ENCoRE

On Practice in Conservation-Restoration Education

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Introduction:

The profession of the conservator-restorer was defined for the first time at an international level in 1984 by ICOM-CC[1] in *The conservator-restorer: a definition of the profession*[2]. During the nearly 3 decades since then the profession issued a number of European documents and position papers. In the *E.C.C.O.*[3] *Professional Guidelines* the description of the profession of the conservator-restorer was refined and extended; a Code of Ethics as well as the prerequisites and necessities of education were also defined[4]. *The Document of Pavia* (1997), when defining the discipline, relates to education as well as to competencies, among other issues[5]. ENCoRE was established on the 9 November 1997 with the aim of promoting education and research in the field of conservation-restoration of cultural heritage[6], and to maintain and promote the academic level of the education of the conservator-restorer, according to the *Professional Guidelines of E.C.C.O.* and encouraged by the *Document of Pavia*. On the 23rd of May 1998 the founding members agreed on the Statutes of the network and confirmed the legal standing of ENCoRE as a new European network[7].

As the closing event of the so-called FULCO project (A Framework of Competence for Conservator-restorers in Europe) a European conference was held in 1998. The outcomes of the meeting were laid down in the *Document of Vienna*[8], representing at that time the consensus in the European conservation-restoration community on verifiable professional standards for conservator-restorers and a number of related issues. The participants of the meeting made several principal and urgent recommendations, based on *the Document of Pavia*, among which were the harmonisation of conservation-restoration education at university level or recognised equivalent, and hence the need for clarification of "university level and recognised equivalent". It was decided that these issues should be coordinated by ENCoRE, in association with the CON.BE.FOR project[9].

At its third General Assembly in 2001 ENCoRE delivered its contribution to this clarification in the form of the document *Clarification of Conservation/Restoration Education at University Level or Recognised Equivalent*[10]. The clarification document takes into consideration the Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area[11]. The document states that the quality, democratic control of, and public insight into, conservation-restoration education can only be guaranteed by governmentally-validated academic education at university level, leading to protected and internationally recognised academic titles. It also states that educational institutions which are not called universities, but which offer programmes of study which in length, content and quality are regarded by the governmental validating bodies to be equivalent to university degree provision, should be recognised as being at that same level.

It declares that as an academic discipline conservation-restoration is per definition based on the highest level of research, and that the basis of education consists of an appropriate balance between integrated theoretical and practical teaching. Moreover, the document defines as an aim that the conservator-restorer licensed for independent practice is per definition a graduate at Master's level from a university or governmentally recognised equivalent, or doctoral research level (PhD),

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[1] ICOM-CC: International Council of Museums - Committee for Conservation

[2] ICOM, Copenhagen 1984. The Code of Ethics. The Conservator-Restorer: a Definition of the Profession, http://www.encore-edu.org

[3] E.C.C.O.: European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers Organisations

[4] Professional Guidelines of E.C.C.O. 1993/94

[5] Document of Pavia. Preservation of Cultural Heritage: Towards a European profile of the conservator/restorer. European summit. Pavia 18-22 October 1997, http://www.encore-edu.org

[6] The ENCoRE Document of Constitution, Dresden, 9th November 1997, http://www.encore-edu.org

[7] ENCoRE Newsletter 1/1998, http://www.encore-edu.org

[8] The Document of Vienna 1-12-1998, http://www.encore-edu.org

[9] Conservators-Restorers of Cultural Heritage in Europe: Education Centers and Institutes. A Comparative Research. CON.BE.FOR. Associazione Giovanni Secco Suardo, Lurano (BG), Italy, 2000, ISBN 88-8420-001-6.

[10] Clarification of Conservation/Restoration Education at University Level or Recognised Equivalent, ENCoRE 3rd General Assembly 19 - 22 June 2001, Munich, Germany http://www.encore-edu.org

[11] The Bologna Declaration. The European higher education area. Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education. Bologna 19 June 1999.

and that the overall length of study for entry into the profession or to continue to doctorate level should be five years.

