

The Impact of Museum Outreach Education Programs in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This article is a report of the impact assessment of two outreach programs to primary schools run by the Botswana National Museum. The oldest of the programs, Zebra-on-Wheels was officially launched in 1980 and has involved all the primary schools in the country at least twice. This was followed up by teacher workshops, which commenced in 1996 and have now been rolled out to all primary school heads in the country. The study aimed to establish the impact of the two programs and make recommendations for possible improvements. Thirty-eight schools throughout Botswana participated in the study. Teachers in these schools were interviewed and classroom observation sessions were carried out. Teachers' observations about the two programs are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Recognising the need to reach audiences beyond the Gaborone area, the Education Division of the Botswana National Museum has developed several outreach programs and services for primary schools around the country. The world-acclaimed and longest running of these is the *Pitse ya Naga mo Maotwaneng* "Zebra-on-Wheels" Mobile Museum program that brings the museum experience to primary schools, including those that are geographically isolated. This program was started in 1979 and continues to operate in a similar fashion to this day. In 1996, soon after the Revised National Commission on Education restructured the national system of education (Revised National Policy on Education, 1994), another program was introduced by the museum, offering in-service teacher workshops for primary school head teachers. The aim of this program was to build on the work of the Mobile Museum Service and intensify the Museum's relationship with schools by demonstrating to teachers practical ways in which the Museum could serve as an educational resource. Very little has changed in the content and presentation of both programs since they were first implemented.

Given the ever increasing budgetary constraints and the fact that both the Mobile Museum and the teacher workshops have covered most schools in every inspectorial area of the country, in 2003 the Education Division decided to undertake an intensive impact assessment of both programs. In addition, the research team solicited ideas for improving the relationship between schools and the Museum.

The research team, comprising two officers in the Museum's Education Division, expected to find some significant changes in teachers' knowledge of the Museum and its functions as a result of several years of operating outreach programs and distributing Museum publications. The team expected to find tangible evidence in the form of increased number of museum and monument visits, better planning of visits, use of museum resources in the classroom and increased communication between teachers and the Museum.

METHOD

The study entailed the use of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, together with non-participant observation methods. This approach enabled the team to interact with

participants (head and subject teachers) who agreed to allow the team to watch them acting in their natural environment and/or talk with them about their actions and intentions. In studying in-house documents the team tried to balance the sometimes conflicting roles of researcher and museum employee to avoid bias.

Questionnaires were distributed to schools before the interviews so that head teachers and subject teachers would have time to discuss and reflect on their experiences. The research team then visited schools to talk to teachers and students and to observe classroom practices. The questionnaire served only as a guideline for the teachers, and the research team modified or asked alternative questions depending on the answers provided. The length of time spent at each school varied depending on teachers' responses. In most cases, the team spent 20 - 45 minutes interviewing each teacher and in some schools doing group interviews.

Thirty-eight schools, representing twelve inspectorial areas, were invited to participate in the study. The selection was based on both geographic location (urban, peri-urban, rural/remote) and population size. The assumption was that schools in different locations would

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have different needs and resources and as a result they would have different requirements of museum outreach programs. It was thought that urban schools, having the easiest access to resources and located in towns that operated a museum would utilise museum resources (either the National Museum or a community/regional museum) more often. In contrast, it was expected that rural or remote schools would be in greater need of outreach programs and museum extension/support services. Research was conducted in and around the greater Gaborone region during the first week of the study. The second and third weeks involved a circuit of schools along the eastern corridor to the Central District, north to Maun, west to Gantsi and south to Tsabong (see Figure 1).

The first week of the study inadvertently coincided with an industrial strike action by primary school teachers. While most head teachers accommodated the research team by agreeing to an interview, the team was unable to observe subject teachers in their classrooms. Only one school did not speak in-depth to the team because of the industrial strike action.

Of the fifteen schools visited around Gaborone during the first week, six schools in the Moshupa and Lobatse/Kanye areas said that they never received the circular or questionnaire and had not prepared in advance to talk to the research team. Only one school declined to speak to the team, saying they would forward written responses to the questionnaire within two weeks (at the time of this writing, the responses were not received). Of the twenty-three schools visited outside Gaborone, only one school did not receive the circular. Those that did had either circulated it to other teachers or held meetings to discuss or complete the questionnaire.



