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Education and Training in Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage Materials: Whither Nigeria?

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Abstract

Libraries, archives and museums, particularly those in the tropics, are faced with the challenge of material deterioration. This constitutes a big threat to access to the invaluable heritage materials maintained by these institutions. One way of tackling the problem is to have qualified and highly skilled human resources in preservation and conservation. Knowledge and skills in preservation and conservation can be acquired only through education, training and re-training. This paper, therefore, examines the place of education and training in preservation and conservation in the survival of cultural heritage materials. It makes a survey of educational institutions around the world offering courses in heritage materials conservation. It zeroes in on Nigeria, examines the training facilities available in the country and concludes that much still needs to be desired. Finally, it makes a case for the establishment in Nigeria of a centre of excellence for the preservation and conservation of heritage materials.

Keywords: Education and training, Preservation and Conservation, Cultural heritage materials, Nigeria

Introduction

The preservation of the nation's cultural heritage is a big challenge confronting libraries, archives, museums and other heritage institutions around the world. Information resources in libraries and archives are

prone to deterioration. Museum objects, artefacts and monuments too have no immunity against deterioration, loss and damage. The environment in which these heritage materials are kept, among others, constitute a critical factor to their existence. The problem is particularly more acute in the tropics where excessive temperature and relative humidity are recorded in most part of the year. Closely related to this is the organic nature of most of the materials which makes deterioration inevitable. A good preservation and conservation programme is, therefore, essential to the survival of heritage materials. One of the critical components of such programme is highly skilled manpower which only education, training and continuous capacity building can guarantee.

Human Resource Development

The importance of education and training in preservation and conservation to the survival of heritage materials cannot be over-emphasized. Unfortunately, it has been observed over the years, particularly in developing world, that absence of basic training in this field constitutes a major obstacle to the preservation and conservation of the materials. Unlike Europe and North America where "reasonably adequate facilities for training exist for the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage" (Kathpalia, 1984), few developing countries are well-prepared and equipped for the education and training of specialists required for the long term preservation of their cultural heritage. The School of Archival Studies of the National Archives of India, New Delhi in the past served as a training centre in preservation and restoration for some

African countries. The efforts of this institution were complemented by those of the two regional centres at Accra (Ghana) and Dakar (Senegal) for English-speaking and French-speaking countries respectively. The centres were set up with the assistance of UNESCO particularly for training in archival work. In the same vein, the UNESCO assisted in 1963 to establish the museum training centre at Jos, which centre was later upgraded to the Institution of Archaeology and Museum Studies.

Today, most institutions in Africa running academic programmes especially in library and archival studies have preservation and conservation only as a component of the programmes. Only a few, if any, have developed a comprehensive curriculum specifically tailored to the needs of specialists and technicians required for heritage preservation. It is against this background that this paper seeks to set the agenda for the discussion of education and training in preservation and conservation, borrowing from the experience in other part of the world.

Education and Training

Although the terms 'education' and 'training' seem synonymous and are often used interchangeably, they are by no means the same. While "they both prepare those who receive them for some task or occupation... they have different aims and methods" (Pederson, 1992). Education is aimed at the development of intellectual power through dissemination and acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge is required in developing and transforming a specific field of human endeavour. Masadeh (2012) quoting The Manpower Services Commission (1981), defined education as "activities which aim at developing

the knowledge, skills, moral values and understanding required in all aspects of life rather than knowledge and skill relating to only a limited field of activity". Education involves teaching and learning, usually in an academic environment or formal setting. It is essentially theoretical and is "recognized by the wider society upon award of a degree" (Pederson, 1992), diploma or certificate. Apparently stating the value of education, Fortino (2012) expressed the opinion thatit "broadens the learner, makes him different from everyone else and helps him think in his own way to solve problems that have not been solved before". He however, added that "educational programs include training in the skills and knowledge of the discipline". Thus, while acquisition of knowledge is predominantly the hallmark of education, the imperative of skill acquisition cannot be said to be alien, in appropriate cases, to the educated.