In 2006 the *European Qualification Framework* (EQF) was introduced by the European Commission, generically classifying levels of qualification on the basis of knowledge, skills and competences. According to the *ENCoRE Clarification Document*, the *E.C.C.O.-ENCoRE Joint Paper*[12] and the 2004 update of the *E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines III*[13], the entry level for independent practice as a (fully professional) conservator-restorer is defined as being at Master level. Corresponding to annex 2 of the EQF recommendation, level 7 relates to the Master degree, whereas level 6 relates to the Bachelor degree and level 8 to the PhD[14]. According to the EQF the required level for independent practice as a conservator-restorer is therefore level 7.

The conservation-restoration profession was one of the first groups of professionals to respond to the EQF system and to work on a scheme for application within education as well as within the profession itself. The work E.C.C.O. dedicated to the development of definitions resulted in the publication of the description of the *Competences for Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession* (2011)[15], which is based on a concept map, a graphic scheme showing in a qualitative manner the fields of activity of the conservator-restorer in the conservation process. It was thus possible to show the complex interrelation of knowledge and skills inherent to independent practice.
The detailed definitions in this paper also include an evaluation model for the description of the scales of knowledge and skills, respectively.

The present situation, with recognised academic conservation-restoration education programmes existing in most European countries accredited at level 7 according to EQF, requires the profession to develop descriptions and definitions of those parts of the conservation-restoration educational programmes which devoted to practice, with the purpose of improving learning outcomes descriptions, the quality of teaching, and didactic methods, to ensure the highest quality and evaluation, as well as comparison between programmes and facilitation of mobility of students and teaching staff. This is especially challenging as large parts of the teaching, training and performance of practice are based on tacit knowledge which needs to be transformed into meaningful written and spoken language and terms. Moreover, experience shows that in addition to the quality of content, high quality practice education and training also depends on the length of learning time and the teacher/student ratio. The present aim of ENCoRE is that all these necessary requirements can be specified on the basis of a clear and universally agreed definition of practice in conservation-restoration education.

NOTE:

In the professional context the term "practice" stands for the exercise of the profession of the conservator-restorer (a conservation practitioner is not necessarily a full conservator-restorer!)
In conservation-restoration education the term "practice" is related to activities of a (very rarely exclusively) practical nature.

[12] E.C.C.O - ENCoRE Paper on Education and Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession, 2003, http://www.encore-edu.org

[13] ECCO Professional Guidelines(III): Basic Requirements for Education in Conservation-Restoration, 2004, http://www.encore-edu.org

[14] The European Qualifications Framework for Life long Learning, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008, ISBN 978-92-79-08474-4

[15] Competences for Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession, E.C.C.O. 2011, ISBN 978-92-990010-1-1

Practice in Conservation-Restoration Education

In the education field the term "practice" remains unclear when comparing existing university curricula with the requirements of the profession. A definition of the term "practice" and its implications within the educational context of the profession of the conservator-restorer is therefore vital, in order to endow graduates of different universities or educational institutions with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences, according to the E.C.C.O. 2011 description.

A clear distinction of the different types of practice makes it possible to outline the characteristics, as well as to a certain degree the quantity, of practice in education institutions.

Learning Outcomes / Aim:

In preparation for independent professional practice, the learning outcomes of c-r education programmes must include all the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to allow the graduates to act, based on the *E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (I) I. Definition of the Profession,* in terms of the following activities listed there:

- strategic planning
- diagnostic examination
- assessment of condition
- the drawing up of conservation plans and treatment proposals
- preventive conservation
- conservation-restoration treatments and documentation of observations and any interventions
- develop programmes, projects and surveys in the field of conservation-restoration
- provide advice and technical assistance for the preservation of cultural heritage
- prepare technical reports on cultural heritage
- conduct research
- disseminate information gained from examination, treatment or research
- promote a deeper understanding of the field of conservation-restoration
- development in relation to research
- monitoring: the evaluation of the effectiveness of treatments (quality control)

All listed activities and decision making must be in accordance with the *E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines (II) code of ethics*, and taking into account all the values (cultural, historical etc.) of the object.