Figure 1: Map of Botswana

School Profiles

Of the thirty-eight schools that were originally identified and contacted, only thirty-five (7 urban; 11 peri-urban; 17 rural/remote) participated in the study and provided detailed responses to the questions of the research team. Teachers in the three remaining schools (two urban and one rural/remote) responded to some questions about the workshop and Mobile Museum and their answers were recorded. To gain a better understanding of regional variations in schools around the country, the research team asked teachers to describe their circumstances and the kinds of cultural and natural

heritage activities they promoted and why. These are reported in Table 1.

Expected Outcomes

The research team identified the following list of outcomes expected at schools that had sent a representative to a teacher workshop and/or participated in a Mobile Museum program. The team was not limited by this list, and was prepared to include other evidence of the impact of outreach programs as suggested by teachers.

- **More museum and monuments visits:** One of the main objectives of both programs was a marketing

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Table 1. School circumstances and cultural and natural heritage activities

	Urban (7)	Peri-Urban (11)	Rural/remote (17)	Total (35)	Comments
Electrified	7	11	--	18	
Telephone	7	10	14	31	
Active Community/PTA ^{ab}	3	3	7	13	^a not asked during first week of study ^b Active loosely defined by teachers as participating in meetings, raising funds, involvement in heritage, school improvement activities and attending school events.
Radio/Cassette Player	7	11	17 ^c	35	^c reception poor in remote areas or not always used
VCR & Monitor	2	2 ^d	1	5	^d teacher's own
Computer	4 ^e	4 ^f	1 ^g	9	^e 1 computer not working(no computer skills) ^f 2 schools had no printers ^g computer donated to school but no electricity
Wildlife/Environmental Education Club/Activities	5	6	9	20	
Traditional Dance	7	11	17	35	
Art Club	4	4	5	13	
Drama Club	3	--	5	8	
Other clubs/activities (HIV/AIDS, Health, 4B, etc.)	1	--	5	6	

aspect that would encourage teachers to visit museums (either the National Museum or community museums) more often for educational purposes. We also expected that they would participate in Museum annual special events, such as the National Children's Art Competition and Visual and Performing Arts Festival.

- **Proper preparation for visits:** A corollary of the above was that teachers would plan their visits more thoroughly in order to maximize learning opportunities during their museum or monument visit. It was thought that teachers would contact the Museum in advance about specific subjects and

would develop specific learning objectives for their visit.

- **Museum corners/clubs:** The other main objective of museum outreach programs was to encourage teachers to develop teaching collections within their classrooms that could be used in a variety of lesson plans from social studies to science. Children would be responsible for bringing objects, maintaining displays and gathering more information, as a way of developing their research and analytical skills.
- **Use of Museum publications:** The team expected to find evidence of Museum publications used by teachers as supplementary resources

on a wide range of heritage topics related to the curriculum.

The research team also asked teachers about specific expected outcomes for the teacher workshop, particularly in relation to the **dissemination of information**. Head teachers were expected to report back and/or conduct mini-workshops for classroom teachers. They were also expected to circulate the Museum publications and encourage teachers to contact the Museum for more information related to their subjects.

At those schools that achieved one or more of the expected outcomes, teachers were asked to explain the reasons for their successes and whether or not they could be attributed to

Table 2. Schools where evidence of the expected outcomes was found

Expected outcome	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural or Remote	Total	Comments
Museum visit within last five years or since workshop	4 ^a	1	5 ^b	10	^a includes 1 visit to Nhabe and 3 to National Museum ^b includes 1 visit to Phuthadikobo, 1 to Nhabe and 3 to National Museum
No museum visit	3	9	13 ^c	25	^c Visited Gaborone on educational tour but found the Museum fully booked
Monument visit	1 ^d	1 ^e	1 ^f	3	^d Jwaneng (Khama memorial) ^e Domboshaba ^f Nswazi grave
Plans to visit museum/monument in next academic year ^g	3	3	4	10	^g Only as part of educational tour
No plans to visit Museum/nature corners ^h	1 2 ⁱ	5 3	11 4	17 9	^h as a result of teacher's own initiative; no teacher cited workshop as reason for starting corner ⁱ One teacher cited participation in "Family Treasures" program at Nhabe Museum as the impetus for starting corner
Use of Museum publications	7	11	16	34	89% of schools had seen and used Museum publications, but not regularly and not enough quantities. Teachers use them in lesson planning (mostly social studies and culture) or give them to children mostly for reading material
Participation in Museum annual events, e.g. National Children's Art competition, Visual and Performing Arts Festival, etc.		1	2	3	Only 8% of schools knew about the annual children's art exhibition and one school participated in a special exhibition sponsored by DeBeers.

