

Managing and Developing Human Resources at the Museum: Modern Trend or Quality Upgrade?

Vigli Maria, Panagiotopoulos Giorgos and Argyropoulou Maria

TEI of Western Greece, DOEPTM

Abstract. The economic and political "effervescence" at the turn of the 20th century and early 21st century strengthened the strategic management of organizations, focusing on the management and training of human resources, as this sector is linked to their sustainability. Museums and, in general, cultural operators, whether state-owned or private, in their efforts to create an upgraded "micro-environment" that will consistently diffuse knowledge and wisely highlight entertainment within an anthropocentric mentality, adapt to the new reality, by applying effusive practices from other scientific areas. The Museum, as a social space where conceptual misrepresentations, cognitive models and cultures interact, reflects the need for a change in its organizational structure, while at the same time making imperative an effective human resource management which should be reflected in the museum's external functions, from exhibition design to communication practices. Museum experience outlines these processes, making the visitor a recipient and a companion of a reality that is served by an upgraded management model. Our proposal examines whether the Modern Greek museum expresses this logic in a meaningful way, offering a holistic museum experience based on qualitative upgrading through the effective management and education of its human resources.

Key words. Modern Greek Museum, Human Resources, Upgraded management model, Holistic Museum Experience, Anthropocentric Mentality, Conceptual & cognitive models

[The great 21th century museums] are the museums breaking new ground in redefining their national identity, becoming more inclusive and accessible and establishing themselves quite consciously as a forum for the debate of contemporary issues. Dawn Casey, Director, National Museum of Australia

1. Introduction: The 21th Century of Museums: A Conversation in Progress

Museums have existed for centuries, equipped as they are with some sort of “adaptive intuition” to reinvent and transform themselves, however slowly and unconsciously. Museums have evolved through time, from the elite collections of imperial dominance, to educational institutions for the public and now to the museum as “mall” and appendage of consumer society, Gopnik (2007). A new season is upon us and it requires no less than a commitment to the durability and well-being of individuals, communities and the natural world, Berry (2000: 134).

For decades, if not for centuries, there have been two significant and contrasting philosophies of museums. The first is object-centered, saying that the most useful knowledge for museums and their audiences is the knowledge of works of art. The second philosophy is society-centered. In this context, knowledge is common property which includes the experiences and memories of non-professional historians, archeologists or scientists; useful knowledge is tacit as well as explicit. The role of the public is active and creative in a museum which becomes a catalyst for cultural change. Traditionally, museums have favored the object-centered philosophy, sometimes to the exclusion of the other and still do so. Certainly, truth does not lie wholly with one or other of these philosophies.

While national and other public institutions continue to define themselves according to these traditional roles, the socio-political economic and cultural forces for change have caused them also to re-define themselves, according to new roles which respond to a public-service mandate; museums are now to see themselves as “part of the living culture of their time” and the public is no longer to be viewed as “passive observers of exhibitions that have been supposedly created for their benefit”, Hudson (1998). As holders of the material and natural culture that serves to define national identity, national museums present an encyclopedic view of natural world through the preservation and display of material culture in a specialized subject area, such as the archaeology. In the 21st century, contemporary museums recognize the potential to positively affect society through new or newly emphasized roles. These new public-centered roles embrace such hallmarks of post-modernism as de-differentiation (e.g. the blurring of the boundaries between high and popular culture and between museums and other institutions) and new forms of integration, including relationships between people within organizations, regardless of status or position. As museums reinvent themselves, they are paying increasing attention to the importance of developing new reflexive relationship with their audiences, in order to stay relevant and provide the kinds of services that best serve and promote the public interest, Neves (2002).

Along with trying to establish through collections and exhibitions an empirically documented truth, the modern museum seeks to elevate the past to an introduction of the present and the future. This intention is characterized by a

holistic approach that will not examine it individually as a tool of the upper class, or an educational mechanism, a storage of precious artefacts, a space of national pride and individuality, a field of developing a specific professional and scientific activity, exhibiting technique or local development lever. Instead, it will endeavor to highlight the field where all the above engage and collaborate through reciprocal support or even conflict.