Training, on the other hand, basically involves skill acquisition. It is the process of learning a skill and developing expertise in a specific job or field. It imparts the skill to do things and acquire a hands-on experience. It also "helps the learner solve known problems with a high degree of expertise" (Fortino, 2012). In drawing a clear distinction between education and training, Pederson (1992) explained that "the educated prove their knowledge and capacity through discourse while the trained must demonstrate their competence and skill through performance". Fortino (2012) summarised the difference and attributes of education and training in Table 1.

Table 1: The Difference Between Education and Training

ATTRIBUTE	EDUCATION	TRAINING	DETERMINING FACTOR
Purpose of the Learning Experience	Acquire or deepen mindset or profession	Acquire new skills and knowledge	Do I want to be transformed into a different person or just be more skilful?
Evidence of Learning Success	Course grades GPA	Testing, Certification, Job Performance	How will others and I know I was successful with my learning experience?
Credentials	Degrees, Graduate Certificates	Certificates and Licenses	Do I want to get a degree or a certificate?
Difficulty to Learn	Harder	Easier	Am I ready to undertake a lengthy and hard learning process or can I just do something quickly?
Length of the Learning Process	One to three years	Typically from one to five days or several weeks	How long do I expect the learning process to take?
Persistence of the Learning Outcome	Lasts a lifetime	Short half-life, five years on average	How long should I expect the results of the learning to last or remain current?
Style of Learning	Draw out, mentoring by instructor	Drill in, developing skills, habits, Practice	What can I expect my educational experience to be like?
Behavior After Learning Took Place	Acting after deep thought and analysis, broad	Acting out of new habits and skills, narrow	How will I behave after this learning experience?
Change	Skilful at thinking, Transformational, deeper, more radical	Skilful at doing, Shallower, more superficial	What kind of change am I looking for?
End Results	Makes you different from others, thoughtful and mindful, educated	Makes you the same as others with the same training, measure up	What am I looking for as an end result of my learning experience?
Institutions Providing Learning Experience	Colleges and Universities	In-house seminars, training companies, self-taught	Where can I obtain this learning experience?
Examples	College courses and degree programs	Training seminars, job training	What are some examples of education and training?

Source: Fortino (2012)

The distinction notwithstanding, the field of preservation and conservation requires a combination of education and training in order to ensure the survival of heritage materials. Conservation works, according to the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), should be entrusted to persons competent in these specialist activities and only education and training can assure the knowledge and skill required.

Survey of Institutions

A good number of institutions all over the world provide educational

opportunity in preservation and conservation of cultural heritage. This section takes a cursory look at some of these institutions and the training programme available there. The list is by no means exhaustive and the order in which the institutions are mentioned has nothing to do with their importance or the depth and quality of the programmes which they run.

In Austria, the University of Applied Arts in Vienna offers a ten semester Masters programme in conservation and restoration. In Croatia, Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts, Arts

Restoration Department of University of Zagreb runs conservation courses at different levels from Diploma to Doctor's degree. The postgraduate programme of the Department is organised either as a one-year specialist programme or a two-year scientific programme of studies. France's Ecole d'Avignon has a five-year programme in the conservation of painted works designed for candidates that are under the age of 31 years (Conservation Online (CoOL), n.d.).

In Germany, a number of institutions including State Archives' Administration of Baden-Wurttemberg (Germany) Institute of Preservation of Archival and Library Materials and State Academy of Art and Design, Stuttgart offer courses in conservation of heritage materials. The institution at Stuttgart, for instance, has a Master of Arts programme in the conservation of new media and digital information.

Other institutions in Europe include the Technical Education Institute of Athens (Greece), Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in Ireland, American Academy in Rome (Italy), Malta Centre for Restoration, Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, City and Guilds of London Art School, University of Cambridge Hamilton Kerr Institute, University of Northumbria and Camberwell College of Arts which offers programmes in book arts, conservation, printmaking and applied arts.

