

# A Study on Functionality of Hong Kong Railway Museum

XIE Hong

Hangzhou Mass Cultural Center, Hangzhou, China

This article aims to figure out the functionalities of Hong Kong Railway Museum and its essential statuses in Hong Kong Railway culture. In general, the Hong Kong Railway Museum has two basic functions: First, it has been witnessing the development of Hong Kong Railway History; Second, the museum has its educational function in present days.

*Keywords:* Hong Kong Railway Museum Functionality

## Introduction of the Hong Kong Railway's Background

Railway can be regarded as one of the most convenient and efficient public transportation methods during current ages. Hong Kong, as a compact district and a society with fast rhythm depends on the railway transportation almost entirely, it can be said that the railway is the life-force of Hong Kong citizens and all-round industries. People would probably stumble at every step if the railway system paralyses at any moment. Thus, the local government of Hong Kong has devoted so much force to create better condition for the development of railway and its related properties. According to the *Railway Development Strategy of Hong Kong in 2014*, "We will continue to develop a passenger transportation system centered on public transport with railway as the backbone. Our railway network now carries over 4.5 million passengers per day, accounting for about 40% of all public transport passenger trips. The development of railway transport will not only significantly speed up passenger flow, but will also reduce the reliance on road-based transport (thus the need to build more roads), alleviate road congestion and lessen vehicle-induced air pollution. The development potential of areas along the railway lines will also be unleashed to facilitate housing and economic developments."<sup>1</sup> It serves to show the importance and its irreplaceable status of Hong Kong railway in people's daily life.

There is no doubt that the Hong Kong railway has its own history and specific culture, which is relied on the colonial rule under the British supervision age. When it comes back to the early era, the youthful development of Hong Kong railway started on at the beginning of 20th century which built up the close connection between Hong Kong and the mainland of China, which was named as Kowloon-Canton Railway. That is to say, this railway had witnessed the vicissitudes of Hong Kong society. Besides, it represents its own identity of local conditions and customs. Because it is located at Tai Po Market which is a place possessing a rich history so that the design of the station is a little bit different with the other railway stations. "While the

---

**Acknowledgements:** XIE Hong, who was graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, got a degree of Master of Arts in Visual Cultural Studies. He is working at the Hangzhou Mass Cultural Center at present, and devotes himself in doing Public Culture Research, particularly in Intercultural Studies and Mass English Education.

<sup>1</sup>. Transport and Housing Bureau of Hong Kong, *Railway Development Strategy of 2014*, Hong Kong: Transportation Press, 2014).

other stations along the Kowloon to Canton railway were built to a standard design, the station at Tai Po Market was built in Chinese style. Construction work was completed in 1913. The external features of the façade, roof and decorations were patterned upon a Chinese style and structure. Internally, it was designed to function as a railway station. The station was made redundant by a new one in a nearby location in 1983. It was then fully restored and now houses the Hong Kong Railway Museum.”<sup>2</sup> However, there is a bit difference between the Kowloon-Canton Railway and the other railway wire ways nowadays under the controlling of MTR (Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited) because of its original characteristics, used train styles and other related elements although the name of this museum seems to stand for all the aspects of Hong Kong railway system.

### **Detailed Description of Hong Kong Railway Museum**

The Hong Kong Railway Museum is the first special subject museum of its kind in the Regional Council area and its establishment owes much to the generous donation of land and major exhibits by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation. As a matter of fact, the first impression in my mind brought by the Hong Kong Railway Museum located at Tai Po Market was obviously not the same with the other normal museums. The whole construction and arrangement about this railway museum is much more like a public park rather than a traditional museum because a large part of this museum can be said as an exposed place.

