

EDITORIAL

The value of a modern science museum

The modern science museum is not merely a collection of historical artefacts and exhibits from the natural world depicting physical, chemical and biological phenomena. It is also a science center, which creates a space for learning about and understanding science mainly through interactive exhibits. Working with interactive exhibits can play an important role in the educational process of young people interested in science. It can provide an opportunity to actively engage in making observations, analyze information and draw conclusions, in an enjoyable setting. The incorporation of these ideas in science education is reflected in the commonly used phrases, “learning science by doing science” and “science is fun”.

At a time when developing an educational system relevant for Sri Lanka in the 21st century is being discussed at various levels of policy making, undue importance is given sometimes to changing syllabi and course contents. In keeping with world-wide trends, a more important aspect of reforms should be to shift the focus from curriculum-based teacher directed education, to one that is curiosity driven, student centred active learning, particularly in the early years. In catalyzing this shift, the access to modern science museums can play a major role. It will be difficult for a school to provide children with the experience they can have in a science centre functioning within a science museum. In addition to exhibits, the museum will provide for an information system including a library and also other resources such as an auditorium for public lectures, films and demonstrations. The learning experience in a science museum is often a social experience, shared by family, friends and other visitors to the museum.

Thus, science museums will also serve to spread scientific knowledge and the culture of science among the general population which will help in creating an informed population, better able to take rational decisions on issues facing society.

Ajith Abeysekara