Institutions also abound in North America where courses are offered in various aspects of conservation and management of cultural heritage. These include Georgia State University Heritage Preservation Programme, New York University Institute of Fine Arts Conservation Centre, Ryerson University Master of Arts in Photographic Preservation and Collections Management and Simmons

Graduate School of Library and Information Science Master of Arts in preservation management. The Canadian Conservation Institute has internship programmes in areas that include conservation research.

In Australia, Curtin University runs a vocational course which provides theoretical and practical training required in the heritage industry. The University of Canberra School of Resource, Environmental and Heritage Sciences offers courses in conservation. The Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation of the University of Melbourne also has study and research programmes at the Postgraduate Diploma, Master's and Doctoral levels for cultural materials conservation.

Training in conservation consists mainly of workshops, seminars, on-the-job learning and period of practical attachment in conservation laboratories. Some archival institutions around the world have such laboratories where skills can be acquired in material conservation. The training programme of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) is, particularly available to cultural heritage institutions to avail themselves of. In the same vein, the Northeast Document Conservation Centre (NEDCC) in the United States of America not only engages in conservation work but also has good training curriculum for the conservation of library and archival materials. The Centre also offers, on request, workshops in such areas as basic preservation, basic book repair, photographic preservation and preservation technologies (CoOL, n.d.).

Preservation and Conservation Curriculum Design

To be most effective, curriculum for education and training in preservation and conservation must be

designed for both specialists and technicians (Kathpalia, 1984). The specialists are graduates who perform overall supervisory functions, facilitate policy formulation and ensure the provision of an enabling environment for preservation and conservation work. The technicians who are non-graduates are involved in the actual restoration work. The kind of training required will influence the type of curriculum fashioned out. Basically, there should be different curriculum for different kinds of programme and the peculiar requirements of libraries, archives and museums must be reflected in curriculum design. Curriculum for the training of specialists must focus on both theoretical and practical works with emphasis on preventive preservation while that of technicians must be tilted heavily in the direction of intensive practical work.

In 1996, a Joint IFLA/ICA Committee on Preservation in Africa (JICPA) was formed to promote preservation and conservation of library and archival materials in Africa. A model JICPA curriculum developed at a forum of experts from library and archives schools in Africa offers a platform upon which education and training in preservation and conservation, particularly for libraries and archives, can be based. Although it has been quite some time since the model curriculum was developed and by, implication, is due for review, yet a strong inspiration can still be drawn from it, while having regard to international best practice, for the training of conservationists required in other heritage institutions.

Education and training curriculum in preservation and conservation should be geared towards raising awareness about the issues and problems of preservation and conservation of heritage materials. It should ensure that professionals are

adequately equipped in meeting the challenges of heritage preservation. There should be introductory courses designed to make trainees appreciate the importance and relevance of heritage institutions and the role of preservation and conservation in ensuring the survival of heritage materials. The nature, structure and characteristics of different media and implication for permanence must be given due attention. Trainees should be made to know and appreciate the factors and agents of deterioration of heritage materials. Skills for the care and repair of materials must be imparted. Curriculum should also include various aspects of disaster control and management as well as preservation planning programme.

Since heritage institutions share affinities, there should be core courses to address issues common to them while specialized courses relating to archives, libraries and museums should be designed. These specialized courses are to focus on the specific nature of archival, library and museum materials.

It has been observed that the practice of conservation is interdisciplinary. As such, courses should also be multi-disciplinary (ICOMOS, 1993). It then follows that courses must be borrowed from other disciplines. Knowledge of Chemistry and Material Science is essential for effective preservation work. For instance, the contents of Silpakorn University International College Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting conservation programme in Thailand include Chemistry of materials, Natural Science of light, temperature and humidity and technology in colour.

Knowledge of research methods in preservation and conservation is also important, particularly for specialist or professional programmes. The curriculum should also include practical

works in core conservation processes including repair and restoration. Whatever curriculum that is put in place must be periodically evaluated and reviewed in the light of changing circumstances and in line with international best practice.