Sincerely speaking, this so called railway museum seems have got much more functions than those normal arranged museums. To put it simply, the space of Hong Kong Railway Museum consists of four parts. A material reference room including the old booking office and some other data products; several old type train carriages which maintain their inner decorations and equipment perfectly; the space for displaying the whole model of early railway system of Hong Kong and a sound horn device of kerosene-used train; the place for visitors having a rest or discussing with each other. Apart from this discovery, the visitors of Hong Kong Railway Museum are almost little kids brought by their parents and some old people living nearby. It seems that the audience is not the same group of people as my estimate before because what my thought was that there should be lots of train fans or railway researchers being there. Most of those visitors are kind of having a rest or taking a walk around the museum.

Generally speaking, once a museum is finished building up and makes itself open to the public, its first and foremost goal is to attract people to take a visit. The value of a museum can be and should be revealed through the featured functionality of the museum. For instance, any museum focused on the scientific topic needs to display the scientific sources as much as possible so as all of the visitors could learn something around the science by paying a visit. According to the “Leisure and Culture Services Department” of Hong Kong Heritage Museum, their vision of the Hong Kong Railway Museum is that “They enrich and inspire by exploring the diverse cultures of Hong Kong, and by promoting and preserving the vibrant cultures of Hong Kong.”<sup>3</sup>

(1) To be much more strictly, the Hong Kong Railway Museum holds its specific mission.

(2) To preserve, study, present and interpret Hong Kong’s diverse cultures, with special emphasis on living heritage and creative culture.

---

<sup>2</sup>. Hong Kong Antiquities and Monuments Office. “Declared Monuments in Hong Kong—New Territories,” (23 January, 2014), [http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments\\_29.php](http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments_29.php) (accessed April 26, 2016).

<sup>3</sup>. Hong Kong Heritage Museum. “The Function of Railway Museum of Hong Kong,” (16 June, 2014), [http://www.heritagemuseum.gov.hk/en\\_US/web/hm/aboutus/planyourvisit/openinghoursandaddress.html](http://www.heritagemuseum.gov.hk/en_US/web/hm/aboutus/planyourvisit/openinghoursandaddress.html) (accessed April 26, 2016).

(3) To connect Hong Kong people with world cultures.

(4) To engage and stimulate audiences with innovative, inspiring, educational and enjoyable museum experience.

(5) To support and encourage intellectual, artistic and creative pursuits.

### **Functionality Description and Analysis of Hong Kong Railway Museum**

It can be said that the growth of museum has gone through for quite a long time. The function of museum was merely being a box room for treasure collection in the 14th century, and then experienced a transformation from the education area for nobility, scientific research place, public resource location to the site of travelling and consumption. In other words, the functionality of museum has been always witnessing a lasting alteration. The functionality can be seen as the essential issue of a museum to some degree. From my sight of view, every museum must have these two basic functions, which are the collection and dissemination. The function of collection is the material foundation of museum which can be used to serve the society; meanwhile, the function of dissemination is the method for serving the visitors. These two major functions can definitely not be replaced by the other named functions. Otherwise, the value and significance of museum will be vanished away.

In general situation, the functionality of museum would probably vary with the change of ages because the requirements are different during different eras. However, the thing which cannot be ignored is that, as for a museum, whatever the change of functionality will be, the connection between the functionality and social benefits will never be cut off. Because of this potential element, these five functions always pertain to the museum: the function of collection, conservation, scientific research, education and entertainment.

The functionalities of Hong Kong Railway Museum can be concluded into two aspects based on my research.

### **The Witness and Carrier of Hong Kong Railway History**

From Theodor Adorno's point of view, the word "museum-like" has its specific meaning, "the word 'museum-like' represents for the death of the past, which does not have any relationship between the visitors and the targeted museum. The reason why those stuffs can be preserved by the museum is just because people want to show their respect for the past history, but not because that the modern society needs them."<sup>4</sup> Although this notion is a little bit biased, it still points out that the first and most intuitionistic function of a museum is to preserve the fragments of the past history and turn itself as a carriage for collecting social memories. Those collected and exhibited objects can always recall the old memories of people when they visit the museum. This function can be exactly confirmed by the Hong Kong Railway Museum.