participating in a museum outreach program. Other teachers were asked to explain why some of the expected outcomes were not achieved.

RESULTS

Evidence of Expected Outcomes

The findings in relation to the expected outcomes are listed in Table 2.

Reasons for Not Achieving Expected Outcomes

Teachers mentioned one or more of the following reasons for the failure of

the programs in meeting their expected outcomes (frequencies are reported in Table 3):

- **No money/transport for visits:** The lack of money for extracurricular activities was cited most often as the reason schools did not visit museums, engage in cultural activities, or create museum corners. This was particularly the case for schools serving remote area dwellers, dependent on local councils for funds. Because securing transport was so difficult,

schools that did manage to undertake an educational tour often combined visits to museums with other places of interest.

- **No security/space in classrooms for museum corners:** Some schools had problems with theft and vandalism at their schools and were reluctant to have children collect and display family heirlooms. Some teachers in rural areas said that the community often uses the school for other community purposes making

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Table 3. No of schools reporting each reason for not meeting expected outcomes

Reason	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural or remote	Total
No Money/Could not raise funds	3	4	5	12
Local authority did not approve transport or could not arrange transport	4	5	6	15
No security/space for museum corners	3	4		4
No interest in creating corners	1	1	1	2
Schedule too full/no time			1	1
No expectations from Museum to do activities (after workshop)	1			1
No follow-up/assistance from Museum	2	3	7	12

it difficult to keep objects in the classroom.

- **No interest in creating corner/heritage activities:** Some teachers did not find them useful, did not think they were necessary or did not know how to integrate a teaching collection into a lesson plan.
- **Full schedule:** Some teachers suggested that they did not have time to create museum corners. There were other teaching duties or extracurricular activities that they were mandated to do.
- **No expectations from Museum to do anything else:** Some teachers were not aware that they were supposed to do anything else after the Mobile Museum visit or a teacher workshop. No teacher said that they continued to have children collect and maintain objects after a Mobile Museum visit and most schools treated the visit as a one time experience.
- **No follow-up/assistance from Museum:** In those schools where Museum corners were created or heritage clubs and activities existed, no school attributed the initial inspiration to the teacher workshop. Some teachers said that they started

museum/nature corners on their own or that it was suggested to them during their teacher training. Others said that the Museum did not provide enough information/guidelines about creating Museum corners, how to plan a visit to the Museum, or how to use teaching collections in the classroom.

Below are some of the statements made by teachers that could assist the Museum in its programming:

The relationship between schools and the Museum is not very strong. There is little follow-up and it is difficult to implement topics learnt at workshops because of the on going changes in the curriculum. The museum should keep in regular contact with schools to support teachers better.

[We] would like to see reports [written by Museum staff after Mobile Museum service] to see how other schools fared and what they did to make the program a success at their schools. It also helps encourage teachers.

Teacher Responses Regarding the Mobile Museum

Group I schools (roll of more than 600 pupils) and schools located in urban or

peri-urban areas were not specifically asked about the Mobile Museum program since they do not receive this service. However; many teachers at the aforementioned schools volunteered information about the Mobile Museum, having participated in the program at their previous postings. For many teachers, the program was a memorable experience. Some of the positive comments cited about the program were:

- All the components of the program were highly educational and presented in an interesting and entertaining manner.
- Topics support and enrich the curriculum
- The entire school and community is involved in the program
- Shows that the museum has expertise that schools do not have, particularly in the areas of cultural studies and the environment
- Leaves a deep and lasting impression on pupils, teachers and the community

While the positive responses to the Mobile Museum program far outweighed the negative, teachers did identify the following problems with the service:

- **Infrequency of visits** (usually once every seven years): This was by far the greatest complaint about the service.
- **Duration of the program:** Some teachers suggested that the program should be spread over two days because so much information is presented in one day.
- **Confusion/competition with other outreach programs of Government departments:** Some teachers suggested that they receive more support from the Departments of Wildlife and Health and were more likely to establish wildlife and health clubs/activities because these departments had more continuous contact with schools.
- **Organisation of program:** Some teachers thought that the children should be divided into smaller groups and that the content should have been tailored for different learning levels and aptitudes.
- **Lack of communication with teachers:** Teachers were not involved in the planning of the itinerary or did not receive enough advance notice about the program. Some teachers also suggested that they could be consulted about the topics beforehand and given more detailed advice on how to prepare for the Museum visit. Some teachers suggested that there should also be follow-up soon after the program so that the experience continues beyond the visit.
- **No follow-up:** Some teachers suggested that the Museum should send reports summarizing teacher evaluations of the program so that there is some follow-up and schools can have a better understanding of what other schools did in preparation for the program.

- **Never experienced the program:** This was the complaint of Group I and urban schools who felt that the Mobile Museum should also visit their schools because their pupils could also benefit.

Teacher Responses Regarding the Teacher Workshops

All thirty-five schools were asked to respond to the questionnaire about the teacher workshops since all schools had sent a representative to attend a Museum workshop in their inspector area. They mentioned the following positive aspects about the workshop.

- Topics are relevant to the curriculum
- Enjoyed visit to monuments (These are places where they usually do not have opportunities to visit)
- The information, pamphlets and books are useful in the classroom

We didn't know the Museum could be such a valuable resource until the workshop.

The number of schools reporting outcomes in relation to information dissemination are indicated in Table 4.

Teachers were asked to explain why the expected outcomes in relation to the dissemination of information were not achieved. They mentioned the following:

- **No feedback, follow-up or evaluation:** This was the number one reason cited by head teachers for not achieving the expected workshop outcomes at schools. At least two schools said that they had written to the Museum for more pamphlets for their own mini-workshop.
- **Head teachers did not report to classroom teachers:** Some were transferred (one passed away) before they conducted workshops or reported back to class teachers,

some did not circulate materials. More often, no reason was given for not reporting on the workshop.

- **Head teachers attend too many workshops:** Subject teachers said that head teachers attend too many workshops through the Department of Teacher Training and Development and that there is rarely any follow-up or evaluation. Some subject teachers suggested that the Museum should target subject teachers or school heads of divisions, such as the Sports and Culture teacher.
- **Head teachers could not recall the workshop:** Many teachers had to be reminded about the content and program details. One Head teacher had a difficult time remembering the workshop because the Museum had been a stakeholder at a number of similar workshops.
- **Head teachers were unaware of what was expected of them after workshop:** Most head teachers claimed they were unaware that they were expected to disseminate information to their teachers and assumed that a verbal report of what occurred was sufficient. While they claimed to have circulated notes and the Museum publications to teachers, they did not formally conduct workshops, provide a written report for future reference, or follow-up how the information and resources were used in the classroom.

Teacher Recommendations

In light of the specific circumstances and financial constraints at each school, teachers were asked to give suggestions on how to improve relations between the Museum and schools and what support services the Museum should be providing. The teachers suggested the following:

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Table 4. Schools reporting dissemination of information as a result of Teacher Workshops

	Urban (9)	Peri-urban (11)	Rural/remote (18)	Total
Mini-workshop conducted	2	--	3	5
Verbally reported to teachers	3	5	5	13
Did nothing	2	1	6	9
Don't remember workshop	2	5	4	11

