On Training of Conservation of Movable Cultural Heritage in Turkey and The Department of Restoration and Conservation of Cultural Properties

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I. INTRODUCTION

The material relics that carry traces of the past cultures reflect the historical progress on which we build our future. Architects, archaeologists and art historians have directed their studies on the issue of conserving and maintaining the works which constitute the essential resource of scientific studies, against the factors that threaten the durability and sustainability of our cultural and historical heritage. All the developed and developing countries in the world, despite the fact that they do not have a cultural heritage as rich as Turkey's, have made huge investments in the field of "conservation", and have trained specialists by opening up comprehensive, scientific training programmes. Especially after the World War II, the activity of conserving the cultural heritage ceased to be an artisanship and gained a scientific qualification, and this led to a rapid increase in the number of training programmes on conservation in the world. The research methods that multiplied and diversified thanks to this development have been put in the service of cultural properties.

It is evident that in our country, there are only a few training programmes in this field, and the limited number of conservation personnel (conservators) educated in the existing programmes fail to meet the needs. Despite the existing employment opportunities, due to the unsatisfactory number of qualified personnel, our cultural properties are either abandoned or left to the uneducated reasoning of the personnel, who started this job with a limited knowledge and work with trial and error methods. Today our museums, ruins sites and historical cities are full of examples of works that are damaged as a result of improper and insensible implementations.

The "conservation-restoration" technicians that graduate from vocational education programmes, which are widespread in our country, directed at training intermediate staff are, because of their limited knowledge, incapable of upholding the decision-making and engaging initiative stages. The technicians definitely need to be directed and supervised by a conservation personnel or specialist (conservator) in the implementation process. Thus, it has become a primary necessity to train conservation personnel and specialists who have the competence and knowledge in conducting scientific research, determining methods, implementing and assessing the outcomes of the implementations, and to achieve this by providing, at least, undergraduate level education, have emerged. *In fact, considering the examples in the*

developed countries, the period of study at education programmes covering the conservation-restoration of various cultural properties, range from 4 to 7 years.

II. ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES

Considering these problems and the fact that, with its historical heritage, Turkey is one of the countries in the world which needs “conservation specialists” the most, it is now planned to form a four-year programme within the scope of Gazi University, Faculty of Fine Arts.

One of the essential aims of the department is to train qualified vocational staff (conservators) who have advanced technical knowledge and competence in the field of conserving cultural properties, who will contribute to satisfying the needs of the country. Accordingly, it is possible to list the education programme that is planned to be structured by employing specialized teaching staff, as follows:

1. to follow the technological developments in the field of conservations and restoration in Turkey and in the world,
2. ensuring that the types and the reasons of the problems faced during the conservation of cultural and artistic properties having architectural and decorative qualifications belonging to movables and immovables are researched, determined and documented with scientific methods,
3. ensuring that the materials and tools used for conservation and restoration are identified and utilized,
4. training “conservators” who have competence in scientific examination and research; developing and determining methods; implementation and assessment of implementation results,
5. through the graduate programmes procuring specialization, and training researchers and instructors,
6. Internalizing and popularizing internationally valid principles and basic approaches in the field of conservation of cultural properties ,
7. in addition to education, playing an active role in conserving our cultural heritage with research-implication projects and consultancy services that will develop diagnosis and treatment methods oriented towards conservation of movable and immovable works, constructions and construction materials, by cooperating with various arts, social and physical sciences that help the conservation sciences, such as archaeology, art history, fine arts, museum studies, architecture, *mineralogy, microbiology, petrography and archaeometry.*

The programme is planned to begin in the 2012-2013 academic year; it covers subjects of conservation and restoration of artistic and cultural properties belonging to movables and immovables having archaeological and ethnographic qualities such as ceramics, chinaware, stoneware, metal, glass, textile, paper, leather, wood, canvas painting, mural painting.
In the department, a curriculum based on theory and practice with and elective courses will be implemented. In the first year, science branches associated with conservation science, such as archaeology, history of art, documentation techniques, basic chemistry, and courses that cover basic information about the theories and concepts in conservation will be prevailing. From the second year on, the education programme dominantly covers theory and practice, with various groups of objects, on knowledge about materials, deterioration types, and “preventive” and “active” conservation methods oriented to employing precautionary actions. There are also courses that cover conservation methods in the museums and archaeological sites. In the content of the curriculum, a path open to continuous improvement, progress and diversity will be followed, depending on the demand from the academic staff and students.

To graduate, the students are obliged pass 180 credit/hour must and elective courses, and to complete a30-day internship at the end of 2nd and 3rd years, summing up to 60 days.

The students will be able to take up internship in excavation activities and laboratories of the institutions associated with museums and restoration sites. The students that are entitled to have internship and the qualified places of internship shall determined by the “internship committee”. The committee is going to evaluate the internship results. The students will be able to find internship opportunities abroad as well.

The students, who fulfil the academic and internship obligations, shall be entitled to receive diplomas by preparing a “graduation project” oriented towards research and/or practice at the last year.