The public space created by the Hong Kong Railway Museum has its own contextual meaning. Those abandoned train carriages all stand for a historical period. The common memory will be aroused up when local people step onto the surface of Hong Kong Railway Museum. "The open-air museum, occupying an area of 6500 square meters, is located at the town center of Tai Po Market. It comprises the old Tai Po Market Railway Station building, six historical coaches dating from 1911 to 1974, a narrow-gauge steam locomotive, a diesel electric engine and a red-brick office block. The station building in unique Chinese style was built in 1913. It

---

<sup>4</sup>. Moore, Willard B. *Reflection upon Interpretation Museum*, Hallan, CA: Folklike Museum Press, 1986.

was declared a monument in 1984 and was opened to the public in 1985 after restoration and refurbishment.”<sup>5</sup> It can be found that the capacity of Hong Kong Railway Museum is not only a place for gathering historical objects but also should be regarded as the historical relics. The status of Hong Kong Railway Museum had already been determined as a place of heritage. The functionality of Hong Kong Railway Museum can be said as the same as a historical supporter filled with all kinds of cultural relics related to Hong Kong railway because the museum was not a newly created site but was once served as a railway station instead. Thus, the historical meaning is much more dense by reason that some people might have experienced that early period and when they get into the museum, the old scene of this railway station would re-emerge in their minds.

When it comes to the functionality of history recording, it is necessary to mention about the history of Kowloon-Canton Railway by occasion of the Tai Po Market, the location of Hong Kong Railway Museum, means so much to the Hong Kong railway history. “The construction of the Kowloon-Canton Railway marked an important step in the history of transport development in South China. The concession for building a line connecting Kowloon and Canton (Guangzhou) was first obtained from the Chinese Government in 1898 by the British and Chinese Corporation. After further negotiation, it was agreed that the line containing two sections, the Chinese section and British section, should be built separately by the two Governments concerned. The Hong Kong Government decided to implement the project in 1905. The first route went through Beacon Hill by a tunnel nearly 2.4 km (1.5 mile) long and then followed the west coast of Tolo Harbor.....The British section, also known as the Hong Kong Railway, was completed and opened to the public on 1 October, 1910, construction having costed 130 million. Five stations were first established along the main line from Kowloon. The whole Kowloon-Canton Railway was opened for through traffic services on 15 October 1911, with its termini established at Tai Sha Tow and Kowloon. On 14 October 1949 the through train service for passengers was suspended due to political reasons and Lo Wu became the terminus instead. After a lapse of thirty years, the direct through train service to Guangzhou was resumed on 4 April 1979.”<sup>6</sup>

With the rich historical background, the Kowloon-Canton Railway brings plenty of benefits for the local citizens, economic development and also facilitated the railway museum became forming. “The opening of the Kowloon-Canton Railway (British Section) in 1910 marked the beginning of a new era in the development of internal public transport in Hong Kong as well as communication links with China. The railway not only brought about rapid social and economic development for new towns along the line but also enabled the city to become the most important enter port in Southeast Asia. Over the past 76 years the Kowloon-Canton Railway has passed through the eras of steam and diesel, reaching full electrification of its passenger service in 1983. At a time of rapid change in this mode of transport, the establishment of the Hong Kong Railway Museum at the site of the Old Tai Po Market Station is most meaningful. Besides the preservation of a historical building, the Museum also serves as a repository for coaches and railway equipment used over the years, and is an archive of information relating to the history and continual development of the local railway system.”<sup>7</sup> It can be summarized that to the local people who have been living in Tai Po Market since childhood, the Kowloon-Canton Railway had witnessed their growth and had already become an indelible historical impression in their mind for reason of “farming and fishing were the major sources of livelihood of Tai Po residents. From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, floral cultivation developed as a major occupation, and industries of

---

<sup>5</sup>. The postcard bought from Hong Kong Railway Museum.

<sup>6</sup>. District Council Museum Hand Book 1, *Hong Kong Railway Museum*, Hong Kong Railway Museum Press, 1986.

