum in the future?		
10	Do you think the idea of children museum will be successful in Samarkand?		

Part 2:

1- Can you help as volunteer at children Museum? If yes, how many hours per week?

(2-3-4-5)

2- Can you guess how many hours to visit the children museum?

(5-6-7-Other please specify)

3- How many days the children museum should be work per week?

(3-5-6-7)

4- Can you celebrate your birthday\your children birthday at children Museum?

(Sure-often-little-never)

5- Can you suggest the time working day for children museum in summer vacation?

(Only morning-only night-all the day-other)

Fig. 14: Study Questionnaire for Various Age Groups and Specializations in Samarkand City.
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APPENDIX 2: "SAMARKAND CHILDREN'S MUSEUM & SDGS"

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Countries have committed to prioritise progress for those who are furthest behind. The SDGs are designed to end poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls. The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context.

Museums are perfectly positioned to address and enhance sustainability as they are able to work with communities to raise public awareness, support research and knowledge creation to contribute to the well-being of the planet and societies for future generations. NEMO determined there are 7 tips for advocating the sustainable transition of museums (NEMO 2023:36,37), and UNESCO publications focus on how to achieve SDGs in our museums, cultural heritage, and tourism field.²⁰ By the same token, we can apply SDGs along Samarkand Children's Museum Activities.

No.	SDGs	Samarkand Children's Museum Policy and Activities
1	NO POVERTY	Mobile Museum in public Schools
2	ZERO HUNGER	Samarkand Traditional Day Food
3	GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Museum Medical Convoys
4	QUALITY EDUCATION	New Excavator Project
5	GENDER EQUALITY	Uzbekistan National Day for Men & Women
6	CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	Water Resources in The Museum's Exhibition
7	AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	Uzbekistan Energy Future in The Museum's Exhibition
8	DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	The Museum will offer around 150 new jobs
9	INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	Samarkand Children's Museum App & Smart Website
10	REDUCED INEQUALITIES	The Museum for all Children, Teenagers, Families
11	SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	World Geographic in The Museum's Exhibition
12	RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	The Museum will be built through self-financing projects
13	CLIMATE ACTION	The Museum will be Green Museum
14	LIFE BELOW WATER	Water Life in The Museum's Exhibition
15	LIFE ON LAND	Wild Life in The Museum's Exhibition
16	PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	Tolerance & Peaceful Values in The Museum's Exhibition
17	PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	The Museum will get National & International Cooperation

Fig. 15. Table showing SDGs and Samarkand Children's Museum Policy and Activities.

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APPENDIX 3: SWOT ANALYSIS FOR SAMARKAND'S CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

SWOT Analysis has been considered when developing museum education policies in museums in America and Britain (Stapp 1992:1). The researcher conducted SWOT Analysis to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the project of building a children's museum in Samarkand. This analysis may assist decision-makers in proceeding with the construction of a children's museum in Samarkand.



Fig. 16: SWOT Analysis for Launching Samarkand Children's Museum. © Mohamed Ahmed

NOTES

¹ The Boston Children's Museum is currently considered one of the leading children's museums globally in the field of museum education. Its educational programmes operate on the principle of "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand".

² As for the field study aspect, if the proposed plan for the construction of the Samarkand Children's Museum is accepted, it will include one of the largest spaces for children within museums worldwide.

³ The city of Samarkand is located amidst the fertile lands of the Zarafshan River. Archaeological excavations in the Afrasiyab area revealed the existence of settlements in the city dating back to the 7th century BCE. Samarkand distinguished itself with its architecture and flourishing civilisation during the Islamic era.

⁴ External experts and assessors to benefit from diverse experiences and perspectives and to achieve the highest desired quality standards in the educational programmes provided for children should evaluate educational museum programmes tailored for children.

⁵ Drawing upon leading global experiences in the field of children's museums, and after studying the environment surrounding Samarkand, the researcher presented a comprehensive operational plan in this study for the proposed Samarkand Children's Museum.

⁶ To view the questionnaire results and see the participants' answers divided by their study specialties and various age groups, the researcher shared a photographic image of the questionnaire at the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1K7BMv7-CAd8r1ufp9wTrRFw8buz_13a6. I extend my gratitude to my esteemed student, Ms. Ulugova Zilola Shekhrozovna, an English teacher at School 60 in Samarkand and a Master's student at Silk Road University in Samarkand. She assisted me in translating the questionnaire into Uzbek and Russian on March 10, 2024. She has been a partner with me in all activities related to this research.

⁷ The researcher conducted several experimental activities, including: "Our Children...Our Future- Heritage-Museum Bag-Drawing your Heritage-Enjoy in the Past-Storytelling about our ancestors-Special Needs Children Activity". To view images of the events and activities, they are available at this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1K7BMv7-CAd8r1ufp9wTrRFw8buz_13a6.

⁸ For example: Children's Victoria and Albert Museum in London, The exhibition is organised in themes, which include optical toys, sensory toys, and puppets. The objects are displayed at a height suitable for children. The labels are also made with the younger audience in mind as the information is given in simple and engaging language. <http://www.museumofchildhood.org.uk/home/>, accessed 2 April 2024.

⁹ The proposed vision and mission for the Samarkand Children's Museum have been formulated based on an analysis of the visions and missions of leading children's museums around the world, aligning with the objectives and strategies for The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://www.uzedu.uz/en/static/strategy>, accessed 5 April 2024.