The student selection is planned to be made through an “artistic entrance examination”. The students who successfully complete the programme shall titled as “conservator”.

We must state that some problems about “academic” and “physical” structuring are faced in the department which has not completed its foundation and development processes. Comprising of classrooms, workshops and laboratories that will enable a modern education; employing academic staff specialized in different branches of conservation are the primary problems that the department strives to overcome. The department is planned to achieve an ideal structure by overcoming these problems as soon as possible by getting support from the university and various institutions.

III. ABOUT THE CONTENT AND QUALITY OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMMES ON CONSERVATION OF MOVABLE CULTURAL PROPERTIES IN TURKEY

When the academic institutions providing education on “conservation and restoration of cultural properties” are observed, it is seen that 2-year “Restoration-Conservation” associate degree programmes within Vocational Schools and graduate degree “Restoration” programmes on immovables in Faculties of Architecture prevail. These programmes, which train technicians and architectural restoration specialists, continue to give education with a limited coverage.

It is seen that the newly developing four-year programmes on movable cultural properties are structured under two different academic roofs: Faculties of Science and Letters and Faculties of Fine Arts. The programmes, some of which are yet not active, are oriented towards subjects of conservation and restoration of movable archaeological, ethnographic, and arts objects. “The Department of Conservation and Restoration of Movable Cultural Properties” at Istanbul University, Faculty of Letters, is the first and pioneering department that gives undergraduate education on this field in Turkey. The Faculties of Arts and Sciences at Batman University, Konya Selçuk University, and Denizli Pamukkale University founded departments that followed this programme. The above mentioned programmes either could not start education due to insufficiency of academic staff or had to continue education with instructors who are from different vocations. “Department of Conservation and Restoration of Art Works” at Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts and “Department of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Properties” at Gazi University are examples of education programmes founded at the Faculties of Fine Arts. These programmes which continue their academic structuring are planning to admit students in the 2012-2013 academic year.

It can be stated that, Faculties of Fine Arts constitute a more suitable academic structure when the high efficiency that these programmes will achieve at education is considered. There are close supplementary and supporting links between the basic fields of arts such as "*Painting", "Sculpture", "Ceramics", "Textile"* and sometimes *"Architecture"* and "the departments of conservation and restoration of cultural and artistic properties" with respect to their areas of research and practice. There are different education programmes, which aim to produce art objects (painting, sculpture, ceramics, textile, etc.) on the one hand and to conserve the art objects that are carried from the past to the contemporary times on the other. It is clear that uniting these programmes under a single body, thanks to the common courses that cover design and production techniques and conservation-restoration techniques, will contribute to strengthening the interaction/cooperation among the disciplines and raising the student quality. Thus in the developed countries it seen that, in consideration of the cooperation that we emphasized above, education programmes about conservation and restoration of cultural properties are generally founded within the scope of Faculties of Fine Arts.

There are many strong aspects of these education programmes based on local and international considerations. The most important one is that conservation of cultural properties which are accepted as the heritage of all humanity is a universal issue that is highly emphasized and there is an increasing attention on the subject in Turkey and in the world. For increasing the durability and sustainability of cultural heritage, conservation institutes (UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM, ICOM, etc.), of which Turkey is also a member, work intensively and provide support to the education programmes and implication projects aiming to train vocational staff specialized on this field. Another strong aspect of the programmes is the existence of a wide range of employment opportunities considering the wealthy cultural and historical heritage of our country. Despite the existence of employment opportunities, the small number of education programmes on this field and the conservation staff (conservators) make these programmes even more important.

Certainly, some basic problems and weaknesses at so called "young" field of education should be mentioned. First and most important of all is the challenges in providing "specialists/instructors", and the other one is the insufficiency of the "physical conditions" (library, laboratory, technical equipment) suitable for practical education and research. This situation leads to weaknesses in continuing efficient education and research activities. Eliminating these weaknesses and constituting the ideal conditions will accelerate as consciousness is raised about conservation across the country and central administrative units allocate sufficient resources to this field.

Another problem about the field is that, the publications that will be used as secondary resources are mostly in foreign languages. This situation sets forth the obligation of the academic staff and the students to speak foreign languages in order to follow the developments in the world and to enhance their knowledge. It is possible to solve this problem through facilities like courses, certificate programmes, etc. provided by the university. On the other hand, for realizing the efforts for increasing the number of Turkish publications, important responsibilities are on the shoulders of researchers and instructors that work on this field and the universities should provide support to these efforts.