<sup>7</sup>. District Council Museum Hand Book 1, *Hong Kong Railway Museum*, Hong Kong Railway Museum Press, 1986.

various kinds were developed in Tai Po.”<sup>8</sup>

It is not difficult to find main arrangement of the indoor part in Hong Kong Railway Museum by browsing the Gallery carefully. The ancient architecture has been using till now since it was used as the management office of Old Tai Po Market Station, and almost all of the internal installation has kept intact. It has five parts, the Exhibition Gallery, the Waiting Hall, the Information, Booking Office and the Signal Cabin. In my view, another element which can prove that the Hong Kong Railway Museum has the functionality of history record is the message displayed in the Booking Office including the speech sound material. People can get enough information about how the Kowloon-Canton Railway operated and a series of other useful info related to the Hong Kong railway in the old time.

The room besides the Gallery was the office room of railway station locating in Tai Po Market during the old age. The office room was where the station agent working, which had the multiple functions such as ticketing and signal processing. There were few station employees in the early period, around ten workfellows, helping manage this station. Employees would be at work in the forenoon or afternoon during that early period. One station agent, one railway director, one railway director assistant and two railway servants would be in the same organization of every duty group. The responsibility of station agent was to manage the political affairs, signal system and train's operation. The booking system was run by railway director or the assistant. Passengers could purchase their tickets approximately twenty minutes ahead before each train was set off. There was a wide variety of the tickets to choose from, the first, the second and the third class, including one-way and round-trip choices. In order to bring passengers convenience, the railway station also sold monthly ticket, season ticket and student ticket. Apart from this, passenger's friends and relatives could buy the platform ticket at Kowloon station in Tsim Sha Tsui if they wanted to stand beside the train and wave to see off. The process of ticket selling in this old railway station could only rely on manual operation with the support of abacus if it was possible because the lack of computers or other electronic calculating machines. All of the station employees knew the price of each type of train tickets thoroughly by heart. They got this ability that the total price would be in their mind as soon as passengers told them the tickets they wanted to buy. The speed of calculation between station employees and computer was too close to call. Each ticket was printed on the date and serial train number record in copper letterform. The print process was finished during ticketing period in which employees would use ticket printer to stamp tickets. Railway station director or the assistant should also in charge of the startup of per train apart from ticketing. They used gestures to announce the conductor after all the passengers settled down, and the engine driver would set off the train right after the notification given by the gesture from conductor. Railway servants took huge responsibilities of delivering road boards to engine drivers, controlling signal system of railway station, cleaning almost every place in the station including restrooms and even would double as cook. Station posts had complementation very often because it was extremely shorthanded. Only in this way, the operation of railway station would be much more flexible and smooth. For instance, railway agent or railway servants would help selling tickets when the number of passengers was in a maximum. Railway director or the assistant would also give a hand with handling signal system when it had breakdown. The team spirit could give its full scope to its advantages when railway station employees created the best cooperation.

---

<sup>8</sup>. District Council Museum Hand Book 1, *Hong Kong Railway Museum*, Hong Kong Railway Museum Press, 1986.

In sum, the Hong Kong Railway Museum holds the history of Kowloon-Canton Railway. On the one hand, the people who are old enough or once took the train driving on the Kowloon-Canton Railway can have a chance to recollect their historical memories; on the other hand, as for those younger generations, they can get a chance to know and learn the history of Hong Kong Railway in this museum based on all the image or substance sources showed. Thus, the second functionality of Hong Kong Railway Museum can be discussed about, is the functionality of education.

### **Functionality of Education**

As the time passes away, the functionality of museum has been transforming from the visitor-alooof situation into visitor-close condition, which means that the public could get in touch and enjoy the benefits from all the functionalities of museum. From my sight of view, museum should become an extramural classroom for students to obtain the knowledge which they might not study in the school. In order to illuminate the aspect of educational function much more clearly, I would like to introduce the “Constructivism” as my theory application.