¹⁰ Based on the survey published in this study and the nature of museum operations in Samarkand, the museum can be operational six days a week, both in the morning and evening, with Monday designated as the museum's day off.

¹¹ From the researcher's field observation within the Samarkand community, volunteering is highly effective across all institutions. Given that the proposed building for the Children's Museum is close to the Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage in Samarkand, which administratively falls under the university, it is possible to utilise university students majoring in history, heritage preservation, museum studies, and tourism for volunteering at the Children's Museum. Moreover, faculty and staff at the university can also contribute to enhancing the efficiency of operations and activities at the Children's Museum. For further information about Silk Road University: <https://www.univ-silkroad.uz/en/>, accessed 7 April 2024.

¹² Age groups for children and teenagers: Starting from 4 years old up to 17 years old, pre-university stage.

¹³ Museum languages (Uzbek-English-Tajik-Russian): The researcher suggests using Uzbek and English as the primary languages in the museum, with Tajik and Russian as auxiliary languages.

¹⁴ Financial Resources and Expenditure: Funding can come from various sources including school contributions, corporate sponsorships, government allocations, university partnerships, grants, and international collaborations.

¹⁵ Many international experiences have emphasised the positive impact of scientific and practical collaboration between museums and schools on students. A prime example is the art museums in the United States, which have engaged in years of collaboration with schools to deliver impactful educational programmes aimed at developing children's abilities.

¹⁶ Museum studies have predicted the significant role of modern technology and its diverse applications in bringing about a major breakthrough in educational tasks within museums. Indeed, technology has assisted museum educators and children's museum curators in innovating various educational methods that serve cultural heritage in its various forms.

¹⁷ I would like to thank Ms. Ulugova Shokhista Orzuevna-Director of Samarkand state public school number 60- for her official interview on 28 March 2024, and her connection with Samarkand state educational department of public schools. For all official statistics in Uzbekistan, especially those related to museums and schools. See Statistics Agency, Under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://stat.uz/en/>, accessed 4 April 2024.

¹⁸ After reviewing the most important museum education programmes in the education departments of the world's largest museums and the most important children's museums in the world, an attempt was made to mimic them to come up with a comprehensive operational plan that would serve as a model for Samarkand Children's Museum at its inception. Among the most important museum institutions relied upon in this regard is the Vision Map. Additionally, the educational department at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston is distinguished by a systematic mechanism for evaluating children's annual activities within the museum. This mechanism has been utilised in launching the proposed activities for the Samarkand Children's Museum, and it can also be adopted as a mechanism for the museum's annual performance evaluation.

¹⁹ This number can be divided into five subgroups, with each subgroup comprising 11 children. They can be distributed alternately among the general programmes designated for the visit. In this case, the number in each group would be ideal, and there would be no crowding or congestion of children inside the museum building.

²⁰ For further information about SDGs: <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?>, accessed 31 March 2024. For further information about UNESCO publications of the sustainable: https://www.academia.edu/21771847/Sustainable_development_of_UNESCO_world_heritage_sites_An_approach_based_on_multi_agent_model, accessed 5 April 2024.

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اقتراح خطة لبناء وتشغيل أول متحف للأطفال في سمرقند "مركز الإبداع والاختراع"

الملخص

يقترح هذا البحث مقترحاً لإنشاء أول متحف للأطفال في سمرقند، والذي سوف يمثل بإنشاءه تطوراً كبيراً في المشهد المتحفي بدولة أوزبكستان، محققاً بدوره استفاده كبرى من المشهد التاريخي والجغرافي الغني للمدينة، حيث يهدف المتحف إلى توفير مساحة تعليمية واستكشافية للأطفال، تمزج بين الماضي والحاضر. يرصد البحث عديد من التجارب العالمية الرائدة في مجال متاحف الأطفال، وبعد دراسة البيئة المحيطة بسمرقند، قدّم الباحث خطة تشغيلية شاملة في هذه الدراسة لمتحف الأطفال المقترح في سمرقند. تتألف منهجية الدراسة من ثلاثة محاور رئيسية:

- الإطار النظري: يشكل تأسيس مفهوم متحف الأطفال جانباً أساسياً للبحث، حيث يقدم اقتراحاً جديداً لمجتمع المتاحف في سمرقند.
- التحليل الإحصائي: يوفر التقييم الشامل لاحتياجات المجتمع المحلي من خلال المسوحات الميدانية التي تشمل الطلاب والمعلمين والباحثين رؤى حول الطلب على متحف للأطفال في سمرقند.
- الاقتراح العملي: يقدم البحث رؤية المتحف ورسالته وخطة مفصلة للإطار التشغيلي، بما في ذلك اختيار الموقع وتصميم المبنى.

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بيانات المقال

تاريخ المقال

تم الاستلام في ٦ فبراير ٢٠٢٤
تم استلام النسخة المنقحة في ١٤ أغسطس ٢٠٢٤

تم قبول البحث في ١ يناير ٢٠٢٥
منح على الإنترنت في ١ فبراير ٢٠٢٥

الكلمات الدالة

المتحف؛ المدرسة؛
التعليم المتحفي؛ الأطفال؛
سمرقند؛ المربي؛
سياسة التشغيل.