Differentiation of Practice in Education

Practice is the comprehensive activity of providing physical care for cultural heritage, being associated with its interpretation, and representing the core competence of the conservator-restorer. It is based on the understanding of the appearance, meaning, values, material composition, and condition of the cultural heritage object as interdependent parameters and their relevance to the decision-making process.

If practice unites all these above mentioned aspects then this definition makes evident that practice represents the central piece, the heart of any conservation-restoration education; it is in the dialogue with the object that all acquired knowledge and skills come together.

As conservation-restoration practice involves the application of direct or indirect physical action with respect to objects of cultural heritage, it is necessary to deliver, as an essential part of the educational process, practical experiences in relation to original objects as well as practical studies of the properties and interactions of their constituting materials.

In order to prepare future conservator-restorers for their profession, with a profile and code of ethics according to the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines, the teaching of all aspects and activities of practice as shown in the EQF description by E.C.C.O. is necessary. The final aim of conservation-restoration education is to impart all the knowledge, skills and competences needed for access to the conservation-restoration profession, so that the graduate can undertake all the responsibilities linked to the preservation of the cultural heritage as described in the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines.

The EQF description by E.C.C.O., derived from the sequence of the conservation process, gives clear indications for differentiating between practice types. In conservation-restoration education, activities of practice constituting a conservation-restoration process or a part of it should therefore include all of the following:

1) Studies in materials, techniques and technology

– to understand the materials constituting cultural heritage objects[16] and the technology for producing them, to experience and learn about material behaviour and develop various dexterity skills related to the creation of the objects (e.g. creation of reconstruction/copies/replicas).

2) Diagnostic[17] examination of the object and object collections

The act of identifying and documenting a condition of an object by investigation or analysis of the cause or nature of a condition and a statement or conclusion from such an analysis by:

A) Non-invasive examination
   Diagnostic examination of the cultural heritage object by visual inspection at the macro and microscopic level and other examination methods, which do not alter the object[18].
B) Invasive examination
   A variety of investigative methods to be used only when necessary and subsequent to non-invasive examination. Any sampling or resulting alteration of material(s) should be as limited as possible.

3) Assessment[19]

A) Condition assessment covers the basic cognitive process of classification of an object or collections of objects into classes or categories with respect to condition and context. An appraisal based on careful analytical evaluation (diagnosis).
B) Risk assessment is the determination of quantitative or qualitative value of risk related to a concrete situation and a recognized threat.

4) Planning and decision making concerning non-interventive and interventive C-R measures

5) Application of case-related non-interventive C-R measures

Preventive conservation including
- Long term conservation strategies
- Collection care
- Risk management

Practice directly related to object/item(s) but without direct intervention

6) Application of case-related Interventive C-R measures

Remedial conservation and restoration treatments including
- Testing of materials and methods
- Intervention

Interventive practice directly related to object/item(s) or their constituting materials ("hands on practice")

7) Documentation

Creation of any form of documentation relating to the composition, condition, alteration, previous interventions and current treatment of the cultural heritage object.

8) Experience of professional practice

Training under realistic working conditions, including "hands on" practice but also other types of practice, routine procedures, and also organisational matters, contact and communication with stakeholders etc.

9) Dissemination

The dissemination of information gathered by the above mentioned activities and research.

In order to comply with their future responsibility and to prepare students to be professional conservator-restorers, all the above-mentioned types of practice should be present, in a well-balanced ratio, in a recognised Higher Education institution curriculum[20].

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[16] In the context of this document the term cultural heritage objects includes also objects from natural history collections as well as modern and contemporary art and architectural elements.

[17] Diagnosis is the identification of the nature and cause of anything. Diagnosis is used in many different disciplines with variations in the use of logics, analytics, and experience to determine the cause and effect relationships. It covers the act of identifying a condition of an object by investigation or analysis of the cause or nature of a condition and a statement or conclusion from such an analysis.