In this sense, museums of the 21st century have a social and moral dimension, with four important responsibilities in relation to moral creativity: to help visitors engage with works of art that explore moral issues in creative ways; to develop exhibitions that are themselves works of moral creativity; to act as an interpreter of society's values; and, as an institution itself, to uphold moral and professional standards. Because the idea of reconceptualization is a central theme of current museologic research which should be governed, amongst others, by professional ethics and respect, the dimension of an upgraded management model applied in Greek museum reality is emphasized in this text, through the dimensions of museum networking, professionalism and the involvement with the local community. These parameters could be significant factors of reframing the organizational function of Modern Greek museums, in order to serve correctly their social and cultural role as agents of collective memory, Neves (2002). Our research draws from the Greek archaeological museum field, with the example of the Archaeological Museum of Olympia as a representative of a Greek museum policy that has to change. The option emanated from the fact that the Modern Greek museum phenomenon is related, since its birth, to the moral obligation of preserving the antiquities; this sense led to the establishment of the first museums, exclusively archaeological, with a restricted jurisdiction to rescue the material evidence and remains of the glorious past of the Greek culture. These museums were later transformed, from warehouses and antiquities storages, into areas of bequeathing archaeological knowledge and cultivating the arts, Hourmouziadis (2006) & Gazi (2011). Originally, Greek museums are public, which clearly demonstrates the conscious democratisation and socialisation of the institution, as a result of adopting the equivalent European perceptions. Over the years, Greek museums have evolved and they have been enriched thematically, organizationally and museologically. However, as evidenced by the figures, archaeological museums have always been more numerous, demonstrating different aspects of Greek museum policy, thanks to their public character, thus, being one of the important indicators for highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary Greek museums.

2. The increasing importance of the human resources management in the Modern Museum

Given the reduction or stagnation of budgets, the effort for economies of a scale as well as for better functioning by the same means, earns a new importance. In this context, museums are exploring various possibilities such as partnerships, multi-skilled staff, pooling available resources, and, at the same time, trying to

make management methods more efficient and effective. Thus, museum renovation policies only make sense if they are accompanied by the modernization of their management so as to bridge the gap due to their often obsolete ways of functioning (rigid hierarchy, lack of dialogue, delegation of limited competencies, lack of incentives for teamwork, "Micro" rather than participatory management). Gradually, managers are called upon to increase staff competencies and to foster the individual or group initiative. In this context, human resource management is becoming increasingly important for a number of reasons: increasing complexity of the professions, diversification of professional profiles, increased need for internal communication, demand for more qualifications and specialization of staff, widening of teamwork for improving the quality of services and the relationship with visitors. It is necessary to move from the logic of simple staff management to a policy of human resource development. Indeed, the lack of autonomy of public museums can be seen more in the field of human resources, than in the economic field: Permanent staff with incomplete training, poor qualifications and "lifetime service", lack of recognition of the work of temporary staff leading to abandonment of incentives, lack of financial incentives, lack of evaluation, over-employment of volunteers, etc. In addition to the need of autonomy in managing human resources, directors converge on the fact that the pyramid structure does not fit into modern cultural institutions that are called upon to implement projects using multidisciplinary teams. Therefore, it seems necessary to work together and delegate the power, initiatives and responsibilities - measures that can guarantee workers' satisfaction and motivation. However, in many museums, staff management faces a double hurdle: on one hand, museums do not usually have a specialist in human resource management, a sector of key interest that is becoming more and more complex. On the other hand, museums are poorly managed, as they do not have the necessary administrative staff, Tobelem (2010: 164-165).