The “Constructivism” is a kind of philosophy of education. “Constructivism is a theory of knowledge that argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. It has influenced a number of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, education and the history of science. During its infancy, constructivism examined the interaction between human experiences and their reflexes or behavior-patterns. Jean Piaget called these systems of knowledge schemata. Constructivism is not a specific pedagogy, although it is often confused with constructionism, an educational theory developed by Seymour Papert, inspired by constructivist and experiential learning ideas of Piaget. Piaget’s theory of constructivist learning has had wide ranging impact on learning theories and teaching methods in education and is an underlying theme of many education reform movements. Research support for constructivist teaching techniques has been mixed, with some research supporting these techniques and other research contradicting those results.”<sup>9</sup> George E. Hein, who has been studying the connection between the education and museum for several years, makes a minute discussion and analysis of the theory of “Constructivism” by explaining the functionality of education about museum in his famous literature work *Learning in the Museum* which helps me to make an analysis of the educational function much more smoothly. It can be said that “*Learning in the Museum* examines major issues and shows how research in visitor studies and the philosophy of education can be applied to facilitate a meaningful educational experience in museums. Hein combines a brief history of education in public museums, with a rigorous examination of how the educational theories of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and subsequent theorists relate to learning in the museum. Surveying a wide range of research methods employed in visitor studies is illustrated with examples taken from museums around the world, Hein explores how visitors can best learn from exhibitions which are physically, socially, and intellectually accessible to every single visitor. He shows how museums can adapt to create this kind of environment, to provide what he calls the ‘constructivist museum’. Providing essential theoretical analysis for students, his book also serves as a practical guide for all museum professionals on how to adapt their museums to maximize the educational experience of every visitor.”<sup>10</sup> The “Constructivism” is even more distinct for me by understanding the written knowledge of George E. Hein because when it is applied to the research of museum

---

<sup>9</sup>. George E. Hein, *Learning in the Museum*, The York, NA: The Routledge Press, 2008.

<sup>10</sup>. George E. Hein, *Learning in the Museum*, The York, NA: The Routledge Press, 2008.

educational functionality, the position of teachers and students are relocated. When students or children place themselves into the museum, they are not the passive receivers anymore, in contrast, they become as the active creator and getter of museum knowledge; as for the teacher, they transfer their roles from imparting the knowledge to encouraging their students to find out knowledge in the museum by themselves. In this way, the education pace in the museum is not in the synchronous but asynchronous instead. Different students or children who are visiting the museum would probably acquire different knowledge from the materials displayed in the museum owing to their various study methods and abilities.

When it comes to the educational functionality of the Hong Kong Railway Museum, it can be found that the purpose of education functionality does achieve to some extent through the exhibits. There are three materials which could be used as the educational sources: the Kowloon-Canton Railway simulated sand table, the train model of narrow gage railway and four used train carriages. I choose three raw data sources to finish analyzing that if the education functionality can be realized one hundred percent through the situational teaching approaches and whether the Hong Kong Railway Museum could meet the demand of education based on the “Constructivism” by taking entire video records. The three research targets are a mother and son (Miss Cui and her son Duan Haoxiang), groups of primary students with their teachers and an audiovisual education at a carriage in the daytime. These three research data can be divided into two categories which are the individual research target and group research target. By making contradistinction of these three data’s situations and feedbacks, I can reach a conclusion for the evaluation of the functionality of Hong Kong Railway Museum.

The first research target: Miss Cui always takes her son to the Hong Kong Railway Museum because they are living nearby. Duan likes the train so much that he spent nearly all the time playing with the rock around the railway. It can be discovered from the conversation between Duan and me that as a little student who is studying in the primary school, Duan does know much about the railway’s construction. It can be referred that these sources of knowledge related to the railway was ingathered by Duan himself during the process of visiting. However, he had not known anything till I told him that there is a Kowloon-Canton Railway simulated sand table in the lower course which seems a little bit strange because he had come to this museum more than twice. The Kowloon-Canton Railway simulated sand table aroused Duan’s interest again. He kept playing the train models many a time.

What I found was that Duan can remember some train types when he saw those train models, which means that the “Constructivism” education had produced the useful effect to him.