Conservation Manpower Profile of Heritage Institutions and Training Facilities in Nigeria

A preliminary survey of preservation and conservation situation in heritage institutions in Nigeria revealed that much still needs to be done, particularly in the area of manpower requirement. Only one or two of these institutions had a conservation section or unit which was ill-equipped or equipped with obsolete equipment. Again, only one or two had a sizeable number of conservation personnel as indicated in Table 2. The intention is just to give a general picture; hence the anonymities of the institutions are maintained.

Table 2: Conservation Manpower Profile of Heritage Institutions in Nigeria

Heritage Institution	Number of Conservators	Number of Conservation Technicians
A	1	2
B	Nil	2
C	3	15
D	Nil	20

Source: Author's Preliminary Survey

Even for institutions that seem to fare better, the present conservation staffing level is a far cry from their actual manpower needs. In real terms, most of the so-called conservators in most heritage institutions in Nigeria are technicians who acquired their skills through years of 'on-the-job' experience rather than formal education and training. The situation is not helped by the fact that the conservator cadre

seems to be non-existent in the Nigerian Civil Service. There is, therefore, a yawning gap waiting to be filled in the provision of qualified and well-trained human resources for the conservation of heritage materials in Nigeria.

In terms of training facilities available in the country, there is still heavy reliance on library and information science (LIS) schools imparting mainly theoretical knowledge in preservation and conservation of information resources. Most of these LIS schools offer one or two courses in preservation and conservation at both the Bachelor and Master levels as part of the library and information studies programme or archival and records management programme. The practical component of the courses which can provide the platform for the acquisition of skills and hands-on experience seems to suffer neglect due to near absence of conservation laboratories. However, some of the heritage institutions in Nigeria have conservation units where hands-on experience can be acquired, particularly in the area of paper treatment and document repair. The constraint, however, relates to obsolete equipment and shortage of relevant chemicals and materials for conservation work. The National Archives of Nigeria, for instance, has conservation units in its zonal offices which, in the past, attracted trainees from other African countries. Today, most of the equipment in the units are outdated while most of the experienced conservation personnel constituting the trainers have retired.

Meeting Nigeria's Preservation/Conservation Education and Training Requirements

As indicated earlier, there are institutions around the world for the education and training in preservation and conservation. In addition to formal training, leading to the award of diploma or degree, opportunities for ad-

hoc training in preservation must be explored. These opportunities abound all over the world. For instance, ICCROM contributes to conservation training by organizing professional programmes in Rome and around the world. It also arranges internship for member states, and Nigeria has been a member since 1961. The activities of the World Heritage Centre aimed at changing the perception of African cultural heritage are also worthy of note, even though the focus of the Centre is mainly immovable heritage. These and other opportunities should be tapped into to produce competent hands that can deploy their expertise and skills in preservation and conservation to ensure the survival of the country's cultural heritage.

More importantly, Nigeria must establish her own National Conservation Academy where conservation personnel at different levels are to be trained to meet the challenges of heritage preservation in the country. The curricula of the Academy must be designed in such a way as to take care of the peculiar needs of each heritage institution and with specialization in specific areas or materials. Details of the curricula should be worked out by experts in curriculum design and in the various fields. There could be collaboration with conservation centres and foreign institutes at the initial stage, particularly for internship. The trainers too must be well-trained to be able to adequately impart knowledge and skill. A career path must be developed in the Civil Service for professional conservators, conservation scientists and conservation technicians.

Conclusion

Education and training in preservation and conservation constitute a critical issue in the preservation of heritage materials which

comprise mainly library, archival and museum materials. In developed world, the issue has received the priority attention which it deserves, going by the survey of institutions offering courses in this field undertaken in this paper. It seems that not much has been done in Africa, particularly Nigeria, to fashion out and implement a comprehensive curriculum to meet the manpower needs for the preservation and conservation of heritage materials. This is a challenge to educational institutions⁸ in Nigeria, particularly those running academic programmes in library, archival and information studies. They have to rise to the occasion to ensure that education and training opportunities are available locally in preservation and conservation, as it is more expensive to train conservators in foreign institutions where facilities exist. Nigeria as a country is ripe for a centre of excellence for the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage. The good work which ICCROM and other organisations are doing should be replicated in Nigeria. The time to act is now.

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