IV. ON BRANCHING AND SUSTAINABILITY IN CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Conservation science is a discipline that merges many subjects such as archaeology, history of arts, chemistry, physics, biology, archaeometry, fine arts, museum studies, photography, and computer in its structure and utilizes them in its area of study. During the conservation of various kinds of cultural properties depending on the type of the material, diverse practices are applied using various materials in multifold sizes/amounts and technical knowledge. In the developed

countries, this situation has led to a diversification in conservation science based on different material types and fields. It is clear that specialization in specific fields such as painting, paper, leather, wood, mosaic results in a higher quality of work at advanced stages. However, to what extend such a diversification will provide help for Turkey, a country that has no conservators in its museums -except a few-, has no a widespread awareness regarding conservation and has not matured its conservation standards is open to discussion. As a matter of fact, it is seen that the undergraduate programmes called “Ancient Faience Restoration” at some Faculties of Fine Arts, cannot contribute to the satisfaction of the needs of the country with a high efficiency, due to their focus on a single material.

The existing facilities and the actual needs of our country reveal the necessity of structuring the specialization at an undergraduate level of basic education that provides vocational knowledge and skills. Thus, in 1993 in the “Guidelines on Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites” of ICOMOS, it is emphasized that education plans should be shaped according to the traditions and needs of the cultural site and administrative and economic conditions. Accordingly, just like medical practitioners who take 6 years of basic medicine education, training “practitioner conservators” who can apply preventive and active conservation methods at a minimum level should be the primary aim, and the education programmes should be planned to meet this need. For these conservators, who have completed these education programmes and have a basic level of knowledge and skills, should be offered ways of specialization on areas like stone conservation, mosaic conservation, painting conservation, metal conservation, paper conservation, china conservation, wood conservation, etc. depending on their choice. Apart from specialization directly on material types, specialization on various conservation fields such as museums, archaeological sites and underwater antiques can also be offered.

It is crucial to apply continuous training programmes oriented towards vocational staff, and to convey information about conservation attitudes and approaches to all the people and institutions who may have influence on conservation policies. Moreover, it is necessary to make international cooperation with institutions and foundations on conservation, follow and update developing methods and technologies by organizing scientific activities such as seminars, symposiums, workshops and common projects. For this, national, regional and international instructor, specialist and student exchange programmes should be encouraged.

V. AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THE GRADUATES

In Turkey, for the graduates who successfully completed conservation and restoration of cultural properties programmes, there are a wide range of employment opportunities in public institutions responsible for cultural properties, such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate General of Foundations and in public and private sector like excavations, museums, conservation laboratories, special collections and restoration companies. Nevertheless, the insufficient number of conservation staff (conservators) that is supposed to meet the need of our country catches attention.

Museums and ruin sites are the where the conservators are needed the most. The primary responsibility of museums is to preserve the works which are their reasons of existence, and to provide the most suitable environmental conditions. This idea requires more or less restoration (active conservation) on the one hand, and preparing conditions that will prevent any kind of deterioration (preventive conservation) on the other. To achieve this aim, conservation specialists are needed as much as museum employees and exhibition designers (curators). In Turkey, one of the initial reasons of the difficulties faced in this issue is the deficiency of conservation training and employment of permanent

conservation staff. In Turkey, the number of permanent conservators who work in museums today is no more than 20. Considering that there are about 185 museums and ruin places, about 320 scientific excavations under the body of the ministry, it is understood to what extent these numbers are insufficient.

Excavations as well are application fields of conservation which provide wide opportunities for employment. Conservation of antiques starts in the excavation area. Transferring the works that are brought into daylight from the underground without losing their archaeological data and traces to the future generations is possible through a common planning of excavation and conservation. It is emphasized in the 1956 UNESCO decisions that conservation in the excavation is supposed to be planned in advance, and it is a very crucial issue which cannot be left to chance. Conservation that covers antiques and architectural ruins requires one or more professional conservators to continuously take part in the excavation team.

Another area of employment for the conservators is restoration sites where implementations are made for conserving architectural heritage. Conservation of mural paintings, original construction materials such as mosaics, stone, china, stucco, wood and metal and decorations are included in the field of practice of conservators rather than architects and demand is increasing in this context.

There are also opportunities for establishing private firms serving public and private sectors. The number of firms providing service for excavations, museums, private collectors and restoration sites have been increasing recently, most of which are located in Istanbul.

The recent obligation imposed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate General of Cultural Properties and Museums of having a conservation plan and a conservator in the local and foreign excavations, increasing demands from the museums, and rising interest on the issue are promising developments.

VI. CONCLUSION

Conservation of cultural properties which are the common heritage of mankind is a universal issue. International conservation organizations, of which Turkey is also a member, such as ICCROM, ICOMOS, and ICOM are founded in order to bring new approaches towards conservation of cultural heritage, generate criteria and techniques, and collect information about these and make it prevalent. Today, the technical basis of conservation activities which are successfully applied in the developed countries, rest on the international knowledge and experience gained with the support of these organizations. A society-wide awareness about conservation and the diversity and sustainability of training programmes have played a big role. In our country, filling the gap in this area, supporting training programmes about the restoration and conservation of cultural properties with scientific and modern methods and making them prevalent is very crucial. The success to be achieved in this field depends on developing policies across the society concerning attributing status to the notion of conserving cultural heritage and implementing collaboration projects, which include universities, public and private sectors and non-governmental organizations.