[18] Other examination methods may include ultra-violet, infra-red or other electromagnetic radiation based methods.

[19] In all cases, the quality of assessment is depending on the quality of data from examination and diagnosis of objects and environmental conditions and other significant factors.

[20] Universities or recognised equivalent (EQF level 6-8).

The Document of Pavia recommends in para 4 "an appropriate balance of integrated theoretical and practical teaching".

As can be seen in the list above, all types of practice involve aspects of theory, which cannot be separated from the "hands-on" practice element. In fact, the hands-on part – as much as it may involve the necessity of training dexterity – is the last point in a long row of researching, decision making, planning, testing of materials etc. Practice is therefore always related to a theoretical background which has to be taken into account and comes into the teaching of practice.

On the other hand, theory can be taught on its own, independent of practice. Nevertheless, theoretical knowledge can be conveyed more easily when linked to practice.

Pure basic theory will be preferentially taught at the beginning of studies in order to give a basis from which to start. Theory will also be taught in a phase where the student has already accumulated enough practice in order to be able to relate theories to his/her experiences. More advanced theory will preferentially be taught in later phase where the student is confronted with problems of a deeper and more complex nature.

Apart from the teaching of pure theory, it is obligatory that in a conservator-restorer´s study curriculum, the teaching of explicitly practical interventions on original objects is provided, in terms of a variety of different conservation-restoration projects.

Didactic Requirements

It is necessary that candidates for conservation-restoration studies must prove they have the necessary aptitude in terms of manual skills. This has to be verified before the beginning of the studies by means of entrance assessment. Otherwise an indispensable precondition for reaching the learning outcomes is missing.

Education and training in some types of practice, as described above, requires a specific way of teaching as well as specific teaching conditions.

The education process must prepare the student for the responsibilities that a future conservator-restorer will take on. It is therefore necessary that the student is entrusted with conservation-restoration projects on cultural heritage objects during her/his studies under the guidance of a teacher. The projects and the tasks involved can be of a relatively simple nature in the beginning, but while advancing the student will have to master increasingly complex tasks. Teachers tutoring practice projects should normally be fully professional conservator-restorers themselves with ample experience in the relevant field.

Project-based practice education will consist of case studies which should teach conservation-restoration methodology as a primary goal. Apart from that, selected methods will be taught according to the needs of the projects and the specialisation covered in the curriculum.

A full conservation-restoration curriculum should enable the students to work through c-r projects from the very beginning to the end. As the students advance through the curriculum, the complexity of the projects should increase. In addition, towards the final stages of the curriculum the independence of the students in executing these projects should increase while the intensity of direct supervision decreases, in order for the students to become autonomous and responsible professionals. In the end, a level has to be reached which is compatible with the professional requirements, taking into account the interdisciplinary nature of conservation-restoration

Within the framework of an educational system student practice projects have to be independent of the pressures of time/money which usually are dominating and limiting parameters to the activities of a conservator-restorer. Only considerable independence from time/money constraints gives the student the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of conservation-restoration with all its implications, including the decision-making process. These conditions, in combination with the necessary infrastructure and professional teaching, will normally be found only in the context of a university or institution of recognised equivalence.

However, in order to prepare the student for the profession, projects with tight deadlines must also be experienced. This may be realised better in a placement, such as an internship outside the university or educational institution. In such an environment the student is able to experience the concrete implications of financial and time issues involved in the preservation of cultural heritage.

One of the most important prerequisites is the teacher:student ratio:
Practice which does not involve original material will not need very close supervision and can normally be taught in larger groups. Student conservation projects, on the other hand, need a low teacher:student ratio, normally 1:6 or 1:8. In the case of a complex project this ratio may even come down to 1:1, as is usual for final master projects. The quality of an educational program depends directly on the teaching capacity which is allocated to the practice component of the c-r program by the university (or educational institution of recognised equivalence).