- Better communication with teachers and pupils:** This was the most often cited recommendation by teachers. Teachers thought that communication was often one-way, with the Museum telling teachers that they would be attending a workshop or that the Mobile Museum would visit their schools on a particular date regardless of what the school might have planned. Rarely would teachers have any prior input about either the itinerary or program content. Teachers also suggested that lack of follow-up from the Museum was the major reason for not initiating or sustaining any museum related activity at schools. Many teachers recognized that it was not always financially feasible to follow-up in person, but suggested that Museum officers should correspond by mail or phone and send evaluation reports to acknowledge school and teacher inputs. At least two teachers also felt that programs targeting children should be presented at their level and in a more participatory manner instead of lecture-based.
- More frequent Mobile Museum visits/increase number of days:** Similarly, teachers requested more Mobile Museum visits, rather than teacher workshops. Several subject teachers commented that the number of beneficiaries of the Mobile Museum program was greater than the workshop since teachers, pupils and the community were involved in the program. Teachers also suggested that the program should be spread over two days because of the amount of information presented.
- Update content of Mobile Museum program:** Teachers wanted to see both current topics such as HIV/AIDS and subjects not normally covered in the primary school syllabus, such as archaeology, included in the program. They also wanted information about Botswana's ethnic groups and regions, e.g. schools in Tsabong requested more information about the Okavango and ethnic groups living in that area. Some teachers thought that the program emphasized only the culture of the Basarwa at the expense of other people in Botswana.
- Send more teaching resources:** Teachers wanted to receive more Museum posters and publications, especially the Zebra's Voice, more regularly. Larger schools wanted multiple copies of each because two were not enough to circulate amongst a staff of fifteen or more teachers. One head teacher suggested inviting teachers to contribute to the Zebra's Voice. Another commented that some of the articles should be written at a child's level. The teacher was informed that the Museum was producing a children's publication for that purpose. Another teacher said that the Education Division should produce a short newsletter just for teachers, informing them about new Museum developments, events and programs. The newsletter could provide guidelines and lesson plans using artifacts and collections.
- Send videocassettes supporting syllabus subjects:** This request came primarily from urban schools that had access to VCRs and TV monitors, however, even remote schools said that they were interested in videocassettes and could make arrangements to borrow equipment if necessary. The subject matter teachers most wanted to see on video were: wildlife, cultural practices and traditions of different ethnic groups and the history of Botswana.
- Develop teaching kits:** Teachers at rural and remote schools suggested this as an alternative to the videocassettes because such schools had no electricity or audio-visual equipment but all rural schools have radio/cassette players and regularly integrate Radio Botswana programs into their lesson plans (when reception is good). One teacher suggested that the Museum could create kits on various subjects, from basket weaving to monuments, that would include attractive posters,

pamphlets, cassette tapes and suggested lessons plans.

- **Involve local authorities and communities in programs and services:** Teachers suggested inviting local councils (Council Secretary) to participate in Mobile Museum programs or informing them of the itinerary. Local councils are instrumental in securing transport for schools and if they see the educational value of the Museum they will be more likely to approve or provide funds for educational tours.

Main Themes Emerging from Teachers' Responses

Five main themes regarding the reasons the two programs were not meeting their expected outcomes emerged from the data collected in this study. These are presented below, together with suggestions for how these might be overcome.

1. Not enough consultation with stakeholders

Clearly, the most important lesson of the study is that the Museum needs to communicate more often with its stakeholders and target audiences. Mathewson (1994; 2001) reveals that museums dominate in the museum/school relationship. This seems to be true about the programming in the National Museum. While education programs and services, in particular, the teacher workshops were developed with good intentions, they tended not to address the real and varied needs and circumstances of Botswana's primary school teachers. Moreover, decisions about implementation and presentation tend to favour Museum facilitators rather than the intended stakeholders. For example, Museum education officers decide on when and where they want to go on a Mobile Museum trip at a given time. Their plan for the year is never sent to schools at the

beginning of the financial year not even to Regional Educational Offices. While this is often a good starting approach, this in the end sends a wrong message particularly the spontaneity with which such trips are undertaken.

Before any program, service or resource is developed, the Museum should conduct a proper and thorough needs assessment and feasibility study, to establish the most efficient and effective service delivery and to set measurable objectives and outcomes. Data should be collected and analysed to help in shaping up what is being developed.

2. No clear, measurable indicators of expected outcomes

Again, many of the expected outcomes of outreach programs were assumed by the Education Division and not derived from the actual situation of teachers. Many schools for example could not visit museums because of transport problems and those that did, did so as part of a general educational tour of Gaborone. The Museum still lacks evidence to show the extent to which their set objectives have been met. For instance, those schools that had nature/museum corners claim that they had not created them as a result of the workshop or because of the Mobile Museum program; rather they did so either because of the teacher's own initiative or because they had learned about them during pre-service training.