So the issue is not so much the number of positions, as their reasoned and effective allocation. Creating more administrative positions does not necessarily compensate for the absence of placement of employees in key positions. Museums need rather energetic, prudent and prominent managers who will designate teams and responsibilities for catalyst workers to make the organization more efficient. However, it should be borne in mind that some directors fail in their work as they fail to understand the management mechanisms, the role of the curator, his managerial position, the relationship of the museum with the city and its inhabitants.

If we define management as a process that allows for optimal use of available resources to achieve the museum's strategic goals, the role of the manager is twofold: on one hand, he must promote the changes required within an institution and, on the other hand, deal with both senior management and the public. As in many museums the curator also acts as a director, it is difficult to be an academic specialist and a capable manager at the same time. Therefore, it

is important to train managers, especially if they come from the scientific field of museology, all the more so because administrative skills are indispensable in the entertainment and creativity industry due to the competition aimed at institutions with competent, skilled and adept professionals, Tobelem (2010: 166-167).

3. The Greek museum phenomenon; institutional operation framework and current situation through the example of the Olympia Archaeological Museum

According to Hourmouziadis (2006: 110-128), there is a substantiated concern on the institutional role and the character of the Greek archaeological museum, a result of inconsistency and fluidity that characterize the modern museum reality. This situation is attributed mainly to the increase in the number of museums and their content broadening, which, in order to be fruitful, requires consideration of individual phenomena associated with the character, organization and operation of the modern Greek museum. So, the museum landscape can not only be approached quantitatively by measuring the increase or decrease in the number of museums and visitors, but mainly qualitatively, through the joint examination of certain parameters. In the case of the Greek archaeological museums, a significant parameter of acme or decay of the institution is the implementation of the museum policy by the State, which in essence is absent, coincidental or disconnected from every modern necessity and concern, associated with the museum. More specifically, the institutional operation framework of the Greek archaeological museums could be synopsized as follows;

- Most of the Greek archaeological museums are run by the State. They are not autonomous administrative and financial units.
- They are characterized as legal entities under the supervision of local and responsible for the antiquities peripheral units / Ministry of Culture and Sport services, which is the main governing body of the sectors of cultural heritage and modern culture as well as the main representative of state interference in the cultural sector, Konsola (2006:195-196) & Voudouri (2003: 255).
- The existing organizational structure creates significant problems, such as: a) the lack of scientific staff, fully and exclusively employed by the museums b) the insufficiency of specialized scientific personnel c) the lack of systematic cooperation and their organic link with local authorities and other bodies and d) separating the archaeological museums in accordance with the structure of the ministry itself, Voudouri (2003: 340-350).
- The management, organization and operation of the Greek archaeological museums suffer the consequences of the absence of long-term national planning, or more accurately the inability, for the part of the state, to draw a clear museum policy, Voudouri (2003: 255-330).

Despite the harmonization of the museum concept with the requirements of the ICOM regarding the promotion of its social role, the practices and perceptions of the Archaeological Service remain subject to the management of collections, impairing the "visitor-focused" image of archaeological museums. This attitude, although justified to some extent, as it is connected with the constant efforts of the Archaeological Service to rescue antiquities, seriously harms the image of archaeological museums, overstating the storage capacity instead of their communicative and operational character. Failure to redefine the role of archaeological museums inevitably leads to addressing the problems inefficiently. Taking as an example the Archaeological Museum of Olympia, it exemplifies the Greek museum policy, with all the positive and negative elements its function presents in contemporary Greek reality. It is a state institution, directly administrated the Ministry of Culture, coming under the exclusive jurisdiction and supervision of the Elis Antiquities Authority. The abundance of valuable findings unearthed by the German Archaeological Institute, during the first excavations which lasted from 1875 to 1881 and the urgent need for protection, storage and conservation were the main reasons dictating the foundation of the Olympia museum, which opened to the public in May 1887. The Archaeological Museum of Olympia was one of the most systematically organized museums of his time, hosting the most important findings from the excavations in the sacred area of the Altis, whilst having a positive impact on the development of the region. The new museum-designed and overseen by the architect Patroclos Karantinos-was officially inaugurated in 1982, replacing the Old (Syngreion) Museum and responding to the new economic, political and social order, as well as the increase of findings due to the progressive excavation activity. Undertaking the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens was a highly beneficial occurrence regarding to the building renovation and to modern museological standards, thus, validating its contemporary role as one of the most important museums in Greece, Vicatou (xx).