The second research target: Some primary school teachers bring their students to the Hong Kong Railway Museum for the extracurricular class education very often. The location was in the old train carriages. I met two groups of teachers and students from the primary schools nearby. The teachers and students had created a normal class content which consists of the questions and answers. By observing their education process, I found that the similar educational environment was being created by teachers based on the “Constructivism” theory about museum education. The questions raised by the teachers were a smart method to advance students think about what they had earned and seen in that journey. The students could also draw a conclusion after observing the materials and equipment showed in the museum. There is no doubt that the functionality of education was basically brought into being.

However, there still existed some doubts as I see. All of the questions posed by the teacher were almost the shallowest ones which can be easily answered by the students so that there could not have any chance to know whether the students had learned something after the visit. Besides, the atmosphere of the class was a

little bit as the same as a chaos. Teachers took out their cameras to take photos for their students while the students were chatting with each other. The last element which should be focused on is that there was nearly no interactivity between the students and the museum. As I found that the teachers supervised their students all the time so that there was little time for the kids to touch or play with the train models.

The third research target which should be discussed about is a documentary movie released in a projecting train carriage. The movie was a documentary film describing the history and brief development of the Hong Kong Railway, which was lasting around twenty minutes. Based on the record I took, there were 24 people there by the time I got, which includes 12 children. Most of them came with their parents.

The point which cannot be denied is that the form of that slide showing was an appropriate method with a clear purpose which means to make attendees to learn much about the history of Hong Kong railway; nevertheless, the actual fact which happened in the course of projection was that all of those children had lost their attention and patience after which the noisy environment was created by the other visitors in the carriage. In addition to this, there were not have any caption on the video clip to the extent that the attendees could hardly hear the sound files and understand the contents introduced by the film. Two foreigners gave up watching halfway under such condition.

In general, the functionality of education is basically being confirmed in the analysis of this part. But nonetheless I have discovered some newly essential points which are necessary to be discussed about the Hong Kong Railway Museum combining with the feedbacks of some fans of railway.

### **Newly Discoveries and Intensive Thinking of Hong Kong Railway Museum**

Several research issues need to be considered about to my way of thinking followed by the discussion about the functionality of Hong Kong Railway Museum. I had discovered some essential points and doubts throughout the process of research which was mentioned a little above.

(1) The first point is around the issue of conservation and revitalization of the Hong Kong Railway Museum. It is well known that as the location of Railway Museum, the Old Tai Po Market station has been protected and maintained since 1984, the time when it was named as the cultural heritage. According to the description on the website of “Conserve and Revitalize Hong Kong Heritage”, the secretary for development once mentioned that “In recent years, Hong Kong people have expressed a passion for the city’s historic past and its place in our future. Indeed, it is to be expected that a mature and advanced society such as ours should become more aware of its historic legacy, and seek to devote resources for its conservation. Many of our buildings have matured alongside us and, like us, may need special attention in later life. This inheritance is something that we should cherish, and we will continue to devote time and effort to heritage conservation and to the revitalization of our historic buildings.”<sup>11</sup> The truth is the Hong Kong Railway Museum is truly being “protected” for the old architecture and abandoned train carriages are perfectly maintained. However, it seems that the thing which is under protection is only about the substance, but with local spirit of railway rarely especially after the Kowloon-Canton was merged into the MTR, the cultural historical life of Kowloon-Canton Railway ceased and was only stored in this railway museum. Thus, does the spirit of Kowloon-Canton Railway truly being preserved by the government? The Hong Kong Railway Museum is only a pure possession to the government because the supporting facilities of the museum need to be upgraded in my opinion. For instance,

---

<sup>11</sup> Development Department of Hong Kong Heritage Museum. “Conserve and Reltalise,” (30 July, 2012), <http://www.heritage.gov.hk/en/about/welcome.htm> (accessed April 27,2015).



the “software” of the museum can be largely improved if there are enough guides to introduce interrelated information and lead visitors to get to know about the railway museum. This problem which I discovered was also mentioned by the fans of Hong Kong Railway.