An understanding of what teachers were doing before the workshop and what was expected of them after having participated in the workshop would have helped in creating real performance indicators. For example, future teacher workshops could involve practical ways teachers could use the Museum and its expertise to supplement and support *already existing* activities at schools, e.g. ways to support school cultural heritage

clubs, how to integrate the nature corner into a number of subjects, how to teach using artefacts, how to develop lesson plans around Museum publications, how to increase community involvement, etc. The performance indicators for such a workshop would measure the actual changes in classroom practices.

3. Competition/lack of collaboration with other departments

Exacerbating the problem of poor communication with stakeholders is the seeming competition with the outreach and in-service training programs of other government departments, such as the National Library Services and Wildlife and National Parks. Unlike the Museum, these have greater capacity to follow up projects and provide outreach services to schools because of their size and regional offices. Coordinated collaboration with other departments should strengthen Museum programming and complement other outreach services without duplicating them. Programs run by Wildlife, Health and Environmental Affairs emulate the mobile museum.

4. Operations too centralised and detached from those being served

Interestingly, Oram and Nteta's (1983) report on museum development in Botswana called for a decentralized museum service that could serve the nation more efficiently. Almost twenty years later, most teachers interviewed felt that the National Museum was still too removed and detached from the public it is supposed to serve and commented that education officers in Gaborone did not understand the issues and challenges faced by teachers in distant and rural areas. The expense of operating the Mobile Museum from Gaborone, means that most schools will only experience the program once every seven or eight years. In person follow

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up and evaluation will also continue to be difficult.

5. No review and up-date of programs

The content and presentation of some Mobile Museum units have not changed much over the past twenty-two years. A case in point is the screening of Basarwa ethnographic films in 16mm format. The films are so old that they often have to be spliced during the screening. Teachers also commented that other ethnic groups and places in Botswana should be represented in the Mobile Museum program. They also suggested that the Museum should plan the itineraries such that people in one area can learn about life in a completely different region of Botswana.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations are suggested by the study reported here:

- The Museum should develop more comprehensive communication strategies with its stakeholders. It should be regularly soliciting feedback from schools and following up programs either by correspondence, school visits or over the telephone.
- The Education Division should conduct more intensive needs assessments prior to developing any program or resource materials.
- Existing education programs and services should be regularly reviewed and updated to meet the changing needs and circumstances of Botswana's schools. This can only be possible with information flow from research Divisions.
- The Education Division should investigate the feasibility of decentralising Museum services to facilitate operation of Mobile Museum and other outreach

services. For example, it might collaborate with other regional museums or government departments (e.g. Ministry of Education) or local authorities who would be responsible for administering services. The Education Division would act as the central coordinating body, providing guidelines and support to these regional centres as necessary. The other possibility is using the three units of the Division as contact points for different regions of the country.

- The Museum should develop more teaching kits that complement and enrich the primary school curriculum. These kits could include posters, tape cassettes and recommended lesson plans on a variety of topics. The Museum could consider sending out videocassettes, although these could only be used at those schools that have equipment and electricity. The Museum should compile loan packages similar to library packages. This should not only reduce costs incurred by Mobile Museum but effectively market the Museum, and most importantly improve the amount and quality of information disseminated to schools.
- Schools or clusters could identify a resource person that would be responsible for liaising with the Museum on a regular basis, similar to a school librarian. These teachers could be inducted to coordinate Museum programs and activities for their school and/or community.
- Future workshops should be extended to classroom teachers as planned, or those with specific responsibilities, such as the Head of Sports and Culture. The workshops should be practical and tailored to their specific needs.
- Plans for the year's Mobile Museum trips should be communicated to Local authorities well in time

such that they are included in their annual plans. The councils would then learn to appreciate problems the Museum encounters in trying to run the program.

- Museum outreach programs, regardless of whether they are targeting teachers or pupils, should be more practical, learner-centred and less lecture based. Programs should reflect the Museum's diversity and strengths in all four-research areas: natural history, art, archaeology and ethnology.

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