4. Professionalism, museum clustering & involvement of local community; aspects of an effective human resource management in the Greek archaeological Museum

The contradiction between the fewer and fewer jobs and the ever-growing museum needs is a major issue that could be positively served by exploring capabilities and exploring solutions in the field of human resource management. Increasing revenue through sponsorship and other activities, creating conditions for greater autonomy of the cultural institutions (in terms of budget, staff and administration), establishing museum practices for increasing traffic, engaging in issues related to external "Partners" (social-educational sector, tourism, business) are the guiding principles on which the modern Greek museum could spring into action to increase jobs and its functionality on a managerial level. In the case of archaeological museums and despite the problems presented by the Greek museum reality, especially for smaller and local archaeological institutions, the aforementioned conclusions form the base for the introduction of an upgraded management model, which open the potential prospects for the

improvement of the institution in Greece. The Archaeological Museum of Olympia, although categorized as traditional, is, mostly, serving contemporary museological functions thanks to its collections, importance and popularity which facilitate funding and visitor attraction. As a contemporary Greek museum, it could be related to a management example that favors practices such as professionalism, museum networking and involvement of local community, in order to serve correctly its role as a cultural institution in evolution.

4.1. Professionalism

Museums staff members actively work to advance not only their own institution, but the museum sector as a whole. The professionals must work together to develop in each department a public-facing attitude that does not see public engagement as an added value, but as the central purpose for all functions that the museum is built for. Furthermore, training is now mandatory for all museum professionals due to the changes and transformations that the museum environment has suffered. The aim of the training is to provide the appropriate knowledge in an increasing number of areas: collection management, preventive maintenance, exhibition planning, administration, communication, funding or research. It is also very important to use the accumulated knowledge in the fields of museology, in order to enhance internal education and work experience. Something similar is also true for continuing training, as there is a need for more professionalism in the museological field worldwide. Training programs emphasize teamwork as well as interdisciplinarity. Human factor, interpersonal relationships and talent identification play a decisive role in the success of the program, Tobelem (2010: 158-160).

Thus, the Archaeological Museum of Olympia could be a field where new ways to train potential staff and better support current professionals will be explored. Our suggestions are the following:

- To introduce guidelines for different job descriptions in order to help potential candidates of the sector understand the available roles as well as the corresponding training
- To introduce more professional specialties already established in the sector, such as museologists and museum educators
- To create new, fixed-term or part-time jobs through the further development of services and benefits such as events, activities, the museum shop or restaurants Tobelem (160-162).
- To take a more active role in training the already existing staff (security guards, archaeologists, art restorers, hostesses etc) in permanence
- To create proper entry-level posts in order to ensure clear career pathways, as well as the correct payment of the lowest rank of employees who are often replaced by volunteers
- To appoint wisely & precisely roles and employment time for volunteers in the museum

- To develop relationships with schools and universities in order to raise awareness of the available museum roles.

The archaeological museum sector needs to apply not only a visitor-focused but a future-focused thinking and put in place a strategy that will provide jobs for emerging and established museum professionals.

4.2. Connecting Museums; A Museum Cluster in Elis

Museum should be actively assisting visitors to easily follow narratives that could pique their curiosity. By encouraging visitors to go to more places, we can help them recognize the connections between collections, objects, historic sites. In this way, museal institutions can help people understand that their heritage is not a series of disjointed events and places dotted around a landscape, but that science, history, literature and art are all connected and directly impact one another.