(2) There exists two opposite views of what the Railway fans thinking about the Hong Kong Railway Museum. On the one hand, they admit that the railway museum does collect and maintain several heritages which are related to the old train, and the location of the museum is also a good place for people to have a visit; on the other hand, there are not enough heritages being kept right now. The things which are being exhibited are merely the used trains produced by the foreign countries, some images and stamps, which can be said that the original intention of Hong Kong Railway Museum has been misrepresented. People need to know that it is a museum but not a graveyard for abandoned trains. The most direct shortcoming of the Hong Kong Railway Museum is that the contents of it are “stubborn”. The museum rarely holds exhibitions and changes the materials often. The Kowloon-Canton heritage exists in name only because the government doesn’t want to pay force and money on the museum. Apart from this, the unchanging arrangement of the museum turns the museum into a “park” for the reason why most people come is just for a rest. Thus, the cognition and orientation of Hong Kong Railway Museum have become a little bit indistinct.

(3) The last issue which I want to mention is about the interactivity of the Hong Kong Railway Museum. There was a simulator train cockpit in the museum once. However, the carriage for simulating driving was moved away in order to put the museum in order and tighten the purse strings. However, the opportunities of interactivity between the visitors and museum decrease from time to time. As I have mentioned before that the students from primary schools did not have the enough space and material to communicate with by themselves. But students could experience the method to drive and control an old train if the simulator train cockpit was still there. To some degree, there are lots of benefits which should be learned by the Hong Kong Railway Museum from the railway museum in Japan. “The Railway Museum was built in Onari, Saitama City as the centerpiece of the JR East 20th Anniversary Memorial Project. This is a railway museum, and it preserves both the physical elements and heritage of railways in Japan and abroad. It also preserves materials relating to JR East and the JNR privatization reforms. The Railway Museum also conducts research and development. This is a historical museum that tells the industrial history of the development of the railway system while introducing the historical background of each period with displays of actual models. It is also an educational museum. Children can learn about and experience railway principles, systems, and the latest technologies (including future plans) through models, simulations, and play equipment.”<sup>12</sup> It can be easily found that the Railway Museum in Japan provides enough chances and equipment to satisfy the requirement from visitors. People can own opportunities to generate the interactivity with museum and learn the knowledge of railway much more directly.

### **Conclusion**

The Hong Kong Railway Museum is the unique museum in Hong Kong which is holding the history of Hong Kong Railway development. The two functionalities, historical recording and education, are largely being functioned from the angle of museum itself. However, there still exists some elements which can be regarded as the drawbacks of Hong Kong Railway Museum.

---

<sup>12</sup>. The Railway Museum of Japan. “English Edition for Introduction of Railway Museum,” (25 June, 2013), <http://www.railway-museum.jp/en/index.html> (accessed April 27, 2015).

First of all, the basic role of the museum is to record the specific history of Hong Kong Railway, but the arrangement and the force which are contributed to this museum are less than the original expectation. Thus, the function has some deletion to some certain degree. For instance, as for the aspect of heritage preservation, the museum does not make use of its historical advantage to hold various kinds of activities to attract people, so as to disseminate related information. The museum seems like a kind of meaningless piling up with some empty used train carriages and other invariable stuffs.

Secondly, the functionality of education also shows that the Hong Kong Railway Museum does have some shortcomings, which will be obviously reflected by contrasting with the Railway Museum in Japan. The lack of material information, guides' explanation and the sources for interactivities between visitors and museum are the insufficient points which can be made up.

### References

- District Council Museum Hand Book. (1986). *Hong Kong railway museum*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Railway Museum Press.
- Hein, G. E. (2008). *Learning in the museum*. The York, NA: The Routledge Press.
- Moore, W. B. (1986). *Reflection upon interpretation museum*. Hallan, CA: Folklike Museum Press.
- Transport and Housing Bureau of Hong Kong.(2014)., *Railway development strategy of 2014*. Hong Kong: Transportation Press.