Creating a culture of active collaboration would allow museums to focus on what should be a common goal: helping visitors question and better understand the world around them. Additionally, with the creation of networks, museums gain access to important human, technological and financial resources, which they rarely have access to usually and without having to change their organizational structure. In this context, the museums and / or cultural institutions of a city or a defined area cooperate on the basis of a specially built development program, Konsola (2013) & Griffin (1996).

In the case of Elis, the Olympia Archaeological Museum could be involved in a network which would implement a “cultural clustering program” on a wider rural scale; at the head of the project, the Olympia Museum could be connected with three other archaeological museums (and two archaeological sites) thanks to their geographical proximity, and their common administration by the same body (Elis Department of Antiquities), Vigli & Zafeirakis (2015). The “lead” museum of the network has a consultative role and is responsible for monitoring other museums, which, in fact, possess fewer means, Tobelem (2010:167).

The project includes archaeological routes, excursions and multiple facilities like the one or two days pass for the totality of museums, the uniformity of opening hours and ticket pricing or other communication and mediation activities. Such a possibility of forming an “archaeological museum cluster” in the Elis district could:

- Be an innovative prospect in reference to the museums inter-connection which will reinforce and redefine the image of the public archaeological museum
- Be beneficial for smaller or less-known museums in the area from the expansion of cross-regional collaborations

- Contribute to the financial boost of the local community in a rural vicinity where the archaeological museums establish their cultural identity
- Promote the cultural and touristic development of the area.

Apart from cost sharing, securing economies of scale and exposure to the public, museum networks increase the negotiating power and the weight of institutions in decisions made by those at the helm (local governing body, supervisors, partners, etc.), Konsola (2011).

4.3. Involvement with the local community

Greek archaeological museums should be radical and participative institutions at the heart of their communities, Anderson (2015). More specifically, having a strong and clear concept of culture, Olympia Archaeological Museum could:

- be working in partnership with external organizations to develop formal and informal learning, skills and social change; e.g. schools and universities in order to undertake systematically educational programs
- direct its expertise outwards, to become centre for public creativity and local enterprise; e.g. summer cultural festivals with performances, concerts and projections related to the archaeological theme of the Museum, connection with already existing local festivals (“Raisins Feast”, “Festival of Greek Emigration”, “Festival of Adolescence Cinema”), organization of temporary archaeological exhibitions which will be held in independent cultural centers of the region.

In this way, incentives will be given to the local economy by involving local population to its activity Kirchberg (1998: 2) and Cultural Tourism will be essentially promoted. The Olympia Archaeological Museum and the wider area should “grow up” together. Its future requires also the city of Pyrgos and assumes that some sort of symbiosis between the region of Elis and the museum of Olympia will be salutary for both.

5. Conclusions

Apart from being repositories of objects, Museums are meeting places for people and ideas, Hewison (2015). Museums are in a position to invent a new field for themselves and their communities and help create an image of a desirable prospect, Janes (2009). Museums reflect the past, yet stay current and fluid to changing times. As our audience change, how we collect, interpret, engage and interact with them will inevitably change. Therefore, we are part of a greater mission that encourages us to constantly evolve our museum practices. Through curious and lateral ways we can continue use our collections and stories for a brighter future in museums. Furthermore, museums have to recognize that as sites of dialogue, are responsible to encourage, facilitate and enable evolving conversations. Thus, mutual exchange, cooperation and respect should underline all museum relationships with other museums, institutions,

communities or individuals. In Greece, they need to do everything they can to engage with their public, through their displays, education and outreach programs and by being as open as possible to what their audience wants. Away from being solely led by collections, Greek Museums, and in particular archaeological museums, must be managed by the fluidity of innovation, with practices leading to alternatives in terms of professional ethics, public interest and development, in order to remain a dynamic part of the public realm.

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